

# The Employers' Perspective of Vocational Education Work Placement Programs



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*2005*

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## **Abstract**

This study is an evaluation of Victoria University's Workplace Learning Melbourne West (WLMW) work placement service to employers. Local Community Partnership's (LCPs) like Workplace Learning (WLMW) are funded to coordinate work placements for vocational students and enable them to integrate about 10 days on-the-job learning in industry with classroom study.

To keep enterprises engaged in the program the study canvasses employers' perspectives on the work placement service with a view to improving program effectiveness. Work placements constitute a growing element in the senior secondary curriculum and the demand on employers to provide or grow opportunities for students is intense. The study sought to identify the changes required to manage the increased demand for work placements more effectively taking into account the needs of enterprises to improve the quality of the work placement service delivered and employer satisfaction with it.

In 2004 a survey was mailed to about 432 enterprises participating in the work placement program and about one quarter (122) completed and returned surveys to Workplace Learning (WLMW). Just over one quarter (126) of the enterprises that hosted work placement students in 2004 also completed and returned Evaluation Forms to WLMW and together these two sources of data established the statistical background for the study.

The study provided an insight into Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that hosted most of the work placement students for Workplace Learning and some of the survey respondents cited concern with the quality of the work placement service. The study showed that overall enterprises enjoyed the experience, benefited from the program and were willing to continue to participate if they were provided with adequate administrative support and

monitoring during the progress of the work placements. They pointed out that contact during the placement, a phone call from Workplace Learning (WLMW) and a visit from the school, during the progress of the placement was necessary. This support was seen as a way of acknowledging the employer's role and contribution to the programs.

Enterprises indicated they wanted concise and easy to understand information about new education initiatives and more support to understand program responsibilities that was useful to them. Enterprises made it clear that they required more support to understand work placement responsibilities including occupational health and safety (OHS), WorkCover, legal forms, payment and student management procedures including workplace assessment log books and feedback forms. Agreement and documentation about the roles and responsibilities of the VET providers and Workplace Learning when managing the work placement program needed to be established as a priority for the maintenance of cooperative working relationship between all the stakeholders, Workplace Learning, VET providers and enterprises.

Ensuring students were prepared for work placement and matching students and enterprises were also identified as areas of concern. The majority of enterprises also indicated that they preferred Workplace Learning to coordinate the work placement bookings centrally rather than be contacted by individual teachers, schools, parents or students. Workplace Learning also needed to minimize multiple approaches to enterprises and to manage the demand for placements more sensitively and effectively.

Enterprises also preferred to host year 11 and 12 students who were talented and reliable and only a small number of enterprises were willing to host students considered 'at risk' of leaving school or were disabled. Work placement cancellations were of concern as students were not always well equipped or ready to attend work placement for various reasons. Enterprises

required the provision of additional intensive support when they hosted students with special needs. The Adopt a School Program needed to be promoted more widely as it provides an extensive range of industry based activities additional to work placements to improve employability skills and the job prospects of this group.

Length of time spent in the workplace was identified as a key management issue and enterprises revealed that they preferred placement duration of five day blocks and generally did not like one day per week placements. Workplace Learning needed to promote the advantages of short-term vocational work placements to enterprises to increase the opportunity for successful selection into employment, apprenticeships and further training. Workplace Learning also needed to promote part-time School-based New Apprenticeships to VET providers as the preferred option for students who favored spending extended periods of time in the workplace and less time at school. A significant number of enterprises that hosted work placement students offered them paid employment and New Apprenticeships but most students were employed on a casual basis with only a small number employed in part-time or full-time work. Participation in vocational work placement appeared to be a successful pathway into employment and training immediately after school but not always into full-time employment. Workplace Learning needed to focus on matching young people with local enterprises that were experiencing skills shortages and required employees, new apprentices and trainees to improve future job prospects for them.

## **Declaration**

The work contained in this Minor Thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other Higher Education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously submitted or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed:.....

Date:        /    /

## **Acknowledgements**

This Minor Thesis was researched, written and presented with the support and assistance of a range of people.

I would like to thank the host employers who took the time to complete and return the survey questionnaire for their thoughtful responses that have made this research a real reflection of the experiences of enterprises.

I acknowledge and thank the staff at Workplace Learning (WLMW) particularly Nataline Vin for sharing her insight and knowledge of the program, community representatives including Shanti Wong who gave her time and assistance in describing the work the Local Learning and Employment Networks undertake in the Western Region of Melbourne and the school VET coordinators particularly Anne Mitchell and Karen Colasurdo for their dedication to the work placement students.

I would also like to thank Victoria University and my two supervisors John Brooks and Rob Townsend for their encouragement and patience and my husband Dimitri Pantzopoulos who checked the drafts and provided me with the support I needed to complete the project.

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## **Glossary**

ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
AiG	Australian Industry Group
ANICA	Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers initiative
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
ASP	Adopt a School Program
ATC	Australian Technical College
BCA	Business Council of Australia
BM LLEN	Brimbank Melton Local Learning and Employment Network
CC LLEN	Capital City Local Learning and Employment Network
CiM	Careers in Manufacturing
CTS	Career and Transition Support Program
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
GTO	Group Training Organisation
LCP	Local Community Partnership
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MIPs	Managed Individual Pathways
M & MV LLEN	Maribyrnong & Monee Valley Local Learning and Employment Network
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NICS Network	National Industry Career Specialists Network

NTF	National Training Framework
OTTE	Office of Training and Tertiary Education
RICA Network	Regional Industry Career Advisers Network
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SBNA	School-based New Apprenticeship
SME	Small to Medium Enterprise
SWL	Structured Workplace Learning Program
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	VET in Schools
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
WLMW	Workplace Learning Melbourne West
WWLInc	Western Workplace Learning Incorporated
WMR Awards	Western Metropolitan Region Education and Industry Awards.
Wyn Bay LLEN	Wyndham Hobson's Bay Local Learning and Employment Network

## **Introduction**

This study was an evaluation of Victoria University's Workplace Learning Melbourne West, (WLMW) work placement service to employers. WLMW was situated with the Centre for Student Career Services, Teaching and Learning Support (TLS), at Victoria University. Workplace Learning (WLMW) received funding from the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) through Western Workplace Learning Incorporated (WWLInc) to be eligible for DEST funding. DEST funding required Workplace Learning (WLMW) be incorporated, not-for-profit, community based and locally operated and known as a Local Community Partnership (LCP) (DEST 2005). Workplace Learning ((WLMW) was therefore contracted to DEST as a Local Community Partnership (LCP) to coordinate a work placement service for employers, Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers, secondary school and TAFE students, from the Western Region of Melbourne (DEST 2004). Local Community Partnership's (LCPs) like WLMW are funded to coordinate work placements and facilitate closer school and business links that provide more opportunities for students to combine vocational workplace experiences with their senior secondary education (DEST 2004). These students are divided into two categories by DEST (2005) and priority of access to work placements must be given to category one students, those doing Vocational Education Training (VET) in Schools in years 10, 11 and 12 or VET in TAFE. Category one students are completing VET in Schools or TAFE, vocational Certificates I-IV that are nationally recognised qualifications with work placement as a key component of the course whereas category two students are those students completing other vocational learning programs usually as part of year 9, 10, 11 and 12 (DEST 2005).

Workplace Learning (WLMW) enables these vocational students to integrate 10 or 20 days, or the state average of 54.5 hours per student, of on-the-job learning in industry with classroom study (OTTE 2006; Taylor 2005; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005).

The national Vocational Education and Training (VET) certificates have a mandatory or highly recommended work placement component called Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) (VCAA 2005). Work experience, work preparation and work placement are often confused and a distinction needs to be made between them (NCVER 2005). Work experience is unpaid work or observation in the workplace and work readiness is a short orientation to the workplace. Work placement or Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) is considered to be a VET in Schools program component, situated in a real or simulated workplace, where learning activities are supervised and contribute to an assessment of competency required in the qualification (DEST 2005). Industry recommends work placement as an important component of a vocational qualification and considers students who have completed it to be more work ready (VCAA 2005).

Industry prefers vocational competencies to be mastered on-the-job during work placement to ensure the tasks can be carried out consistently and safely at work. Industry has questioned the quality of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools training if it has taken place in the classroom only and when the achievement of work related skills and competencies have not been grounded in workplace learning (OTTE 2006). Work placement was recommended as an effective Learning in the Workplace (LiW) model for preparing senior secondary students for work and acquiring the technical and employability skills needed in the workplace. Learning in the Workplace (LiW) models have also been developed for Higher Education (HE) students at Victoria University and are defined as any workplace based program or

activity that integrates formal classroom learning with its application in the workplace, and includes work placement, mentored employment, simulated workplace experiences and enterprise research projects (Victoria University 2005).

In 2002 Workplace Learning (WLMW) placed 800 students from 35 schools at 860 work placements hosted by 460 enterprises. In 2003 WLMW placed 800 students from 31 schools at 1082 work placements hosted by 480 enterprises. In 2003 and 2004 demand for WLMW work placement services increased due to the rising numbers of schools in the region introducing the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). The VCAL has a vocational focus with work placement and the development of work readiness skills as a central component of the program. As a result of this, in 2004 WLMW provided work placements to 828 students from 39 different VET providers including schools, TAFE and Adult Community Education (ACE) providers. These students attended over 1247 individual work placements at about 500 enterprises. Demand for work placement services continued to increase in 2005 and WLMW agreed to provide about 43 schools with work placement services and was under increasing pressure to deliver more when staffing was reduced and funding was decreased in real terms. In 2005 Workplace Learning was at risk of losing the goodwill it had worked so hard to achieve with the VET providers and the enterprises it provided services to.

To keep enterprises engaged in the program the study canvasses employers' perspectives on the work placement program with a view to evaluating its effectiveness. Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placements constitute a growing element in Vocational Education and Training (VET) curriculum and the demand on employers to provide or grow opportunities for students is intense. The problem for Workplace Learning (WLMW) was to find out how to manage the increasing demand for vocational work

placements and continue to meet the needs of enterprises and the community. Where if anywhere would program change be needed to achieve this?

The aim of the evaluation was to identify the changes required to manage the increased demand for work placements more effectively and improve the quality of the work placement service delivered and employer satisfaction with it. This would then result in increased employer participation in vocational work placement programs; and achieve government policy objectives for students participating in work placement to assist their successful transition from school to further training and sustainable work.

It was foreseen that the research would not only result in improvements to the work placement service; and increase employer participation and increase work placement opportunities for students but it would in turn improve Workplace Learning (WLMW) staff morale and their relationships with clients. The study examined the partnership between Workplace Learning and enterprises that would result in the development of a better practice model for the delivery of work placement programs. The study would also contribute to the development of a new innovative framework for vocational work placement programs. This framework would support education and enterprise partnerships and assist to further integrate school and workplace practices and training.

The first section of this study provides a summary of findings from current literature on learning in the workplace and work placement for Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs and relates these back to the findings and key messages identified in the study. The second section provides a report of the results of the 122 surveys received from host enterprises, and an analysis of the data that contributed to the development of recommendations for Workplace Learning (WLMW) program improvement.

## **Research Methodology**

The main focus of the research was an evaluation of WLMW work placement service to employers that was undertaken in 2004 to center on program change and improvement (Owen & Rogers, 1999). Owen and Rogers (1999) confirm the validity of the Interactive Evaluation model and recommend it as an ideal evaluation method to provide information about program improvement. Thus the Form of evaluation selected was Interactive evaluation previously known as Process evaluation (Owen & Rogers, 1999). Interactive evaluation is usually undertaken by those responsible for program delivery and assumes that those at the local level develop expertise and can create effective solutions to deal with local problems (Owen & Rogers, 1999). This problem solving perspective enables organisations to develop a learning culture that integrates evaluation into the day-to-day processes and systematically examine what they do and how they might become more effective and efficient (Owen & Rogers, 1999). Interactive evaluation is consistent with action research that has its genesis in the workplace, is carried out by workplace staff and provides information for improved performance in the workplace (Owen & Rogers, 1999).

Interactive evaluation includes an action research approach as it occurs during program delivery, gives the evaluator information and relevant knowledge for decision making orientated towards improving the program, and findings can then be directed at those responsible for delivering the program (Owen & Rogers, 1999). As a WLMW staff member and researcher I developed the key evaluation instrument; a self-administered survey questionnaire. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix 1. I was the internal evaluator who worked closely with the primary audience, the key WLMW program staff. As a staff member of WLMW and evaluator of the program there may have been an apparent conflict of interest (Owen & Rogers, 1999). To overcome this

perception, all stakeholders were informed of and made aware of this apparent conflict of interest (Owen & Rogers, 1999).

The research utilized four different but complementary sources of information. The key research method for the project was the survey questionnaire completed by enterprises that hosted work placement students for WLMW in 2004. The survey questions were designed to ascertain satisfaction with the level of performance in the delivery of a quality work placement service and to identify ways to improve it.

Secondly a comprehensive critical literatures review into previous research into VET in schools, vocational education and SWL work placement programs and youth transition policy that highlighted the key issues and themes was carried out. Survey questions were designed to reflect the issues and themes identified in the literature combined with informal information gathered by WLMW staff in their daily interactions with employers. Thirdly a detailed analysis of existing data from statistical reports submitted to DEST twice a year and fourthly a detailed analysis of WLMW enterprise feedback Evaluation Forms were used to establish the statistical background. All information was then analysed, summarised and synthesised into the key findings and recommendations.

## **Survey**

The survey questionnaire was composed of three parts and three types of items (questions). Part one consisted of Multiple-Choice and Yes/No type items (tick the most appropriate box) and short written response items. The enterprises were asked if they wanted to continue to host students, if the work placement service benefited them and their reasons for hosting work placement students. They were also asked what fundamentals students should bring to the workplace and whether they considered students were prepared

for work placement. A description of the size and type of enterprise and what industry area they belonged to was also sought. The questionnaire asked enterprises whether increasing demand for work placements and additional paperwork was affecting them, did they prefer coordinated single point enterprise contact and did they need further information, support and visits from WLMW and the schools. They were asked what pattern and duration of work placement they preferred, the number of students they were prepared to host each year, their recommendations for program improvement and if they offered employment to work placement students or employed apprentices and trainees. Parts two and three of the survey consisted of Likert-type items. Likert-type items are typically a five-point scale but some research designs prefer an even number of possible responses so that there is no midpoint in the scale (Lemke, 2004). In this case, the respondents were asked to make a choice that leaned either to agree or disagree (Lemke, 2004). This was used, as a basis for the design of the 10-point Likert-type items included in the survey. Enterprises were asked to rate the *effectiveness*, and *importance* of the work placement service on a Likert scale of 1 to 10, with 1 low, 10 high. A score of 1 to 2.5 represented the lowest score, indicating a very poor result. The second lowest quartile of 2.6 to 5 also represented a low score and an unsatisfactory result. A quartile score of 5.1 to 7.5 indicated a more positive or good outcome and a score of 7.6 to 10, the highest quartile, was the best possible result and considered a very good outcome.

The survey was pretested on a small number of people from a small group of stakeholders in order to uncover ambiguous questions and other potential problems. In response to stakeholder feedback about the length of the survey, the numbers of questions in the survey were reduced to fit to a double-sided A4 page. Enterprises were selected for participation in the survey on the basis of their participation in the WLMW work placement program. Once enterprises were recruited to participate in the program they were recorded on

the database (Activ8 Pathways 7.1) and listed on the WLMW web site [www.wlmw.net](http://www.wlmw.net). At the time the survey was sent out WLMW had about 400 participating enterprises listed on the database. The pretested survey was sent by mail in August 2004 to the contact person responsible for work placement at each enterprise. They were mailed to the 432 participating enterprises and they answered the questions and returned the surveys directly to the researchers' office at Newport Campus of Victoria University. A total of 122 useable surveys were returned which indicated an acceptable response rate of about one quarter (25 percent). The responses were entered onto a spreadsheet and analysed using percentages, means, medians and standard deviations.

The reasonable response rate and the industry areas respondents represented compared with information known about work placement programs nationally increased the chance of the sample being representative. The study can be used to make observations and suggest trends and can be viewed as an indicative study giving a general profile of what participating enterprises thought of the quality of the WLMW work placement service.

## **Evaluation**

In 2004 enterprise feedback for WLMW was sought via Evaluation Forms (see Appendix 8) that were routinely mailed to each participating enterprise together with the letter of confirmation of a booked work placement including WLMW contact details and a copy of the Evaluation Form. Just over one quarter, 126 enterprises, that hosted work placement students completed and returned Evaluation Forms in 2004, which was an acceptable response rate of 25 percent.

The completed and returned evaluation forms also provided WLMW with feedback from enterprises on how they rated the WLMW work placement service. Enterprises provided feedback on the quality of WLMW service to

them and the support provided by schools, and whether the enterprise was interested in employing an apprentice or trainee. It also provided feedback on student performance and attendance, including nomination for the Western Metropolitan Region (WMR) Education and Industry Awards. The evaluation forms were also examined and summarised and included in the report as the data was found to complement and confirm the findings of the survey data.

## **Analysing and interpreting data**

To strengthen the credibility and usefulness of the evaluation results, multiple evaluation data collection methods both quantitative and qualitative were used. The summary data was used as the basis for the responses and the preparation of a set of recommendations on program improvement.

For multiple-choice items, the research reported on the number and percentage of people who marked each possible choice. The written response items were entered in tabular form and for each set of responses common elements were color-coded. The data generated was then synthesized and used to detect broad themes and emergent trends on employer perceptions of the work placement service (see Appendix 2).

For the Likert-type items descriptive statistics were used medians, means, standard deviations and frequencies/percentages by category (Clason & Dormody, 2004). The advantage of frequencies/percentages by category is that it provides more specific insight. For example, one item may reveal 50 percent response at each end of the scale compared to 10 percent response in each of the ten categories of the scale. Both groups may both have the same mean but the summarised percentages may provide more meaningful information (Clason & Dormody, 2004).

The numerical data was entered onto a spreadsheet then frequencies and percentages were calculated. Simple measures of central tendency, means, standard deviations and medians for ratings of *effectiveness* and *importance* of the work placement service were calculated and the shifts in means and medians for each item was determined by calculating the difference between the *effectiveness* and *importance* ratings (McLeod et al, 1998).

Qualitative information provides an insight into the enterprise's staff thoughts and feelings and gives program staff members a real understanding of the work placement service from an enterprise and employer's perspective. Feedback from the survey questionnaire and evaluation forms will help staff build on these collective understandings, and better connect with the enterprises, teachers and students involved in the program. This may result in improved staff interactions and improve relationships with enterprises, teachers and students because it has generated new knowledge and understanding about them.

## **Literature Review**

This section of the research examines the existing body of work in the field, focusing on the provision of quality work placement services to enterprises and the vocational students they support. Key issues and themes were identified and innovative and best practice models reviewed. These issues and themes were incorporated into the survey questionnaire used to evaluate the quality of the service provided to participating enterprises, they were also considered in the development of strategies and recommendations for improving the quality of the work placement services.

### **The quality of the WLMW service to employers**

In 1997, The Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and formerly through the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) and the Enterprise Career Education Foundation (ECEF), commenced funding the now Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) including Victoria University's Workplace Learning Melbourne West (WLMW) to help establish and promote VET in Schools and coordinate work placements (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training 2004). From 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003 the former ECEF bureaucracy that had oversight of the Local Community Partnership programs was absorbed within DEST to reduce costs and service replication and improve program quality and management (HR-SCET 2004).

In 2005 DEST funded 216 Local Community Partnerships across Australia. Thirty-one LCPs including WLMW were located in Victoria and formed the Victorian Local Community Partnerships (VLCs), formerly the Victorian Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) VET Cluster Organisation (VAVCO) a network of Victorian LCPs that supported each other and worked cooperatively to promote quality work placement service standards.

*Guidelines for Structured Workplace Learning programmes 1st January 2005 to 1<sup>st</sup> December* was introduced by DEST (2004) to improve the delivery and coordination of work placement services. These DEST (2004) *Guidelines* stated that the main objectives of Local Community Partnerships was to provide students with workplace experiences and opportunities to participate in Structure Workplace Learning work placements to gain employability and technical industry specific skills. Work placement was designed to increase work readiness and assist students to make a more successful transition from school to further training and sustainable employment. The main aims of the Local Community Partnerships outlined by DEST (2004) in the *Guidelines* were to enhance the quality of the service provided, increase enterprise and student participation in work placement and to ensure students with special needs and those most at risk of leaving school were included and supported to participate in the programs.

The quality requirements that Local Community Partnerships were expected to comply with were described in the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* as six quality principles. The six quality principles included the maintenance of effective organizational arrangements to ensure efficient coordination of student work placements, the development of industry education partnerships, and the development of documentation that clearly explained the roles and responsibilities expected between the Local Community Partnerships and each partner organisation (DEST 2004).

Quality compliance required Local Community Partnerships to establish strong relationships with stakeholders, and have a range of groups represented on the management committee, including representatives from enterprises and industry, schools, professional career advisors and career associations, Youth Pathways Providers, parents and young people (aged 13-19 years) (DEST 2004). Other management committee members could also be drawn from

those working to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people in their region that would include Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs), Group Training Organisation, (GTOs) and School-based New Apprenticeship (SBNA) program, Jobs Pathway Program (JPP), Managed Individual Pathways (MIP) coordinators, Beacon No Dole program, Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) Pilot, Leaders in Careers project, Career Planning Program, Job Placement Employment and Training Program (JPET) and Area Consultative Committees (ACC) (DEST 2004). DEST encouraged collaboration with these agencies to reduce duplication and assist Local Community Partnerships to gain knowledge of local education, training and employment opportunities to assist young people's transition to work in a more coordinated and effective manner (DEST 2004).

Local Community Partnerships were also required to manage the demand for work placements sensitively to ensure individual enterprise requirements were considered and responded to, and to deliver induction programs and support work readiness preparation, ensure student occupational health and safety training had taken place and ensure suitable students and enterprises were well matched (DEST 2004). Induction programs raised awareness of work placement responsibilities, assisted with work readiness and ensured students and enterprises were better equipped to complete a successful placement (DEST 2004). Local Community Partnerships were also to provide students with the opportunity to select work placements they preferred and if students had not been found a placement Local Community Partnerships were required to inform schools of this in a timely manner to ensure these students were provided with alternative arrangements and other appropriate support (DEST 2004).

Local Community Partnerships were required to recruit enterprises that offered students a range of tasks related to vocational learning to enable them to achieve technical competencies and employability skills that could be assessed in the workplace. They were also required to monitor work placement progress, provide support to students and enterprises during placement and manage the duration and pattern of placements for both schools and enterprises (DEST 2004).

In summary providing quality Structured Workplace Learning work placements services as required by DEST (2004) included ensuring students and enterprises were contacted or visited during work placement by the school; checking work placement progress by phone and discussing placement progress with the student and enterprise to resolve any issues that arose by the Local Community Partnership; provision of a 'Certificate of Appreciation' to enterprises that hosted work placement students and a 'Certificate of Participation' issued to students on completion of work placement by the Local Community Partnership; developing and implementing program evaluation feedback forms to gauge enterprise, school, student, and teacher satisfaction with the program and to identify barriers and implement strategies to overcome problems identified.

Victoria University had a *Quality Framework* that detailed its approach to quality assurance that could assist WLMW to improve the quality of its service delivery (Victoria University 2003). The DEST (2004) *Guidelines* quality requirements, a review of the literature on quality advice and innovative and best practice models for delivery of work placement programs, informal consultation with enterprises and WLMW staff and formal feedback from stakeholders all contributed to the recommendations developed for program improvement and the for the implementation of quality services by the WLMW program.

Many policy papers and reports recommended the improvement of partnership quality process and procedures. Recommendations to upgrade transition services by the Business Council of Australia (BCA) and the Düsseldorf Skills Forum (DSF) in the report *Increasing participation in education and training* (2005) focused on improvement of quality assurance, access and coverage of vocational education and Structured Workplace Learning in schools (DSF 2005). The *ANTA MINCO Action Plan Project* (2003) identified innovative service delivery models for Structured Workplace Learning work placement programs and recommended that a range of nationally consistent approaches be adopted to improve the quality, relevance and credibility of the programs (Taylor 2005). Taylor (2005) summarised his recommendations in the presentation *Quality of Structured Workplace Learning* and advised that the six quality principles outlined in the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* should be adopted and that knowledge and implementation of innovative best practice models must be shared to improve the quality of program service nationally (Taylor 2005). Taylor noted that work placement programs often had inconsistent and shallow arrangements for assessment in the workplace, for monitoring students in the workplace and for providing feedback from program participants (Taylor 2005). These types of quality issues were also identified in this research and agreed with Taylor's findings and therefore underpin the final recommendations. These recommendations include improved monitoring of students and enterprises during the progress of work placement and improving feedback forms to identify gaps in service and better respond to the needs of participating enterprises and students.

### **Government policy initiatives for Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

Vocational training played an important role within secondary schools in the 1960s and in the national post-school system of vocational education in the

1970s. It helped young people in Year 10 or 11 to consider different pathways to employment, apprenticeships, vocational training, or university study (HR-SCET 2004). There was less emphasis on vocational education and training in schools in the 1980s and technical schools were closed and secondary schooling focused on student academic outcomes. Increased awareness of the need for a more skilled workforce and the value of completing secondary school and attaining further qualifications did not prevent national retention rates from falling in the early 1990s (HR-SCET 2004). It was higher youth unemployment, the goal of increasing school retention rates to Year 12 and variable numbers of apprentices in training that resulted in a renewed focus on vocational education in the late 1990s. In 1992 the Australian government established Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) (now absorbed by DEST), a national system of VET with input from industry. In the late 1990s saw the introduction of New Apprenticeships, the establishment of the National Training Framework (NTF), the introduction of VET in Schools (VETiS) and the development of Training Packages. Since 2000 the national VET system continued to respond to industry and community needs. In a rapidly changing global work and social environment, improvement must be continuous and the VET system will continue to change to equip Australians for the future (Smith & Keating 2003).

The Training costs review committee, 1991, encouraged an open training market and the need to establish diversity and competition in the training market. The national government came to the conclusion that training was too provider driven and that it was necessary to make the system more client or industry driven (Smith and Keating 2003). Considerable activity at the national level from the 1990s moved VET from a post-school option to encouraging vocational education in schools as a key element in education that supported the broadening of the curriculum, from the narrow academic focus that provided for 30 percent of students that wanted to go on to

university, and to offer valuable alternative vocational pathways to the other 70 percent of students (HR-SCET 2004). To address this need, in 1996 VET subjects and qualifications were introduced into secondary schools as VCE VET programs (Department of Education, 1999). There was a vocationalisation of senior secondary school education with the funding of policies that emphasized VET in Schools, schools becoming Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to deliver the VET training, VET in TAFE, and increasing industry involvement in work experience, New apprenticeships and traineeships and School-based apprenticeships for senior secondary students (Security for Women 2004).

In 1999 *The Adelaide Declaration on national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century* was endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) and announced that students should develop an awareness of VET and career options, experience workplaces and develop employability skills, by the time they left school (DEST 2005). The Prime Ministers Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce 2001 report *Footprints to the future*, promoted an Australia-wide approach to career and transition support for young people, driven by local partnerships with schools, the community and business (DEST 2005). Some key elements for improving transition outcomes for youth in the VET sector included the establishment of organized vocational qualifications pathways, well organized pathways to connect initial education with work and further study, and school to work initiatives to strengthen the relationship between schools and enterprises to combine learning with workplace experience (DEST 2004). The main objectives of VET were to provide education and training for work, industry specific skills enhance generic employability skills and improve training and employment outcomes (HR-SCET 2004). Other important benefits of VET and workplace training included increased student self-

esteem and motivation, broadened curriculum options and the addition of a pathway for students not intending to go to university (Kelloch 2002).

The implementation of the *New Framework for vocational education in schools* in 2001 announced a reshaping of vocational education in schools nationally through to 2004 (Spring 2002). In January 2001 the *Framework* was endorsed by all education and training Ministers to help ensure all young people could have access to learning pathways and be able to participate in VET (Spring 2002). There was a broadening of the agenda in July 2002 when the subcommittee of MCEETYA on Young People's Transitions developed *Stepping forward – improving pathways for all young people*, and the Taskforce on Transition from School developed an action plan for young peoples successful transition to working life with a focus on those most at risk (HR-SCET 2004). Group Training Australia (GTA) was also funded by DEST to support the implementation of the *Framework* (Turner 2004). Group Training Australia oversees 180 Group Training Organisations (GTOs) that currently employ about 40 000 apprentices and trainees. They manage and monitor training in the workplace and provide ongoing employment and support for the apprentice or trainee (Turner 2004).

In June 2003 Ministers responsible for VET endorsed the *National strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004 – 2010 shaping our future*. Its major objectives were to continue to work in partnership with industry, to improve the quality of VET and make learning pathways seamless for young people, so that employers had greater confidence in VET qualifications (Australian National Training Authority n.d.). The *Career Services in Australia: supporting people's transitions across the lifespan* (2002) report and the OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies: *Australia Country Note* (2002) both identified the need to improve specialized career education training for career practitioners to enable them to assist youth to make a more

successful transition (DEST 2005). The School and Transitions Services Framework further developed the *Stepping Forward* strategy and promoted a community partnership approach that would deliver professional advice to young people supported by industry that connected education with career choices and employment at the local level (DEST 2005). An inquiry into VET in schools, *Learning to Work*, HR-SCET (2004) found that helpful career education for students was central to their future success. The Australian Government then announced new investment in School-based apprenticeships through Australian Technical Colleges (ACTs), pre vocational and VET in schools programs (DSF 2005).

*The Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisors, (ANICA) Directions Paper* (2005) outlined the more recent Australian Government initiative and laid out a strategy that aimed to provide career and transition support and bring together young people, parents and schools, career advisors and local industry to maximize training and employment opportunities. Students will be encouraged to complete year 12 or a vocational course and be encouraged to participate in Structured Workplace Learning work placement in industry and have access to professional career guidance (DEST 2005). DEST also funded two industry-networks, the *National Industry Career Specialists* (NICS) network to provide industry specific career information and resources to a national network of *Regional Industry Careers Advisors* (RICAs) that would work with the Local Community Partnerships to support young people with industry career information, resources and services (DEST 2005). The RICAs were established to work with businesses to increase industry links with Local Community Partnerships and schools (DEST 2005). Increased industry and community involvement aimed to ensure that the skills taught to students would match those required by local businesses (DEST 2005).

Regional Industry Careers Advisors (RICAs) role would be to ensure that industry-based career advice was widely available to Local Community Partnerships, employers and schools in their region and supported the broader implementation of Adopt a School Programs (DEST 2005). Specifically the role of the network of RICAs would be to: identify and promote pathways, particularly in skills needs areas; promote employability skills; promote and disseminate up to date industry labor market information, industry career information, advice and resources, increase employer participation in work placement and School-based apprenticeships; promote industry teacher assistance programs for vocational education and VET in schools delivery; and facilitate more employer participation (DEST 2005).

In recent years, many new initiatives designed to improve youth transitions were also introduced in Victoria and the Kirby's review (2000) promoted a renewed focus on youth transition issues (DEST 2004). The Victorian Government's response to the Kirby Review included the *New Goals for Post Compulsory Education and Training in Victoria* (Department of Employment Education and Training 2002). This was announced by the Premier and has resulted in the establishment of the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC) and the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and further funding for School-based New Apprenticeships (DEET 2002).

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) were introduced to create local networks of people with an interest in improving education, training and employment outcomes for young people (VLESC 2003). The main objective of the LLENs was to establish new relationships between all groups supporting young people in the community to tailor opportunities and better respond to needs of youth at the local and regional level (DEET 2002). Students who achieve year 12 enjoy a much more successful transition to

training and employment and the importance for young people of completing an initial qualification has been acknowledged by the Victorian Government (OTTE 2006). They have committed to a target of 90 percent of young people attaining year 12 or its equivalent by 2010 by expanding VET in Schools and VCAL provision. They have also guaranteed places at government schools and provided free instruction for students less than 20 years of age at TAFE to the end of year 12. The Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T) also aims to compile and distribute useful and relevant information about labor market trends including emerging skill needs and shortages to careers advisors and training providers on a statewide basis (OTTE 2006).

Australia needs to consider demographic changes as the population ages and impacts on economic growth (DSF 2005). The DSF (2005) report *Increasing participation in education and training: key policy steps*, identified three main policy areas for further development: youth, migration and older workers, to ensure there was increased productivity and participation in the labor force. They believed that education and workforce participation were critical for future economic growth and recommended that there should be a focus on youth, that young people should stay at school to complete year 12, or its vocational equivalent, as this will assist them to get the start they needed to sustain their careers (DSF 2005). They believe that increased investment in education and training of young people has the benefit of improving the number of future workers that will be a critical contribution to participation in the workforce and productivity in Australia (DSF 2005).

Buchanan and Hall (2004) identified a gap between employers' skill demands and workers' interests/ aspirations that also requires consideration. In the report *Beyond flexibility: skills and work in the future* Buchanan et al (2001) recommended extending skills policy beyond its focus on the supply of skills and to also consider the demand for and use of skills. *Beyond flexibility*

proposed the 'skill ecosystem' concept to explain the emerging relationship between skills and work as an alternative framework for skills policy. The report suggested that using skill ecosystems as the focus for skills policy would encourage consideration of both skills demand and supply, and of the relationship between firms, regulators, institutions and labor markets. The skills ecosystem project was developed for the NSW racing industry and illustrated the concept of a classic low wage, low skills ecosystem. Employers complained of unskilled track work riders and imported labor on temporary visas. There was casual employment, little training for entry level employees, no real career paths, health and safety issues and fewer applicants seeking jobs in the industry. The industry association worked with the racing clubs, the unions and training bodies to implement a skill ecosystem project and two regional clubs agreed to trial track work riders as permanent part-time employees of the clubs. An industry HR and training expert worked with the clubs for six months and introduced a range of good practices including better recruitment approaches, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity principles, induction training, career development and good mentoring practices. The industrial parties have agreed to more flexible industrial arrangements to accommodate multi-skilled workers who can also access jobs in hospitality or grounds maintenance to expand their employment, skills and earnings and qualifications (Loble 2005).

The Düsseldorf Skills Forum (2005) has recommended that the Australian Government and the States and Territories come to an agreement on transition policy to avoid the confusing duplication, pilots, gaps and patchy policy that exists and to ensure that in the future resources are pooled and integrated to target youth that are most at risk of being unemployed. An important challenge that remains for all levels of government is the need for cooperation to reduce the current duplication of transition initiatives and to improve

coordination and integration at the local level to ensure more young people are supported effectively (DSF 2005).

### **VET in Schools, VCAL and work placement**

About 95 percent of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the 1990s were provided in institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) (Marks, MacMillan & Ainley 2001). Courses included a range of vocational training from entry-level employment preparation, to trades, through to advanced vocational and professional courses and recreational programs (Marks et al 2001). In 1995 VET was expanded to include a variety of secondary school and post compulsory education and training programs delivered in schools, private industry and community organisations (VCAA 2005). VET programs included employment-focused curriculum that concentrated on keeping young people engaged in education and developing skills for the workforce and helping to equip secondary students to make a successful transition to the workplace (Kane & Warton, 2002). Tyler's report *Building relationships: making education work, a report on the perspectives of young people*, (2001) identified some of the reasons why young people disengaged and disconnected from school that included subject choice and content and the importance of having subjects that led to career pathways and were useful for life after school. Other reasons were that young people left school to get a job or apprenticeship, to earn their own money and because they did not like school or their teachers had advised them to leave (Marks et al 2001). One of the keys to raising Year 12 completion rates was to provide wider curriculum choice to allow more young people to develop personal and vocational interests (Sweet, 2002).

Victoria has two secondary qualifications which include Vocational Education and Training (VET). VET in Schools also known as VCE VET programs are vocational certificates approved by the VCAA and fully integrated within the

Victorian Certificate in Education (VCE) (VCAA 2005). They lead to nationally recognised qualifications, thereby offering students the opportunity to gain year 12, the VCE and a national vocational education and training (VET) certificate (VCAA 2005). The certificates are endorsed for recognition in the VCE by the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) and are issued under the National Training Framework (NTF) (VCAA 2005). Previously the VCE was school curriculum only and designed primarily to prepare students for academic learning and tertiary education; however, not every young person wanted to go to university (Office of Tertiary Training and Education 2003).

The award of a nationally recognised training credential, transferable across Australia, was developed to ensure that employers recognised VCE VET programs as having the same status as VET credentials delivered at TAFE (VCAA 2005). The intention of VCE VET programs was to provide students with a qualification that meets the expectations of industry (Department of Education 1999). The social benefits of VET qualifications include reduced absenteeism, improved student maturity, motivation for learning and better understanding of career options (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2005). Expanding VET in Schools options for year 10 students was also seen as a key step to further improving student engagement and year 12 retention rates (OTTE 2006). Even with improved access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) and the resulting improvement to retention rates alarm bells should continue to ring out as Australia still experiences a high rate of non completions and only 80% of students currently stay on to complete senior secondary studies and complete year 12 at school or TAFE (DSF 2005).

Vocational students have been typically male; English speaking from low socio economic backgrounds, with low achievement levels in literacy and

numeracy, and more likely to be school non-completers from government or catholic schools with most from rural areas (Marks et al 2001). The Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) was introduced in Victoria as a practical hands-on option for year 11 and 12 students that also made use of workplace learning as a feature of the curriculum (VCAA 2005). The VCAL formalised existing vocational training and good practice at secondary school to extend pathways for young people to find work, or further training as apprentices and trainees (OTTE 2003). The VCAL was developed for students that wanted to develop confidence and practical work related skills by completing a mix of VCAL subjects, VCE subjects and VET programs. The program includes literacy and numeracy, industry specific VET units, work related skills and personal development. But VCAL was often perceived by the school community as an easier option for students with low achievement to take up but this was not the original intention (A Mitchell, Pers Comms. 2005). The intention was that VCAL would be integrated with mainstream curriculum to provide broad student access to the program and be delivered to students who wanted to enter the trades or gain hands on experience in project development and running businesses like the girls at Mt St Josephs College in Altona (A Mitchell, Pers Comms. 2005).

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement is a component of VET in Schools program and is situated in a real or simulated workplace where supervised learning activities contribute to an assessment of competency and qualifications (DEST 2005; NCVET 2005).

There has been considerable debate on whether work placements should be mandated; work placements are mandatory in only two states New South Wales and Tasmania (HR-SCET 2004; VCAA 2005). The Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) recommended that Structured Workplace Learning work placement was an appropriate and valuable

component of VET programs that are an integral, sometimes compulsory part of many VET programs in Victoria and may take place in a workplace or simulated workplace (VCAA 2005). Most VCE VET programs provide Certificate II qualifications in combination with the VCE or VCAL although certificates at other levels, Certificates III and IV, are also provided (VCAA 2005). In the VCE VET program booklets, work readiness and the standards of performance required in the workplace, are explained as being important aspects of program delivery (VCAA 2005). Where suitable work placements were not available, students had the opportunity to develop work related skills through practical activities and projects that usually occurred in industry within the training institution, TAFE, school or Skill Centre where purpose built workshops or other facilities simulated the workplace (DEST 2005; VCAA 2005). Secondary College Skill Centers aim to replicate real workplaces and provide simulated work experiences and ideally have industry standard equipment, commercial operating environments and thorough assessment strategies in place (DEST 2005). But many parents and teachers acknowledge the benefits of Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement and expect that it will be an option in the final years of schooling (Kelloch 2002). Industry strongly emphasizes the importance of gaining experience in the workplace and advocates the benefits of school-industry partnerships and has expressed greater confidence in qualifications gained through successful completion of vocational training that incorporates workplace experience (DEST 2004<sub>1</sub>; VCAA 2005). In recent consultations Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) (2006) concluded that students in Victoria had only a limited access to Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement in their area of study and therefore recommended that serious consideration be given to prioritizing work placement opportunities and providing work placements only in areas of skill shortages. They also recommended that in the longer term the sequence of VET

units should be designed to ensure on-the-job experience was not essential as part of VET in Schools or VET in TAFE, VCE VET programs (OTTE 2006).

### **Context: Western Metropolitan Region (WMR)**

The transition through education to working life is probably the most important and difficult transition young people will experience and has gained the attention and concern of policy makers (Spring 2002). From existing research we know that this transition from school to adulthood is hazardous for many students (Sweet 2002). Research indicates that if young people do not make a successful transition from initial education to training and sustainable employment they continue to be disadvantaged both socially and financially (VLESC 2003). Barriers encountered to successful transition include the changing nature of work, and the downsized, outsourced and digitized nature of today's workplace (Spring, 2002). It has been well established both in Australia and overseas that students who complete the final years of schooling experience less unemployment and are less dependent on a buoyant economic climate than non completers and that university qualifications are generally associated with higher incomes (Marks et al 2001). Australian school completion rates are comparatively low and teenage unemployment is worse than the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average (Sweet, 2002).

Australian student's skill levels in literacy, mathematics and science was found to be high by international standards but their skills and performance has not improved in the past 30 years (Marks et al 2001). There are a number of strong arguments to further increase the achievement levels of Australian students as poor literacy and numeracy skills are strong risk factors for unsuccessful transition to work and are an even stronger risk factor than economic disadvantage. Ability in literacy and numeracy was found to be the most powerful influence on a range of educational and labor market outcomes

including early school leaving, and participation in higher education and unemployment (Marks et al 2001). Following the Finn review of post-compulsory education and training in 1991 young people have increasingly been encouraged to complete Year 12 or vocational training and as a result the number of students completing Year 12 has risen markedly (HR-SCET 2004).

The Business Council of Australia (BCA) and the Düsseldorf Skills Forum (2004) note that there is a striking parallel between educational attainment and employment of the 14 percent of teenagers in Australia not in further training or work in 2004, over 60 percent were early school leavers. In 2004 of the young people aged 20 to 24, 33 percent of year 11 completers, 40 percent of year 10 completers, 50 percent of year 9 completers and as high as 65 percent of year 8 or below were not in training or work. Although completion of year 12 or an apprenticeship was not a guarantee for economic security and success it improved outcomes significantly and only 16 percent of year 12 completers were not in training or employment (DSF 2005). Early school leavers are in greater jeopardy of unemployment, underemployment, insecure employment and ill health (DSF 2004).

Those young people who leave school early are at risk of experiencing higher levels of unemployment, and often end up in low skilled jobs with low incomes (Tresize-Brown 2004). The key challenge is to improve transition outcomes for the most at risk, and focus on the needs of those who leave school before the end of Year 12 (Sweet, 2002). *On Track* (2004) is the Victorian Governments destination survey of Year 12 completers and early school leavers and it provides Local Learning and Employment Networks, (LLENs) schools and Victoria University with a summary of the circumstances of young people in the Western Metropolitan Region. *The Western Region on track survey summary data* (2004) identified some of the

issues that young people face and how the region might respond (Polesel, Teese & Mason 2004).

In Victoria, in the Wyndham Hobson's Bay (Wyn Bay) LLEN area, 75 percent of Year 12 completers go on to further training, 20 percent go to work and five percent are unemployed (Polesel et al 2004). But each year, over 400 or about 30 percent of young people do not complete Year 12, VCE or VCAL and this number has remained steady for the last three years. Half of these young people leave in Year 11, 35 percent leave in Year 10, most of the remainder, 15 percent leave in Year 12 and 60 percent of the early school leavers are boys. These early school leavers have poor outcomes compared to the rest of Victoria. The unemployment rate for early school leavers in Victoria is at about 19 percent, but in the western region of Melbourne the rate is much higher as 32 percent of early school leavers are unemployed in the Wyndham Bayside (Wyn Bay) LLEN area (Polesel et al 2004).

Participation of early school leavers in VET in Victoria and in the Melton Brimbank (BM) LLEN and the Maribyrnong Moonee Valley (MMV) LLEN areas were at 22 percent, and as low as 14 percent in Wyn Bay LLEN area. Vocational programs like VCE VET, VCAL and School-based apprenticeships are all part of the effort to keep young people at school and improve their training and employment outcomes (Polesel et al 2004). The shortage of TAFE places for local students at Victoria University in the Wyndham, Hobson's Bay, Melton and Brimbank areas of the western region of Melbourne remains a challenge to the local community and negatively impacts on the positive training and employment outcomes of local youth. It has been found that enterprises that host Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement students often select them as employees, apprentices and trainees (Smith & Wilson 2002). WLMW will continue to promote VCE VET, VCAL, Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement and

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships to schools and enterprises and endeavor to provide them with the necessary support to ensure there are positive education and employment outcomes for local students.

Barriers to implementing recognised VET subjects and courses as part of the senior secondary certificate in the western region of Melbourne are similar to other regions and include limited access to TAFE places, the cost of buying in provision from a recognised training provider, the cost of training teachers to meet Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), adequacy of facilities to deliver VET within schools, apparent inflexibility of timetabling in schools, the quality of learning within schools questioned by TAFE and industry and the quality of learning in Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement questioned by the schools (NCVER 2005). Victoria University and Local Government organisations like the Melton Community Learning Board and its Community Learning Plan continues to work with the local secondary schools and Melton Brimbank LLEN to improve VET in schools delivery and work placement coordination across the west (S Wong, Pers Comms. 2005). Victoria University as a dual campus university has continued to share resources and deliver Vocational Education and Training (VET) and themed Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) programs, offer pre-apprenticeship programs, vocational tasters, and provide auspicing arrangements for other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) including local secondary schools. Victoria University has also actively developed pathways and bridges for senior secondary students into TAFE and Higher Education programs including the Certificate I in Vocational Education, creating well defined articulation pathways between TAFE and Higher Education, the pilot Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) to Higher Education program and the Portfolio Partnerships Program (PPP) that assists local students gain seamless access to the university. The university through active involvement in the Local Learning and Employment Networks

(LLENs) and a myriad of other community, industry, government, career and education organisations and networks continues to lobby for improved access to education and training for all young people in the Western Region of Melbourne and beyond. Victoria University promotes access and equity in its policy and approaches to ensure that vocational education and training (VET) is responsive to the diverse needs of all clients. Through the implementation of these policies and approaches, the benefits of participating in vocational education and training are available to everyone on an equitable basis, including: women where under-represented; people with disabilities; people from non-English speaking backgrounds; Indigenous Australians; and rural and remote learners. But as the demand for VET places outstrips supply Victoria University continues to struggle to meet the needs of the local community and to provide the skilled employees local industry requires.

### **Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and work placement**

Small enterprises provide employment for about 65 percent of young Australians and represent about 90 percent of all enterprises in Australia (Mulraney & Turner 2001). Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) host the majority of work placement students for Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) like WLMW throughout Australia (DEST 2004<sub>3</sub>). The Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) defines Small to Medium Enterprises as companies with 19 or fewer employees (OTTE 2003). DEST further divides enterprise size, the number of employees, into a four main groups, 'micro' with 5 or fewer employees, 'small' with 6 to 20 employees, 'medium' with 21 to 100 employees and 'large' with more than 100 employees (DEST 2004<sub>3</sub>). Therefore according to the DEST definitions Small to Medium Enterprises are those with 100 employees or less, when 'small' and 'medium' enterprises are combined.

Some of the difficulties encountered by Small to Medium Enterprises have been identified in the literature. In a study conducted by researcher's Little and Fallshaw (2003) *Small business needs and how they align with training in Victoria* found that most small businesses felt they had a voice in their community but did not have a voice with Government or within their industry. They also found that smaller businesses felt that government did not understand their needs and that there were no clear avenues for them to express them. Harris and Turner's (2002) key research into work placement found that the work placement model also presented some difficulties for small business. They found that the work placement model had been originally targeted at big business and that large enterprises usually had well developed training programs that did not usually apply to smaller enterprises. Harris and Turner (2002) also found that smaller business believed that the work placement model was constructed predominantly from an education perspective and did not reflect models of true partnership. Stakeholders reported that there was little shared understanding between schools and small businesses of what Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement was made up of and felt they were not informed generally about the nature of Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement (Harris & Turner 2002). Mulraney and Turner (2001) also identified a lack of understanding of the reforms associated Vocational Education and Training (VET) and understanding of Structure Workplace Learning (SWL), as key issues emerging from their research into small enterprises participating in work placement. Employers in the OTTE (2006) *Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training* indicated that VET was an incredibly hard product to purchase and understand and that employers generally found the training world to be confusing and that it was hard to source accurate information about training. Two main themes identified in this research were the need for easy to understand VET information for potential and current clients, and improved quality assurance (OTTE 2006). Enterprises participating in the WLMW work

placement program also acknowledged both informally and formally in surveys and evaluation forms that they had little understanding of the newer education initiatives and generally felt excluded from them.

### **Skills shortages**

The Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) system was developed for use in Australia and New Zealand for the production and analysis of industry statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005). The objective, when developing an industrial classification, was to identify groupings of businesses which carried out similar economic activities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005). Enterprises listed on the Local Community Partnership (LCP) Workplace Learning (WLMW) database were sorted into Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) industry groups, and summarised statistical data revealed that the ANZSIC groups best represented in the 2004 Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement program were from the Community Services and the Hospitality groups (DEST 2004<sub>4</sub>). The biggest growth in traineeships has been in the retail, hospitality and administration sectors where there has been only slow employment growth whereas the greatest employment growth has been in managerial, professional and trade skills areas (Morris 2006).

Data from DEST (2004<sub>5</sub>) has revealed areas of widespread skills shortages for automotive, electricians, and in the hospitality industry including chefs and cooks across Australia (DEST 2004<sub>5</sub>). Work placements organised by Workplace Learning (WLMW) at hospitality and community services enterprises were therefore helping to provide future employees for these industry groups but more work placement opportunities would be needed in areas of identified skills shortages. The building and construction and manufacturing industries were experiencing ongoing shortages particularly in the metal, engineering and cabinet making trades (OTTE 2006). While the

official measure of skill shortages (the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations index) indicated there were only isolated cases of skills shortages in Victoria, it was also noted that some employers were having difficulty in recruiting staff in the community, health, and financial services industry groups and in traditional trades particularly in the civil construction industry.

At the same time, there remained a significant proportion, an average of 20% unemployed young people nationally; who could be better utilised to satisfy the demand for labor if appropriate training and investment was provided (DSF 2005). A report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) identified Australia as third from the bottom in the developed world for funding the training of unemployed people (Urban 2006).

Vocational Education and Training (VET) and raising the skills profile of the population, particularly unemployed and underemployed young people, have been identified by the Dusseldorf Skills Forum (2005) as useful strategies for turning around the skills crisis that could constrain economic growth in Australia. A higher level of investment in Vocational Education and Training (VET) was recommended to ensure they had more access to skills training. Further investment in VET programs together with raising the profile of VET in Schools was also recommended to help meet some of the challenges associated with the current tight labor market. The Dusseldorf Skills Forum also recommended that more information about VET pathways into industries that offered future employment and increased access to VET training places should be provided to the community to help satisfy the demand for skilled labor and provide more job opportunities (DSF 2005; OTTE 2006).

The Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee (The Senate, Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee 2003) report *Bridging the skills divide* described

critical skill shortage areas and developed a set of recommendations that would further support the establishment of a national network of educators, industry and the community to help link VET providers more closely with industry (DE&T 2003; S-EWRERC 2003). The expanded role of Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) would be introduced to establish networks and identify areas of demand at the local level and match young people at school with current and potential employment markets and training (DEST 2004). The Australian Government's paper the *Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisor (ANICA) directions paper* (2005) required Local Community Partnerships like Workplace Learning (WLMW) to deliver three services in 2006, the two existing programs, Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement program and the Adopt a School Program (ASP) and introduce a new program the Career and Transition Support (CTS) Program.

Aligning VET with skill needs to achieve higher labor force participation and productivity also became the focus of the policy approach adopted by the Victorian State Government (OTTE 2006). The OTTE (2006) report noted that current VET in Schools participation was effective for schools but was not always effective for local industry needs, particularly in areas of skill shortage. The report revealed that up to 40% of VET in Schools enrolments were in industry groups of low priority including arts, entertainment, sport and recreation, tourism and computing. They concluded that they needed to offer a wider range of VET courses, available at an affordable cost that were relevant to local labor market requirements and job opportunities. They recommended that the government increase demand for VET in Schools by expanding VET in priority areas, providing good career advice about VET options, implementing the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and extending the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) program to include career and pathways planning in the year 7 to 10 curriculum (OTTE 2006).

Buchanan's (2005) research also offers inspiration to those hopeful of reducing unemployment and underemployment in the current tight labor market. Buchanan (2005) defined the problem of skills shortages as a shortage of decent jobs and his research makes an important contribution to the debate surrounding unemployment, underemployment and skills shortages. He recommends combining a diverse range of policy instruments across a wider range of portfolios to manage a diverse bundle of skill ecosystems as a better solution to current skills shortages than the band aid approach suggested by the Australian Government policy makers. He promotes a broad strategy that encourages the simultaneous development of businesses and the workforce. It requires better on-the-job training linked with Registered Training Organisations, creating better jobs, new forms of employment, and revitalised career paths. (Buchanan 2005).

Workplace Learning (WLMW) needs to promote VET training programs to local industries identified as experiencing skills shortages and link enterprises directly to VET students and people who require training and employment opportunities.

### **Additional paperwork**

Local Community Partnership (LCP) distribute a variety of vocational work placement paperwork that usually includes legal and insurance forms, log books and assessment criteria, and program evaluation feedback forms to gauge client satisfaction. Little and Fallshaw (2003) found that increasing demand for work placements and the additional paperwork required was a concern for some Small to Medium Enterprises participating in the programs. Kellock (2002) in his report *Six years on: a review of the use of SWL*, found that assessment requirements were seen as unnecessarily bureaucratic, complex and time consuming. There were also concerns regarding the variability in assessment practices and the consistency in reporting. In the

study by Harris and Turner (2002) *Think business transaction for SWL success* it was noted that no uniform mechanisms had been established to involve enterprises in student assessment and that they did not understand the difference between Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement and the assessment of competencies on-the-job compared to work experience requirements (Harris & Turner, 2002).

Assessment of units of competency or industry specific knowledge and skills in the workplace was considered to be an important part of achieving vocational qualifications. Although training and assessment in the workplace was considered ideal in Victoria, a flexible approach has been adopted to enable training and assessment to occur in a simulated workplace environment off-the-job that does not discriminate against people who do not have access to work placement on-the-job (Department of Education 1999).

Under the Australian Qualifications Training Framework (AQTF) the Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are the accredited organisations responsible for assessment and certification of training qualifications (VCAA 2005). The RTO is therefore in charge of all learning and assessment activities and the skills and knowledge gained by students in the workplace and assessment tasks are usually finalised at school or TAFE following short periods of work placement that may contribute to achieving competency (DEST 2005). A much more formal on-the-job assessment is required for apprentices and trainees. This is carried out by qualified assessors from the RTO who carry out work site visits to ensure apprentices gain industry specific skills in the workplace (Department of Education 1999).

It was also recommended that teachers responsible of industry-specific courses including those completing VET work placement programs should visit students in the workplace to monitor student performance and assist with any problems that may arise and keep the workplace supervisor informed

about assessment requirements (Misko 2000). In the Western Region of Melbourne some secondary schools were found to have carried out workplace visits while many others did not carry out visits for various reasons. Reasons included students were scheduled to attend VET work placement during the school holidays when teachers were not usually available, or that teachers were too busy and do not have the time or resources allocated to them to carry out workplace visits (M. Pateras, Pers Comms. 2004). Best practice was identified in schools when the secondary college was the RTO and the VET coordinator or teacher from the school visited the student in the workplace, and provided them with information on the way the work placement assessment would be conducted and recorded including a workplace log book. VCE VET work placement log books provided checklists for the candidate and the workplace supervisor in the work environment. The checklist was a record of all the assessment activities and competencies that were to be achieved on-site and were signed off by the workplace supervisor. This would assist the student to focus on what they should be learning in the workplace. The log book could be used as a supplementary source of evidence for the assessor and together with classroom assessment tasks could contribute to the overall achievement of competency and be part of a range of evidence gathered by the assessor (L. Gibson, Pers Comms. 2004).

The Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) granted a Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) credit for 100 hours of work related learning including work placement (VCAA 2005). Young people completing VCAL therefore had an opportunity to develop the skills that are important for participation in the workforce and achieve credit toward the VCAL by completing a work placement (VCAA 2005). Log books have also been developed to record VCAL student assessment in the workplace. The log books are completed as a record of student attendance, tasks practiced and skills learnt and may be signed and dated by the workplace supervisor. The

Wyn Bay Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) developed the 'Work Related Skills Student and Employer Log Books' for VCAL students to take to the workplace and are now widely disseminated and used throughout the Western Region of Melbourne (S. Condon, Pers Comms. 2003).

In the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* it was recommended that Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) consult with schools and training organisations to ensure that enterprises were informed of assessment processes, the industry competencies students were required to achieve in the workplace and promote the completion of log books. The quality requirements in the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* recommend that Local Community Partnerships recognise the school's role in supporting preparation and orientation to the workplace, providing training in occupational health and safety, and carrying out site visits to host enterprises. To measure overall program effectiveness Local Community Partnerships like WLMW were required to report to DEST the extent students and workplace supervisors were prepared for work placement, the appropriateness of the workplace, and if suitable occupational health and safety requirements were being met. Taylor (2005) established that the arrangements for workplace assessment were inconsistent and recommended the development of a national assessment resource. He also identified the need for improvement in the monitoring of students in the workplace and the need for improvement of the workplace experience for both employers and students. Monitoring student progress in the workplace was found to be inconsistent and of concern to both students and enterprises participating in the Workplace Learning (WLMW) VET work placement program in the Western Region. Site visits and assessment tasks were also found to be inconsistent and in need of improvement and better coordination. Documentation of the roles and responsibilities of the Local Community Partnerships, schools and enterprises participating in work placement needs to

be developed for monitoring student progress in the workplace and to ensure all students and supervisors understand and use log books for the assessment of industry and generic competencies on-the-job.

### **Legal requirements (Occupational Health and Safety)**

The occupational health and safety legislation and common law frameworks operate from the need to eliminate or avoid workplace injury, illness or death. State and territory occupational health and safety legislation sets out a structure for addressing the safety of workers and others who may be affected by activities at the workplace. These legal obligations require all stakeholders to exercise a 'duty of care' in relation to health and safety in the workplace. Enterprises, employers and schools have a 'duty of care' to provide a safe workplace for work placement students that cannot be delegated (Sofweb 2004). Work placement students attending secondary college in Victoria are covered for WorkCover insurance by the Department of Education and Training. Host employers are required to consent to and sign the Ministerial Order No. 23 Structured Workplace Learning Arrangement Form to cover the student's public liability insurance and ensure they undertake the required planning, induction and supervision to maintain a safe and healthy work environment for the student (VCAA 2005). The Structured Workplace Learning Arrangement Form states that employers must view their 'duty of care' toward students as no different from that owed to their employees (VCAA 2005). The Form also requires parent consent if the student participating in work placement is under 18 years (Sofweb 2004). The parent must sign consent and disclose personal details of any known medical condition that may affect their child and any medication or treatment that may be relevant to the enterprise (Sofweb 2003). The DEST (2004) *Guidelines* recommend that Local Community Partnerships maintain a database dedicated to employers who are prepared and able to receive students with special

needs. This includes students with a disability, indigenous students or those at risk of disengaging from education (DEST 2004). These special needs students may require additional and more intensive support from the school and the Local Community Partnership to ensure they are able to access and complete work placement (HR-SCET 2004).

In Victoria all work placement students enrolled at secondary college must complete accredited occupational health and safety training as prescribed in the VCE VET Certificate program booklets, relevant to the industry where they will be undertaking work placement prior to the commencement of the placement (DE&T 2003). The construction industry has developed specific occupational health and safety requirements and any students entering a building site are required to hold a red card or Foundations for Safety proof-of-training card or its equivalent (Work Safe 2004). VCAL students not enrolled in VCE VET modules are required to complete Safe@Work online occupational health and safety training and assessment prior to commencing placement (Sofweb 2004). Victorian students enrolled at TAFE institutes, universities, the Council of Adult Education (CAE) and community-based programs must also complete occupational health and safety training and are protected through WorkCover in accordance with Part 7 of the VET Act 1990 (OTTE 1997).

WLMW will continue to require authorization from schools to ensure schools have met their legal obligations that students have completed occupational health and safety training prior to attending work placement (VCAA 2005). As a Local Community Partnership (LCP) Workplace Learning (WLMW) also has a 'duty of care' to students when administering and managing the work placement program for them. WLMW responds to any concerns raised by the schools and students participating in work placement about particular workplaces and records this information on the database and contacts all

stakeholders that may be affected by any adverse reports. WLMW continues to monitor and review enterprise participation in the program in response to these concerns to ensure work placement students are safe at work.

### **The benefits of hosting placement students**

It has been noted in the literature that enterprises generally benefited from the contribution year 11 and 12 students made to the workplace (HR-SCET 2004; Mulraney & Turner 2001). Much of the information in the literature about the benefits of work placement falls into the “*enthusiastic*” category. The benefits of participation in education-industry partnerships are enthusiastically endorsed and promoted by DEST and the Australian Industry Group (AiG) (DEST 2004<sub>1</sub>). Industry and enterprises involved with schools are championed for their efforts. The benefits of hosting senior secondary students are promoted as enhancing corporate image, reputation and relationship with the community; and increasing employee morale and skill and developing a skilled and flexible workforce that will ensure more sustainable economic growth (DEST 2001).

Reasons cited for hosting work placement students were mainly altruistic and included providing youth with a 'first step' and contributing to their community (Malley, Frigo & Robinson 1999). Harris and Turner (2002) also found that whilst employers displayed considerable altruism in their reasons for hosting work placement students, they saw few benefits to small enterprise other than 'feel good' considerations. Other reasons included improving their reputation and increasing personal and staff satisfaction (Harris & Turner 2002). Other less altruistic reasons were to provide a future pool of skilled labor for the industry, a means of reducing the costs and turnover associated with newspaper and agency recruitment and to increase productivity (Malley et al 1999).

Another theme referred to the research literature was the additional cost to enterprises that participated in work placement (HR-SCET 2004). Some industry groups argued that incentives should be given to employers to encourage them to host more work placement students and recommended that further research on that possibility should be undertaken (HR-SCET 2004). But the valuable contribution that students make to the workplace, the mutual benefit gained by both the participating enterprise and student and the New Apprenticeship incentive package should be taken into account when further inducements are to be considered to encourage enterprises to host work placement students (HR-SCET 2004).

Smith and Dalton (2004) cited the need to broaden VET in Schools and work placement opportunities for students by developing strategies to encourage enterprises to participate in work placement programs. This included providing VET programs with more resources to enable Local Community Partnerships, like WLMW, to provide the adequate administrative support to place students and monitor placement progress for the benefit of enterprises and that would encourage them to continue to host work placement students.

### **Work readiness, preparing students for work placement**

Mulraney and Turner (2001) in their study *Learning from small enterprise structured work placement* found that students were generally well prepared for work placement and many employers praised the quality and contributions of students undertaking Structured Workplace learning (SWL) work placement. VET work placement programs assisted young people leaving school to gain a mix of job specific or technical skills and generic employment related skills (HR-SCET 2004). In the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) were required to provide students with access to workplaces and the opportunity to gain employability skills. Employability skills are described as the skills required to gain employment

and then to progress within an enterprise and contribute successfully to the enterprises strategic directions (ACCI 2002).

*The Employability skills framework* (2002) was developed by Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) and describes the skills employers looked for in workers to meet their current and future skills needs (ACCI 2002). Employability skills included communication, teamwork and problem solving skills, initiative and enterprise, planning and organizing, self-management, learning and technology skills as personal attributes that employers look for when selecting employees (ACCI 2002). Employers select employees that can demonstrate social and personal attributes as well as the ability to learn technical skills (ACCI 2002). Employer interest in behavioral competencies (eg inter-personal skills) had increased in relative importance compared to their interest and investment in cognitive (eg literacy, numeracy, general educational competence) and technical competencies (eg trade/professional skills) (Buchanan, Schofield, Briggs, Considine, Hager, Hawke, Kitay, Meagher, Macintyre, Mounier & Ryan S 2001). Industry believed many students had not developed employability skills as part of their schooling (OTTE 2006). Senior secondary students can now develop employability skills through VCE subjects such as Industry and Enterprise Studies, Information and Communication Technology and Business management. The new Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) has a focus on employability skills and the development of interpersonal skills and the ability to understand the world outside school for year 9 and 10 students. VET in Schools programs offer students opportunities to develop employability skills by completing work placement (OTTE 2006). Ensuring students gain work readiness skills and are prepared to complete a successful work placement remains a priority for secondary schools and Local Community Partnerships like WLMW.

Preparation for the workplace also includes matching students and enterprises, induction programs and occupational health and safety training to assist students to become work ready (DEST 2004). Taylor (2005) after reviewing Local Community Partnership (LCP) case studies noted that work readiness and workplace preparation arrangements were not systematically and consistently applied and called for the development of a national set of student work readiness guidelines and employability skills. Employers, in Mulraney & Turner's (2001) research, also identified preparation for the workplace was important and the lack of appropriate screening for work placement students and the need for greater application of skills required by employers were areas of concern.

Workplace Learning (WLMW), as part of their 2006 to 2008 contract, will be required to liaise with schools to identify student Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) placement requirements and assist schools with induction and orientation to work placement prior to students going into the workplace (DEST 2005). Ensuring students gain work readiness skills and are prepared to complete a successful work placement remained a concern. To help ensure students were prepared for work placement WLMW delivered its own induction program to students, a work readiness program that was an orientation to work placement. This program continued to promote the advantages of workplace learning and the benefits of gaining industry specific and generic employability skills to students. The program motivated students to apply for a placement, provided them with a connection to WLMW support staff at Victoria University and increased student confidence in their ability to complete a successful work placement. The PowerPoint presentation developed included student stories, pictures of students at host enterprises, work placement responsibilities and data on successful student training and employment outcomes (DEST 2004). WLMW and the schools needed to work

together to build student self image and confidence in their ability to perform in the workplace and assisted enterprises to be more ‘youth ready.’

Other issues identified in the literature that affected students work readiness included program selection, access and equity, whether a workplace was youth friendly, promotion and implementation of a range of different workplace learning activities, and the enhancement of the Adopt a School program as a more suitable option for improving work readiness skills for some students and enterprises (DEST 2004; Malley et al 1999; Strathdee 2003; Tresize-Brown; & Turner 2002).

The selection processes for VET programs may also have an impact on a student’s ability to attend a work placement (Malley et al 1999). Students are sorted and selected by the school system and new forms of selection have now been introduced for vocational courses, SWL placement and new apprenticeship programs (Strathdee 2003). Access and equity issues may arise where vocational programs are not integrated with mainstream school curriculum or are limited by a lack of resources (Malley et al 1999). Vocational programs may not be integrated into the mainstream school curriculum and this may affect broad student access to the programs (Malley et al 1999). Selection processes may result in less academic students with lower achievement levels to be directed into vocational courses (Malley et al 1999).

On the other hand, a selection process that excludes less academic students may result in a situation where only the 'best' or 'prepared' students were sent to enterprises for work placement (Malley et al 1999; Strathdee 2003). Employers prefer the ‘*right*’ workers and those considered to be ‘work ready’ (Strathdee 2003). The effect was that only students with the right attitudes and skills had access to work placement (Malley et al 1999; Strathdee 2003). Reasons for this were that the reputation of the Local Community Partnership

(LCP) and the school with enterprises was determined by the quality of student sent to them (Malley et al 1999; Strathdee 2003). Another concern was that an employer might withdraw from participating in the program if they received a difficult student (Malley et al 1999; Strathdee 2003).

Teacher inexperience was also identified in the literature as a major threat to vocational program continuity and the successful completion of placements by students (Malley et al, 1999). To help address this WLMW needs to promote its induction program more widely as a professional development program for teachers that can provide support and information to new vocational teachers and inform them of the advantages of work placement; program processes and procedures and to raise awareness of the variety work based experiences available to students.

Whether an enterprise was youth friendly may also affect a student's confidence and ability to complete a successful work placement. It was noted by Tresize-Brown (2004) in the report *Employing young workers: how well are we managing them* that some employers may also benefit by becoming more 'youth ready'. She also noted that the current focus was on student's development of work readiness skills and not on ensuring workplaces were able to accommodate and retain young workers (Tresize-Brown 2004). Some employer's admitted they needed different skills and knowledge to manage young people (Tresize-Brown 2004). It was noted that students needed to develop employability skills and that enterprises also needed to effectively induct, manage and retain young workers (Tresize-Brown 2004). Ensuring employers were youth ready was found to contribute to the successful completion of work placement and reduce the number of work placement cancellations.

Work placements are the most common way of preparing senior secondary students to be work ready. Students may not always be well equipped or ready

to attend work placement for various reasons. But there are a number of different models of workplace learning and Turner (2002) offers an effective alternative model for the attainment of work readiness (Turner 2002). Students are encouraged to select and develop work related projects from their own interests and ideas (Turner 2002). Work related projects assist students to learn about working together, teamwork, leadership, communication, taking responsibility and supporting each other (Turner 2002). Achievement of industry specific skills and generic employability skills may be achieved by involvement in a variety of activities including worksite visits, employer and employee school visits, mentoring and work shadowing, career investigations and may involve engaging post compulsory providers (Turner 2002). These activities also provide students with the opportunity to explore their career aspirations and analyze how the generic skills learnt are relevant to different careers (Turner 2002). These alternative models may also engage enterprises that are not able to provide work placements, but can offer classroom visits or provide site visits for students (Turner 2002).

Under DEST (2005) *ANICA directions paper* Local Community Partnerships will have an expanded role that includes implementing the Career and Transition Support program and a renewed focus on delivering the successful Adopt a School Program more broadly (DEST 2005). Adopt a School Program (ASP) also promotes an extensive range of industry based activities additional to work placements, that can be built around local industry needs and that are coordinated by LCPs (DEST 2005). Adopt a School Program may include school projects, industry tours, visits and excursions, speakers and demonstrations, student mentoring and career shadowing that are industry based (DEST 2005). Enterprises can provide a mentor who would spend time working with students on a project, and provide students with information about career and training options (DEST 2005). School projects can include building a product or planning an event as part of providing an experiential

learning environment that allows the young person to learn about business. The program aims to offer a broader range of activities suited to all young people in their first years of secondary school to students in year 12 who would benefit from a hands-on learning vocational learning experience including indigenous, disabled, young people 'at risk' of leaving school early and those with a variety of low to high academic achievement (DEST 2005).

### **Increasing demand and availability of work placements**

There has been major growth in participation in VET in Schools from 60 000 in 1996 to approximately 169 000 in 2001 (Allen Consulting Group 2003). In 2002: 185 520 students were enrolled in VET in Schools programs, representing 44 percent of all students enrolled in years 11 and 12 (HR-SCET 2004). In 2003 the 216 Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) throughout Australia assisted in providing 94 000 Structure Workplace Learning work placement opportunities to senior secondary students, in industries ranging from Retail to Building and Construction (DEST 2004). Over 40 000 employers participated in the year 2000, an increase of over 30 percent on 1999 (HR-SCET 2004).

The significant growth in VET has been attributed to a range of factors, including a response to student disengagement from school, the need to better prepare students for the world of work and a demand from industry to meet identified skill shortages (HR-SCET 2004). Significant challenges still remain in implementing VET options in schools (NCVER 2005). These include delivery and resourcing issues associated with meeting the requirements of both schools and VET and the different perceptions of the quality of the VET training being delivered (NCVER 2005). The introduction of the VCAL programs in Victoria has also given students the opportunity to undertake work placement on a regular basis to achieve specific vocational learning outcomes (Victorian Qualifications Authority). Businesses were encouraged

to host VCAL students for longer periods of time to give them the opportunity to have real-life work experience (VQA).

In Malley et al's (1999) report on enterprises that hosted work placement students, they found that there was evidence of increasing numbers of employers willing to participate in the programs (Malley et al 1999). But the most significant area of concern identified in the key research *Learning to work* (2004) was that competition for work placements had resulted in some difficulty obtaining placements in some localities (HR-SCET 2004). There was also some unease that there may be a finite number of placements that Local Community Partnerships and VET schools and TAFE could access while maintaining a positive relationship with employers (HR-SCET 2004). To meet the demand for Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placements new quality models would be required (NCVER 2005). In a recent OTTE (2006) report to Minister Kosky *Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training* noted that due to limited placements available and some employers being overwhelmed with requests, and that even though 72 percent of Victoria VET in School students did work placement in 2004, access to placements was spread thinly. As a result they recommended more targeted access to placements in industries prioritized for funding by the state government in areas of employment growth and labor shortages (OTTE 2006).

Some of the barriers identified when recruiting enterprises have also been noted in Little and Fallshaw's report *Small business needs and how they align with training* (2003) that Small to Medium Enterprises surveyed were philosophically supportive but were hesitant to host students when they felt their company was unable to supply a meaningful work experience for the student. Small enterprises often felt "*bombarded by marketers, Government, financial houses and others*" all of whom were focused on their own needs and not those of their organisations (Little & Fallshaw 2003). DEST (2004)

*Guidelines* recommended that Local Community Partnerships carefully manage any potential burden for employers participating in work placement programs.

Other barriers identified were that VET programs offered by local schools fluctuated and in turn the demand for work placements varied (HR-SCET 2004). If regular contact between the Local Community Partnership, school, student and employer was not taking place, employers often withdrew their participation (Malley et al 1999). Other reasons that enterprises might not be contacted regularly to host a work placement student were due to remote locations, lack of public transport or the requirements of the hospitality industry for students to work split shifts or that the enterprise was not willing to pay \$5.00 per day (HR-SCET 2004).

Growth in work placement opportunities for students required increased engagement with workplaces and locating these opportunities was often difficult with demand potentially overwhelming for enterprises (NCVER 2005). To meet this increased demand Allen Consulting Group (2003) recommended that new national models of quality Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) needed to be developed in collaboration with business (NCVER 2005). KPA Consulting (2004) identified areas critical to continued growth in SWL work placement as the employment of dedicated work placement coordinators and improved enterprise understanding of the mutual benefits of the program (NCVER 2005). The main barriers to growth in work placement opportunities were identified as the failure to meet current increasing demand from schools and TAFE, the over approach of employers, variable placement quality, confusion in enterprises about the assessment of competencies, difficulty in teachers visiting the workplace and supporting students in the workplace and attitudes of schools towards some industries (NCVER 2005).

## **Duration and pattern of work placements**

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placements are mandatory or highly recommended as specified in the accredited Victorian VCE VET program (Taylor 2005). If the work placements are part of an accredited course the total numbers of hours spent in the workplace are stated in the course documentation (VCAA 2005). The duration of work placements are prescribed by the VCAA in the Victorian VCE VET program booklets (VCAA 2005). The VCAA generally recommends work placements of about twenty days per year in Victoria but this varies from course to course (VCAA 2005). If the total numbers of hours of work placement are not specified then each secondary school Principal may determine the number of days or hours for the accredited course of study being undertaken by the student (Taylor 2005).

Mulraney and Turner (2001) identified length of time spent in the workplace as a key theme emerging from his research into small enterprises participating in work placement (Mulraney & Turner 2001). The reported average number of hours spent in the workplace in Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) in 2004 decreased overall (NCVER 2005). In contrast Taylor identified the need to ensure that senior secondary students had sufficient time in the workplace to achieve the competencies they were expected to achieve on-the-job (Taylor 2005). Length of time spent in the workplace was identified as a common management issue for those coordinating and organizing work placements (NCVER 2005; Taylor 2005). Workplace Learning (WLMW) needs to carefully negotiate the competing requirements and different interests of enterprises, schools and students when discussing what is considered a 'sufficient' time spent in the workplace.

In their report *Structured Workplace Learning 2000*, McIntyre & Pithers found that there was a growing trend for work placements to be of short

duration, of 10 days or less as these made up over 65 percent of all work placements in the study. In 2001 the national average number of hours students spent at work placement decreased to seventy hours from ninety-two hours in 1997 (The Allen Consulting Group 2003). This trend continued and in 2002 the national average number of hours students spent at work placement was sixty-five and in 2003 it decreased again to only fifty-one hours (Taylor 2005).

McIntyre & Pithers (2000) also found that there were significant differences in length of time spent in the workplace among the States and Territories that reflected policy differences (McIntyre & Pithers 2000). In NSW and the ACT 90 percent of placements were of short duration and made up about 72 percent of all work placements in Victoria and 60 percent in South Australia (The Allen Consulting Group 2003). In Tasmania and Western Australia 70 percent of students were in the workplace for about 20 days (McIntyre & Pithers 2000). In 2004 Tasmania reported that in their region placements were between 15 and 30 days in a year and placements were preferred to School-based New Apprenticeship (HR-SCET 2004). In Queensland there was a policy of longer placements in part-time School-based New Apprenticeship rather than work placements (McIntyre & Pithers 2000).

Smith and Dalton (2004) found a gender difference in time spent at work placement and a disparity between the work placement opportunities of male and female students. Boys spent almost double the number of days at work placement than girls and boys had a wider range of VET career options available to them than girls did (Smith & Dalton 2004).

### **What enterprises want**

Enterprises hosting students have different preferences but require schools to be flexible and responsive to the needs of their individual businesses. In

Tasmania the pattern and duration of work placements was often determined in consultation with the needs of each specific industry for example enterprises offering work placements for engineering students preferred block placements but the retail and hospitality industry preferred placements of one day per week (HR-SCET 2004). Taylor (2005) also noted that Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) provided students with a great mix of workplace experiences that were well planned and responsive to local needs but that there was a need for improvement of the workplace experience for employers and students.

### **What VET providers (secondary schools and TAFE) want**

In Kelloch's review of SWL (2002) it was found that schools were structuring work placement so that extended placements of one day a week all year were being used rather than block placements, as they were considered to be providing more effective outcomes (Kelloch 2002). Many schools had been looking for ways of encouraging students to stay at school to improve retention rates and employment and training outcomes (Sheed, Rosengren & Kelly 2003). Previously interaction between schools and workplaces had been constructed around short-term work experience. In contrast to work experience work placement operated over an extended period of time, was curriculum based, assessed and was part of VET competency standards that potentially contributed to the completion of a senior school certificate (Kelloch 2002). As VCAL was designed to provide students with a pathway into vocational training, trades and employment, teachers believed that the central place of work placement and the connection to workplaces made VCAL real and authentic for most students (Sheed et al 2003).

The VQA grants a VCAL credit for 100 hours of work related learning including work placement (VCAA 2005). Many Victorian VCAL teachers and coordinators believed that the 100 hours of work related skills could be

achieved by 100 hours of work placement only (VCAA 2005). Other teachers took the view that work related skills could be better achieved by the completion of a range of work readiness skills and work related activities and projects in simulated workplace environments at school as well as participation in a work placement in industry (Sheed et al 2003). Some schools wanted their VCAL students in the workplace one day per week all year, believing it provided them with a connection and a network to the world of work outside school (Sheed et al 2003). A second day spent at TAFE rather than school also had the advantage of linking them into further education (Sheed et al 2003). Sheed (2003) also found that teachers believed VCAL was most successful for students when they began work placement earlier in term one rather than later or they probably would have left school (Sheed et al 2003). Workplace Learning (WLMW) has found that some students were not well equipped to complete a successful work placement at the beginning of the school year that often resulted in work placement cancellations and unhappy host employers. The introduction of mandatory occupational health and safety training in Term I for all work placement students prior to entering the workplace had the effect of reducing the demand for work placements early in the year and contributed to students being more work ready.

The *Learning to work* (2004) report recommended that a consistent national approach to Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement with an agreed mandated minimum time spent in the workplace that meets the needs of both industry and the requirements of the VET training would be the ideal and remains one of the major challenges facing Governments (HR-SCET 2004). Taylor also concluded in his report to DEST that there was a need for the establishment of agreed maximum hours per year for placements for all vocational programs (Taylor 2005).

## **Coordinated single point enterprise contact**

Demand for work placement has grown quickly in recent years and a coordinated ‘single point enterprise contact’ approach was found to be the preference of enterprises to ensure they were not overwhelmed with requests (VCAA 2005). Kelloch, in his 2002 review of Structure Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement, noted that the work placement coordinator who maintained a close relationship between schools and enterprises was seen as essential by both the enterprises and VET school staff to sustaining the program. External coordination also reduced the workload of students and teachers (Kelloch 2002).

Enterprises rely on the work placement coordinator to carry out the administrative aspects of the program including the provision of bookings, correspondence, employer briefing notes; log books, check lists, student selection, pre-placement training and induction programs, regular employer contacts, remedial action and counseling (Malley et al 1999). Enterprises usually participated in work placement programs on a condition of minimal administrative involvement and were largely dependent on the capacity of Local Community Partnerships to service the workplace. From a coordinating perspective, as programs grow, more complex forms of management and support will be required.

One of the emerging challenges identified by Kelloch (2002) was the need to balance requirements for coordinated enterprise contact with the capacity of each school to continue to develop relationships with the enterprises in their community. Schools in more remote and rural settings have also expressed a preference for having a dedicated VET coordinator located at the school rather than external placement coordination (HR-SCET 2004). Local Community Partnership work placement programs continued to be reliant on diminishing external funding grants from DEST and State education training authorities

and were finding it increasingly difficult to provide the level of services that enterprises and schools expected (Malley et al 1999). But while funding had become more consistent, VET in School funding from ANTA (now DEST) and DEST funding for Local Community Partnerships, the resourcing arrangements had not been enough to keep pace with the growth in demand for work placements. Local Community Partnerships continued to struggle to maintain the coordinator role as the numbers and breadth of the programs expanded and sustaining them became more difficult (Kelloch 2002).

### **Requests for further information, support and visits**

Support for students in the workplace has been identified as a key theme in the literature. The ACER report *Case Studies of Australian School Industry Programs, Recurring Themes and Issues*, by Malley et al (1999) examined the 'quality characteristics' of a sample of work placement programs and identified the servicing level to businesses as an important issue. Malley et al (1999) found that a number of schools had high levels of servicing where most students were visited by the work placement coordinator at least once during a work placement over 5 days. Work placement services delivered to employers included regular visits, training courses and responding to employer feedback (Malley et al 1999). Students were given individual attention; a dedicated help telephone line, logbooks, newsletters and training courses. Stakeholder feedback identified these services as the major reason for participating in the program (Malley et al 1999).

Maintaining a good relationship with enterprises was also seen as a critical element for a successful SWL work placement program (Sheed et al 2003). Much effort was needed to maintain good relationships with enterprises and into acknowledging the invaluable support they provided. A great way of supporting the relationship was for the school to provide visible support to students by visits to the workplace (Sheed et al 2003).

In each of the case studies carried out by Malley et al (1999) industry stated that they continued to rely on LCP and school personnel to maintain the program operations. Provision of a supportive learning environment was also identified as critical for successful student learning (Garrick 1999). It was found that young people need a supportive, flexible environment that was structured, guided and collaborative (Billett 1999). Providing support to students in the workplace also increases the chances of student and enterprise being satisfied with the program (Malley et al 1999).

It was found that contacting the student and the enterprise during the work placement not only provided support to the student but was also a way of valuing the employer's contribution (Sheed et al 2003). Taylor (2005) identified the need for improvement in the monitoring of students in the workplace and evaluation to gauge client satisfaction with the program. He found that generally support for students and enterprises during the progress of the work placement was not adequate and was in need of improvement.

### **Information for young people and parents**

Research indicated that the community, parents, learners and industry required improved information about VET programs to make informed choices (OTTE 2006). In the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* Local Community Partnerships were encouraged to establish strong relationships with external clients and stakeholders including parents. Winning the valuable support of parents had been acknowledged as an important way of promoting and maintaining commitment to vocational programs (Emerson 2000). Recognising the influence of parents on the subject choices, post-school destinations for their children and being able to 'influence the influencers' was also identified by Emerson (2000) as an important component of VET program success. Emerson (2000) found that the majority of parents were strongly supportive of vocational programs and the positive effect they had on their children. They

would recommend VET to other parents. Emerson (2000) also established that a high proportion of parents of students not participating in the programs had not received program information. Even though vocational programs are now well recognized in many schools and integrated with mainstream curriculum, stakeholders have identified the need for Local Community Partnerships to secure support of parents and young people. Consultation with parents and young people from within the local school community will provide advice on ways to improve local awareness and address perceptions held about VET, VCAL and work placement generally and the coordinating role of Partnerships like WLMW in particular.

The Australian Government's newest initiative the *Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisors (ANICA)* outlines an expanded role for Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) that includes the provision of improved collaboration between industry and career advisors to improve both parent and student career information and development (DEST 2005). LCPs will be provided with funding targeted at industry, professional career advisors and parents to provide them with further information on post school opportunities in VET to enable young people to make more informed decisions about their career options (DEST 2005).

To address ways of improving the dissemination of information to stakeholders, DEST now requires parents of students, young people and vocational coordinators from participating cluster schools in LLEN regions to be included on Local Community Partnership management committees (DEST 2004). Getting to know young people participating in vocational programs and their parents will be valuable to Partnerships like WLMW as they can play an important role in the growth and future of the program by encouraging or discouraging young people's participation. Parent support during the progress of the work placement would assist students to

successfully complete the placement and therefore increase enterprise satisfaction with the program. This support would also help reduce the large number of work placement cancellations currently experienced by the program.

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### **Improving student transition from school to further education or employment**

VET in Schools and TAFE improves student transitions to work as it provides students with opportunities to participate in vocational learning in senior

secondary studies that combines attendance in the classroom with involvement in on-the-job experience in the form of work placement (Smith & Dalton 2004; Misko 2000). Work placement has resulted not only in students developing greater knowledge of work and to be better prepared for working life but has had the added benefit of allowing students to try out chosen areas of work and be able to decide which work area they preferred (Smith & Dalton, 2004). This workplace experience allows students to be better informed about their chosen career path and increases their confidence in their own ability to achieve employment and training goals (Smith & Dalton, 2004; Malley, Frigo, & Robinson, 1999; Misko 2000).

### **Work placement and finding a job**

In Misko's study (2000) on the destinations of school leavers, she reported that 10 percent of young people obtained a job with their VET work placement employer. More recent destination surveys by DEST (2004<sub>3</sub>) cited that 40 percent of Vocational Education and Training (VET) work placement students ended up in full-time employment after leaving school with two in five of these in the same industry as that of their placement, and one in five were with the same employer. Smith and Dalton (2004) also found that 39 percent of students were offered a job with their work placement enterprise and often left school to take up the offer of employment. It was also reported by Malley et al (1999) that some students left school prior to completing their VET programs to take up employment with their work placement employer (Malley et al 1999). In some States, particularly Tasmania, some schools use work placement as a direct pathway to employment (Kelloch 2002). Schools decide which Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs they will offer based on the availability of employment in the local labor market. In other States there was a less direct relationship with subsequent employment for work placement students (Kelloch 2002). The role of VET and work

placement varied from school to school. Some schools thought it was part of a school retention strategy while others thought it was to supplement scores for university entry. Other reasons included enabling students to try out working in an industry to find out whether work in a chosen area was what they really wanted as well as increase student confidence in making a successful transition to work (Kelloch 2002; Smith & Dalton 2004). Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) have expressed concern that vocational choices offered to students was determined by the staff expertise available in a school and many other considerations rather than focusing on the needs of local industry and the demand for labor (HR-SCET 2004). At a recent Local Community Partnership (LCP) DEST network meeting a presentation by Taylor (2005) it was recommended that VET and Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement programs needed to be responsive to both the local needs of students and employers and to focus on the relationship of placements to career options and employment particularly for students with disabilities.

DEST (2004<sub>5</sub>) have also expressed concern that the current coverage of VET in schools participation may be effective for schools but that it may not satisfy local industry needs, particularly in areas of skill shortage. About 50 percent of the VET in Schools programs was concentrated in the four industry areas of tourism, hospitality, business and computing (HR-SCET 2004). This may have contributed to over-training in some industry sectors leading to skill shortages in other industry areas (DEST 2004<sub>5</sub>).

The Adopt a School Program was originally developed by the Australian Industry (Ai) Group to help connect employers and students as future employees in an effort to reduce skills shortages (AiG 2004). The aim of the program was to link manufacturing employers (an industry identified as having skills shortages) and schools through actions that would increase

opportunity for careers and education in manufacturing. DEST (2004) *Guidelines* required Local Community Partnerships to expand their Adopt a School Programs activities, modeled on this Australian Industry (Ai) Group program, as part of their *National Skills Strategy* (2005). Adopt a School Programs focused on linking Year 9 and 10 students within a particular industry and providing them with local business mentors and participation in hands-on projects in industry. These student industry-based projects aimed to enhance relationships with local enterprises develop student employability skills and increase understanding of careers and future employment options (DEST 2005).

The Australian Government intended to address skills shortages and connect more young people to VET programs by providing them with more information about VET pathways, to attract them into the trades with skills shortages by promoting pride in the attainment of trade skills and advancing them as a valued first choice option. To achieve this they would establish the Institute for Trade Skills Excellence and 24 Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs) for Year 11 and 12 students in 24 regions across Australia (DEST 2005). Australian Technical College students would be enrolled in School-based New Apprenticeship (SBNAs) and also complete VET information technology, business and either automotive, electrical, construction or metals trade courses. The Australian Technical Colleges were to be located in regions supported by a significant industry base, where there were skills shortages and high rates of youth unemployment (DEST 2004<sub>2</sub>). Instead of working collaboratively with the states and territories, to avoid duplicating services, the Australian Government decided to establish the Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs) outside the existing VET in Schools and VET in TAFE programs; hence, missing the opportunity to connect more young people to the well established and familiar VET pathways into TAFE and possibly university. The Australian Government continues to battle with the states and

territories over Industrial Relations (IR) legislation and therefore risks duplicating and competing with existing Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs and not achieving a coordinated and cost effective approach to VET that would better assist young people's transition to work.

The Victorian Government has funded WLMW as a delivery agent for the Careers in Manufacturing (CiM) pilot program delivered to schools across Victoria in 2005 (Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development 2005). The program invested in current VET in Schools engineering programs and provided training resources that promoted manufacturing and particularly engineering careers to students and provided local industry visits and young industry Ambassador Visits to five participating schools. The Victorian Government has also released a *Blueprint for Government schools* (2003) and introduced the Leading Schools Fund to provide capital for new specialist VET in Schools facilities including the building of a VET Skills Centers. A Skills Center for VET engineering was established at Laverton Secondary College to provide students with the opportunity to gain engineering qualifications and experience as part of year 10, 11 and 12 programs (DE&T 2003). The OTTE (2006) report *Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training* also recommended that the Victorian Department of Education support existing VET in Schools programs and investigate the use of high-intensity VET in Schools models including the development of specialist VET schools that would enable networks of schools to share VET facilities and provide a wide range of VET subjects. These VET in Schools models have achieved the critical mass of students and economies of scale necessary to provide for significant levels of VET programs and a broader range of subject areas that will be able to focus on high priority industry areas and have a better chance of turning around the skills crisis.

Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) like WLMW need to ensure VET programs and Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placements are targeted at real local job opportunities, in areas of skill shortage and future demand (DEST 2004). Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) can assist students and enterprises by promoting industry requirements to training providers to ensure the mix of trades offered is more responsive to local employment and industry needs (DEST 2005).

### **Improving pathways into New Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships and traineeships have been an effective way for young people to make a successful transition from school to further training and work (OTTE 2006). New Apprenticeships were introduced in January 1998 as a national training system for both apprenticeships and traineeships that provided nationally recognised qualifications as defined in Training Packages (OTTE 2006; Strategic Analysis & Evaluation Group 2004). They offered young people employment-based training that was now broadened to cover most occupations and offered host employers incentives to employ people (OTTE 2006). School-based New Apprenticeships were also introduced and came under the general umbrella of VET in Schools accredited courses that encouraged young people to commence training while at school and complete that training after leaving school by providing pathways into New Apprenticeships (Department of Employment Education and Training 2002; Malley et al 1999; Strategic Analysis and Evaluation Group 2004; Smith & Wilson 2002). This enabled senior secondary students to commence a traineeship part-time at school that contributed to the completion of year 12, the VCE or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and gave 6 months credit towards a full-time apprenticeship (VCAA 2005). Typically young people participating in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and New Apprenticeship programs were found to be from outside capital cities,

from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, did not aspire to go straight to university and were attracted by the qualification, industry experience and the mix of work and study (Marks et al 2001; Smith & Wilson 2002). Most School-based New Apprentices were found to be trainees as apprenticeships were considered to be too long to complete at school (Smith & Wilson 2002). An evaluation of New Apprenticeships in *Skills at work* (2004) revealed that even though there was a greater spread of occupations employing New Apprentices with 500 occupations available, the government had collapsed everything into New Apprenticeships that were mostly taken up as traineeships of which many were terminated when the employer incentive ended. The New Apprenticeships were intended to provide young people with a pathway into an apprenticeship and a trade qualification but this was not occurring and had resulted in a high number of underemployed trainees and a dismal rate of apprenticeship completions (ABC 2005;DSF 2005; SA&EG 2004).

Due to growth in New Apprenticeships outside the traditional trades, commencements in traditional trades had fallen from 25 percent in 1996 to around 13 percent in 2003 (SA&EG 2004). In December 2003, 13 percent of School-based New Apprentices had cancelled or withdrawn from the program (NCVER 2005). Problems associated with School-based New Apprenticeships, now mostly traineeships, commonly related to: insufficient time spent in the workplace to gain the required trade skills as they were part-time and the number of hours worked was low compared to full-time apprentices and trainees; the difficulty experienced by some students when combining study at school, TAFE and employment, and the industrial relations systems and low awareness amongst businesses (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2005; NCVER 2005; OTTE 2006).

The number of apprentices training in Victoria and Australia had leveled off over 2004 from the peak reached in September 2003 (NCVER 2005). There were 382 400 apprentices in-training at 31st December 2004 compared to 406 900 at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003 (NCVER 2004). National commencements were down overall in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004, five percent lower than in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003 (NCVER 2005). But some positive results were also recorded, an 11 percent increase in completions in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004, and traditional apprenticeship commencements had a 23 percent increase in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2004, both were compared to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003 figures (NCVER 2005). In Victoria, data revealed that of the 3 201 students enrolled in School-based New Apprentices in 2004, only 1.3 percent were enrolled in traditional trade apprenticeships and that a substantial number of male students leave school before year 12 to take up a full-time apprenticeship rather than stay at school to complete year 12 and a part-time School-based New Apprenticeship (OTTE 2006).

About one half of the male early school leavers relied on apprenticeships as a pathway to employment but only six percent went to TAFE courses (DEST 2004). Whereas female early school leavers ended up in TAFE courses or part-time employment, as the range of apprenticeship opportunities available to them was more narrow than those available to boys and did not offer them broad career and employment pathways (DEST 2004; Equity Research 2001; Smith & Dalton 2004). There appeared to be relatively small income benefits to individuals particularly girls from participation in TAFE courses and historical gender patterns appeared to be repeating themselves in the provision of VET programs. New Apprenticeships continued to disadvantage young women's career and economic outcomes and their transition from school to work and was overall less successful than it was for young men (Marks et al 2001; Security for Women 2004).

Smith & Dalton (2004) found that students were generally positive about the benefits of vocational learning and work placement but it was the boys that found it most useful for getting a job. Boys found work placement valuable for developing the skills and knowledge required for the work they wanted to find an apprenticeship and employment in but that this was not the case for girls (Smith & Dalton 2004). It was found that overall girls spent less time at work placement than boys and that girls were often placed in industry areas they did not want to pursue as a future career, such as retail and hospitality, and therefore found work placement less useful (Smith & Dalton 2004).

There were more men undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships than women and in Victoria, the proportion was approximately 9:5 (Access Training & Employment Centre 2002; Marks et al 2001). Women's participation in traditional trade apprenticeships still remained low and they were often employed in traineeships in sales and services and in short part-time contracts (AT&EC 2002). It has also been found that girls were still choosing traditional 'female' VET courses as career paths into the workplace and that generally these decisions were not based on consideration of future economic security as they had little information about job availability or pay rates in the chosen occupation (Security for Women 2004). Decisions were based on what they enjoyed and what they were good at and though these were important considerations the decision was unconnected to employment availability or the economic security the industry could provide and low pay and many casual positions were common in their preferred occupations (Security for Women 2004).

The Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) had also noted that girls had less opportunity in what was often described as the *masculinist* Vocational Education and Training (VET) framework and had worked to implement programs in local schools that supported young women in their

education and work related aspirations to improve their poor economic futures. The Brimbank Melton LLEN employed two Field Officers to encourage young women to consider taking up alternatives to traditional 'female' VET courses and the four 'Beacon' schools in the area were also supported to develop stronger partnerships with individual businesses to open up employment opportunities for girls. The LLENs also funded WLMW to manage the Teacher to Industry Program (TIP) that aimed to place teachers in one week industry placements so they could not only gain industry specific skills but also explore barriers to employment and the low uptake of jobs by girls in many industries (S. Wong, Pers. Comm., 2005).

About 20 percent of School-based New Apprentices (SBNAs) had worked for the employer before commencing their SBNA; either as an ordinary part-time worker or on a work placement but Smith and Wilson (2002) found that most students learnt about SBNAs at school through Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and that half were located in the retail and hospitality industries (Smith & Wilson 2002). Workplace Learning (WLMW) had continued to work closely with the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and the local Group Training Organisation (GTO) Workplace Connect to promote and disseminate information about School-based New Apprenticeships to industry and enterprises and to recruit host employers to the program. Workplace Connect was funded by the LLENs to employ students from the Western Region of Melbourne and place them in School-based New Apprenticeships in industry. Wyndham Bayside (Wyn Bay) Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) also assisted local students to be better prepared to apply and successfully secure SBNAs by developing the '*Work Readiness Skills Assessment Kit*' that provided local teachers with information about the skill levels required to obtain a traineeship and to improve student work readiness and to assist students to secure School-based New Apprenticeships and employment.

A barrier identified as affecting the uptake of New Apprenticeships and contributing to skills shortages was that some students and their families perceived trade occupations as less desirable career options (DEST 2004). Some stakeholders told the OTTE (2006) inquiry that VET options were still presented by some schools and parents as a second choice after higher education options. This reflected a wider community perception of VET and recognised there was a need for a communications campaign to create a better understanding of the opportunities VET offered and to redress the poor public perception of VET. Other factors contributing to skills shortages were that a high number of apprentices dropped out before gaining their qualifications because of poor wages and conditions, and that there was a lack of flexibility in apprenticeship arrangements and that skill levels and areas of unemployment often did not match available jobs (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2005; OTTE 2006).

Another barrier identified as affecting the uptake of New Apprenticeships and traineeships was the preference for some enterprises to host work placement students rather than employ an apprentice (DEST 2004). There was concern raised by the government, unions and industry groups that some enterprises preferred hosting work placement students rather than employ an apprentice (HR-SCET 2004). Some insight into possible reasons for this could be gleaned from the Tasmanian experience (Kelloch 2002). Tasmanian senior colleges used VET in Schools as a direct pathway to employment and decided which VET and work placement programs they would offer based on the availability of employment in the local labour market. Both the local employers and the local schools had seen little need to put energy into School-based New Apprenticeship programs when the work placement programs had already been meeting the needs of both students and local employers (Kelloch 2002).

A reason for employers preferring work placement students over apprentices and trainees is that this group of employees is entitled to wages whereas work placement students are only eligible for a minimum rate of \$5.00 per day (VCAA 2005). In Victoria the Governor in Council had made an order under section 87(2) of the VET Act fixing a minimum payment of \$5 per day for students on work placement but if a host employer was willing to place students but could not pay them, an agreement could be reached allowing no payment (VCAA 2005). WLMW needs to continue to provide students with the opportunity to participate in short term work placements as part of their VET in schools or vocational programs but should support schools and students to apply for SBNAs if students preferred extended periods in the workplace and also continue to encourage employers to employ more School-based New Apprentices.

Part of the Australian Government's strategy to address the shortage of apprentices was to introduce the Australian Technical Colleges (ATCs). Australian Technical Colleges were to be centers of excellence and established to attract the best students to the trades and thus raise the profile of trades (DEST 2005). The government also wanted to improve the perception of VET in the community by marketing the increased opportunities that would be made available and enlisted industry to promote career opportunities and encouraged career advisers to focus their efforts on subject choice for employment outcomes (HR-SCET 2004). The lack of success in attracting women to the trades also needs to be addressed and more support should be provided to women and girls in vocational training to ensure the career choices they make are fully informed and focus more on future economic well being (Security for Women 2004). As proficiency in literacy and numeracy had been found to be the most powerful influence on early school leaving, tertiary entrance scores, participation in higher education, unemployment and future income levels, more needs to be done for those most at risk of leaving

school early (Marks et al 2001). To address some of these issues the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) recommends boosting wages for apprentices, and continues to call for further investment in TAFE together with the Australian Labor Party (ALP) flagging the offer of 20 000 additional TAFE places and more incentives to employers to employ both young and mature age apprentices (ABC 2005).

The Australian Government has recently flagged a shift in spending programs from tax cuts to skills and education to boost apprenticeships completions, and to increase science and engineering training. They have also acknowledged that the poor literacy and numeracy skills of many workers aged 25 and 64 will require retraining to ensure they remain in the workforce. They have also noted the difficulty Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) experience when restructuring work arrangements to allow their employees to learn and earn at the same time and will develop strategies to support them to train staff. The Australian Industry (Ai) Group is lobbying the Government to establish a 3 billion dollar skill fund to focus on lifting the skill levels of existing workers by the development of local industry skill clusters that would bring together companies interested in training to be mentored through the training pathways process including assessment of employees for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for employability skills gained on-the-job (Tingle 2006).

A recommendation from the OTTE (2006) report *Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training* was to provide an alternative to School-based New Apprenticeships by developing more VET pathways into pre-apprenticeship programs that would provide students with the option of completing year 12 and offer credit for these pre-apprenticeship programs. More pre-apprenticeships would be offered at TAFE and differ from School-based New Apprenticeships in that they are not work-based and require extensive off-the

job training in mechanical knowledge, provide more exposure to common hand tools and focus on the development of mathematical skills required in specific trade apprenticeship areas (NCVER 2005). Usually pre-apprenticeships are the first year of an apprenticeship and enable students to complete up to one year of off-the-job training for an apprenticeship before they start work and become familiar with a particular trade. Pre-apprenticeships are currently available in all trade occupations with skill shortages except engineering, plumbing, electro technology and cookery and are recommended for extension to these industry areas. The automotive industry introduced a pre-apprenticeship program in 2005 where competencies could be completed without on-the-job learning requirements and that guaranteed a 12-month reduction in the nominal duration of the apprenticeship for those who had completed the pre-apprenticeship (OTTE 2006).

## **What are the issues, concerns and problems?**

What are the issues, concerns and problems that enterprises have as participants in work placement programs? What elements of the WLMW work placement service are most *important* to enterprises and delivered most *effectively*? By responding to enterprise feedback WLMW will be able to identify the gaps in the service it provided and manage the demand for work placements better to increase satisfaction with the program. Understanding the key messages from the employer's perspective will contribute to the development of an innovative service delivery model for Structure Workplace Learning work placement programs that will take the needs of enterprises into account and increase enterprise participation in the programs.

A range of nationally consistent approaches will be required to improve the quality, relevance and credibility of work placement programs (Taylor 2005). Taylor noted concern that work placement programs often had inconsistent and superficial arrangements for monitoring students in the workplace and assessment of skills gained in the workplace and only some shallow arrangements for providing feedback from program participants (Taylor 2005).

There has been major growth in participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) (and VCAL in Victoria) that has resulted in increasing demand for work placements that requires increased engagement with enterprises. Hence the difficulty of locating work placements when the demand is potentially overwhelming for enterprises becomes increasingly an important issue to resolve (Allen Consulting Group 2003; HR-SCET 2004 NCVET 2005). To meet the demand for work placements new models for structured workplace learning work placement programs are required (NCVER 2005). This research examined the partnership between work

placement programs like WLMW and industry and enterprises, particularly Small to Medium Employers, that has resulted in recommendations that will need to be considered when developing better practice models for the delivery of work placement programs nationally.

This research discusses a wide range of issues concerning enterprises that participate in vocational Structured Workplace Learning work placement programs and offer workplace experiences for young people. It is important that discussion and debates on these issues continue and that the participants in the debate are motivated by the desire to improve both the educational and employment opportunities of young people while drawing upon the evidence available to inform this debate.

A key element in Government policy for improving transition outcomes for young people has been to promote partnerships between industry and education to improve training and employment outcomes for young people. Insight into how enterprises that host work placement students are faring in the current training environment will help inform policy and decision making that aims to keep employers engaged in vocational work placement and training programs. The research will contribute to the development of a new and improved framework for vocational work placement programs that will better support the needs of enterprises and assist them to remain engaged in training young people in the workplace.

## **Findings**

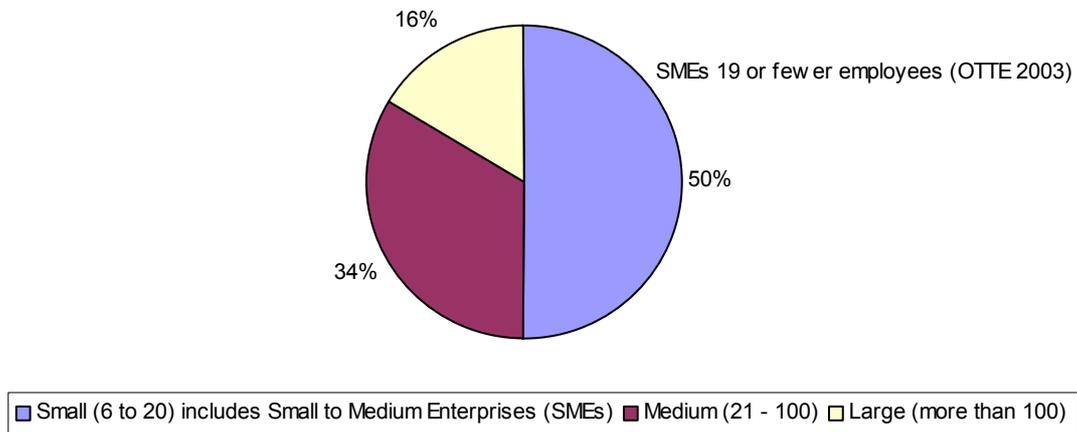
This research was an evaluation of Victoria University's Workplace Learning Melbourne West, (WLMW) work placement service to employers. WLMW was funded to coordinate work placements and facilitate school to business partnerships to provide more opportunities for students to combine work placement with vocational education (DEST 2004). Industry advocates work placement as an integral component of a vocational qualification and considers students who have completed some training in the workplace as more work ready (VCAA 2005). The aim of this research was to identify the changes required to manage the increased demand for work placements more effectively taking into account the needs of enterprises to improve the quality of the work placement service delivered and employer satisfaction with it. Enterprises were selected for participation in the survey on the basis of their participation in the WLMW work placement program. The survey was sent by mail in August 2004 to the contact person responsible for work placement at each enterprise. Surveys were mailed to the 432 participating enterprises and a total of 122 useable surveys were returned which indicated an acceptable response rate of about one quarter (25 percent).

In 2004 enterprise feedback Evaluation Forms were also routinely mailed to each participating enterprise. These completed and returned evaluation forms also provided feedback from enterprises on how they rated the WLMW work placement service. Just over one quarter, 126 enterprises, that hosted work placement students completed and returned Evaluation Forms in 2004, which was also an acceptable response rate of 25 percent. The evaluation forms were also examined and summarised and included in this report as the data was found to complement and confirm the findings of the survey data.

## **Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) host the majority of placements**

The survey provided WLMW with a ‘snapshot’ of Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs), an insight into their thoughts and concerns about vocational work placement programs. The general background survey question Item 2 asked enterprises participating in the work placement program about the size of their enterprises and it was found that Small to Medium Enterprises hosted most of the work placement students for WLMW. Figure 1 shows that just over half of the respondents that hosted placement students in 2004 had an enterprise size of 19 or fewer employees (OTTE 2003). DEST further divides enterprise size into ‘small’ with 6 to 20 employees and ‘medium’ with 21 to 100 employees therefore eighty four percent of the enterprises that hosted work placement students for WLMW in 2004 had 100 or fewer employees and concurs with national data that Small to Medium Enterprises hosts the majority of placement students countrywide (DEST 2004<sub>3</sub>). General background survey question Item 3 found that 62 percent of host enterprise respondents were from private industry, 21 percent were government and 17 percent were not for profit organisations.

**Figure 1. Enterprise Size**



In response to survey questions about community involvement Small to Medium Enterprises expressed a number of common concerns including difficulty in understanding educators and government education policy initiatives and experienced some difficulty operating within the work placement partnership model that was originally developed for large enterprises (Little & Fallshaw 2003; Harris & Turner 2002; OTTE 2006). 66 percent of the enterprises felt they had a voice in their community and 74 percent felt they had a voice in industry but only 41 percent reported that they had a voice in government which confirms findings that small business generally felt they had difficulty communicating their needs to government (Little & Fallshaw 2003).

92 percent of the respondents indicated they had a good understanding of established education initiatives including work experience and 78 percent had knowledge of the VCE and work placement programs. Over half the enterprises understood VET in Schools programs but only 37 percent had knowledge of the newest Victorian state initiative for senior secondary students the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). Most had

little knowledge of what the term Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement meant or understanding of School-based New Apprenticeships (SBNAs), Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and only nine percent of the survey respondents had any knowledge of the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs). These findings agreed with the literature where researchers found that business thought the Vocational Education and Training (VET) world to be confusing, that it was hard to source accurate information about training, and that the Structured Workplace learning (SWL) work placement was constructed from an education and a large industry perspective. Respondents had little understanding of training jargon and required easy to understand information in plain language (Mulraney and Turner 2001; Harris and Turner 2002; OTTE 2006). Responding to the need for easy to understand information about VET initiatives and in response Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) like Workplace Learning (WLMW) need to ensure information sent to enterprises is current, concise and standardized to avoid confusion and information overload. Understanding employer placement responsibilities (Occupational Health and Safety, WorkCover, legal forms and payment) was rated as the most *important* components of the service and sending general information (brochure, info packs, CD and application forms) was rated as the least *important* component of the service indicating that enterprises required more precise information that was targeted to support them to confidently participate in the program.

### **Recommendation**

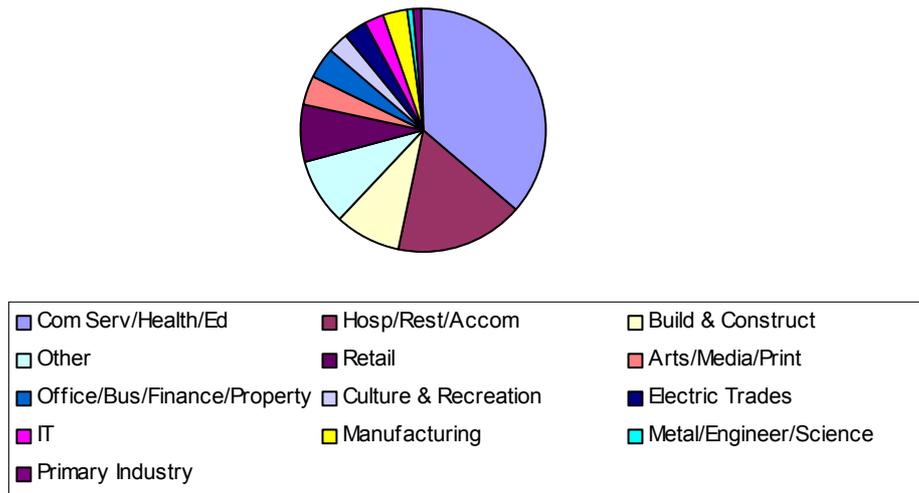
WLMW will promote a more coordinated approach to the dissemination of information to enterprises across the region that is easy to understand and more useful to employers in the limited time they have available to read it.

## **Skills shortages**

Enterprises listed on the Workplace Learning (WLMW) database were sorted into ANZSIC industry groups, and survey data from general background Item 1 showed that ANZSIC group's best represented in the 2004 work placement program were from the Community Services and the Hospitality, Restaurant and Accommodation groups, followed by Building and Construction, Other and Retail groups (DEST 2004<sub>4</sub>). This is shown in Figure 2 where most host enterprises were from the Community Services and Hospitality groups at 37 percent and 17 percent respectively. Statistical reports, submitted to DEST in 2004 that summarised all data on participating enterprises, confirmed that most work placements were in hospitality and the community services groups as 174 students attended work placements in the Hospitality industry and 112 students in the Community Services industry (DEST 2004<sub>4</sub>). These VET Certificate programs were very popular and delivered widely in schools across the three Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) serviced by WLMW. Hospitality programs also had the highest VET in Schools participation nationally at 21% (Deloitte, Touche & Tohmatsu, 2003). Local schools in the Hobson's Bay LLEN area, even though they had large numbers of students completing VCE VET Information Technology, Arts, Multimedia and Sport and Recreation Certificates, they still had an overall decline in student enrolments in VCE VET in 2003-2004. VET training was declining in Hospitality Operations, Automotive, Engineering, Electronics and General Construction even though these were industry groups experiencing skills shortages (M O'Shea, Pers Comms. 2005). WLMW survey data also revealed there were just 9 percent of host work placement employers from the Building and Construction industry and only 8 percent from Retail and only four percent were from the Arts Media and Printing and Business Office, Finance and Property industries. Only three percent were from the Culture and Recreation, Fitness, Electrical Trades, Information Technology and

Manufacturing industries and as few as one percent from Metals, Engineering and Science and Primary industry groups.

**Figure 2. ANZSIC Industry Groups**



This data showed that WLMW had successfully recruited enterprises from the hospitality and community services industry groups but had a shortage of available placements and a difficulty recruiting enterprises from many other industry groups (DEST 2004<sub>5</sub>). In 2005 WLMW staff reported a critical shortage of available work placements in a wide range of industry groups including Automotive, Building and Construction, Hair and Beauty, Information Technology, Business, Office, Furnishing, Engineering, Electronics and Manufacturing. This was also reflected in the data as these industry groups were not well represented in the 2004 program and only hosted a small percentage of placement students. WLMW needs to recruit enterprises in areas of skills shortage to provide more work placements and pathways into employment into these industries for local young people.

The VET system needs to focus more on industries experiencing skills shortages and on people who are disadvantaged in the labor market (OTTE 2006). To respond to labor market skill needs and offer the mix of trades and

qualifications required the VET providers require more funding for training places (DE&T 2003; OTTE 2006). To utilise the local pool of unemployed or underemployed people more vocational trade programs and opportunities to secure pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships are needed in the Western Region of Melbourne. Relevant and understandable information about labor market trends needs to be provided to enable people to develop skills and adapt to a changing labor market. A broader discussion about new approaches and solutions exemplified by Buchannan's 'skill ecosystem' projects will also need to be discussed with local enterprises, community stakeholders, Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers and parents to offer some fresh ways of thinking about old issues (Buchannan 2005). DEST funds (2005) for expanded Local Community Partnership (LCP) programs as well as Workplace Learning (WLMW) may allow these programs to be better equipped to assist in responding better to local economic conditions. Further investment in current Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs and spending money on further vocational skills development in the trades, including engineering and construction will contribute to improving the local economy and the nation's productivity.

### **Recommendation**

WLMW needs to focus on recruiting enterprises in areas of skills shortages to provide more work placement opportunities for vocational students to improve their future job prospects. WLMW also needs to assist in compiling and distributing useful and relevant information about labor market trends including emerging skill needs to careers advisors, training providers and those assisting local unemployed people (OTTTE 2006).

## **Additional paperwork**

Enterprises, in survey work placement Item 18, were asked if they thought they were spending too much time filling out work placement paper work. Work placement paperwork included legal forms, workplace assessment log books and program evaluation feedback forms. The research revealed as seen in Figure 4, that generally enterprises did not feel work placement paper work was a concern. About 74 percent of the respondents were not concerned with the additional paperwork and did not believe it was a problem. A smaller proportion, 26 percent expressed concern. But enterprises indicated that managing work placement processes and procedures including workplace assessment logbooks and evaluation feedback forms was *important* to them as illustrated in Figure 11 but that *effectiveness* of this service could be improved. This indicated that although enterprises did not see assessment requirements as too time consuming, they had some concerns regarding assessment and evaluation practices. In the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) were required to provide enterprises with orientation briefings, information about legal requirements and assessment processes. Taylor (2005) also noted that the arrangements for workplace assessment were inconsistent as was the monitoring of students in the workplace and called for an overall improvement of the workplace experience for employers and students.

WLMW has also noted that there was great inconsistency and variability in student log book, assessment and evaluation processes and acknowledge the need for improvement in these areas. Assessment and evaluation processes could be better coordinated and streamlined at the regional level. The DEST *Guidelines* (2005) required Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) to implement six quality principles including the documentation of the roles and responsibilities between the LCPs like Workplace Learning (WLMW) and

partner organisations. Current roles and responsibilities for work placement including occupational health and safety, student assessment and log books and contact during the progress of the placement were unclear and in need of clarification. Agreement about roles and responsibilities needs to be developed and documented to ensure a cooperative working relationship between schools, WLMW and enterprises are maintained.

Understanding employer responsibilities including occupational health and safety, WorkCover, legal forms and payment were identified by employers as the most *important* component of the service but not as *effectively* delivered as shown in Figure 11 and it can be concluded that WLMW needs to provide enterprises with more administrative support to understand work placement responsibilities. The Department of Education and Training (WorkCover 2004; DE&T 2003) provides this in the document *Structured Workplace Learning Guidelines for Employers*. It sets out employers responsibilities and provides information to assist them with induction and supervision of students in the workplace (Sofweb 2003). WLMW needs to provide this information about employer responsibilities to enterprises either by email, mail or fax.

### **Recommendation**

WLMW with the support of the LLENs will work with the schools to better coordinate and streamline workplace assessment log books, feedback forms and to provide better support for enterprises with workplace assessment processes. Agreement about the roles and responsibilities of schools and WLMW needs to be developed and documented for work placement occupational health and safety, student assessment and log books and industry visits or contacting students and workplace supervisors by phone during the progress of the placement.

## **Benefits and reasons of hosting a work placement students**

The survey questions focused on the quality of the work placement service revealed that enterprises did benefit from the program as most enterprises, 67 percent said that they benefited from the program. This statistic was also consistent with data collected by WLMW from 2004 evaluation forms where the same proportion of enterprises also reported they benefited. The benefits enterprises described were divided into four broad themes “*the organisation gained extra productivity; staff gained supervisory and other valuable skills; increased recruitment opportunities; and the program benefited industry, the student and the community*” as illustrated in Figure 3. These findings also mirrored those noted in the literature about the benefits enterprises reported when participating in vocational and work placement programs (Mulraney & Turner 2001).

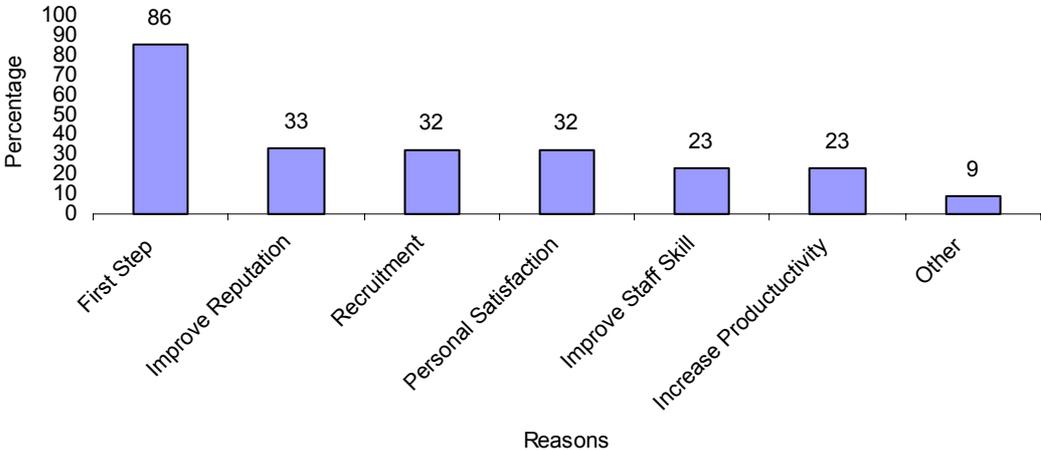
Enterprises were asked about what motivated them to host work placement students and reasons cited were mainly altruistic. As seen in Figure 3 86 percent of enterprises surveyed responded that they hosted work placement students to provide them with their first step. 32 percent said that the reasons were to improve their reputation, for recruitment purposes and for personal satisfaction and 25 percent stated that the reason was to increase productivity and to increase staff satisfaction. But when asked about what characteristics they preferred students to bring to the workplace as illustrated in Figure 4, they said they preferred the most talented and reliable students who were completing VET in Years 11 and 12. 86 percent said they preferred the most talented and reliable students and 61 percent preferred students in Year 12 and just over a half preferred students studying VET and Year 11. 42 percent of the respondents preferred VCAL and 39 percent preferred Year 10 students. Only 14 percent of enterprises stated they were willing to host students considered ‘at risk’ of leaving school, eight percent would host disabled

students and only four percent would be willing to host students with juvenile justice experience. This agrees with findings by Malley et al (1999) and Strathdee (2003) that employers prefer the 'right' workers and want students with the right attitudes and skills to have access to work placement.

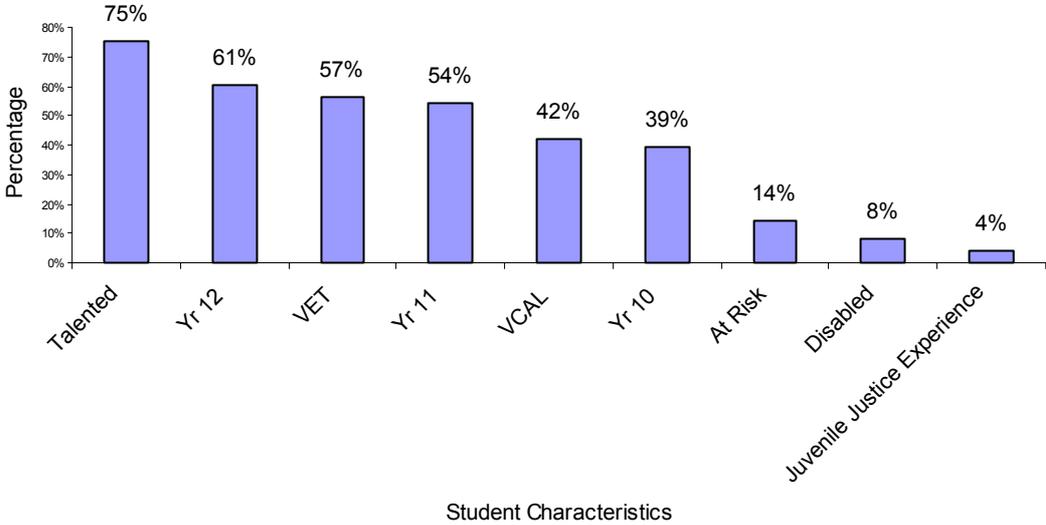
A small number of enterprises surveyed 18 percent said they did not benefit from the program. The responses can be summarised into two broad themes that included "*the program benefited students only; and that too much valuable time was spent supervising and training and completing paper work.*" Harris & Turner (2002) also found that whilst employers displayed considerable altruism they saw few benefits other than 'feel good' considerations, and the additional costs involved were of concern to some host enterprises (HR-SCET 2004).

WLMW will continue to promote the benefits of the work placement program with a renewed focus on the benefits identified by enterprises and the mutual benefits of the program. WLMW will promote the benefit of hosting work placement students to enterprises experiencing a shortage of labor. These enterprises could choose students most suited to their enterprise as future employees and provide students with a much needed 'first step' into work.

**Figure 3. Reasons for Hosting Work Placement students**



**Figure 4. Student Characteristics Preferred by Employers**



**Recommendations**

WLMW needs to advocate Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs to enterprises and promote work placement to industries looking to

recruit staff. WLMW will also establish a list of enterprises prepared to host students with special needs and monitor student progress at work placement more closely. This will help to reduce the number of unsuccessful letters sent to students and increase the number of available work placements on the web site and reduce some of the concerns raised by students and schools.

### **Were students work ready and prepared for work placement?**

Enterprises thought students were generally well prepared for work placement which concurs with Mulraney and Turner's (2001) findings that students were well prepared for work placement and many employers were happy with their contribution to the workplace. The vast majority, 86 percent of the enterprises surveyed, said they were satisfied that students were prepared for work placement as illustrated in Figure 7. This is a confirmation of the success of the Workplace Learning (WLMW) and Wyn Bay LLEN 'work readiness' induction to work placement program that was delivered to the schools as an important part of preparing students for the workplace.

Enterprises were also asked about what fundamentals students should bring to the workplace for a successful work placement. Their responses included *“good presentation, communication skills, more confidence in their ability, show interest and willing to learn about to the industry, ability to problem solve and work semi independently, ability to listen and take instruction, initiative, good attitude, good work ethic, maturity, punctual, honest and friendly.”* These desirable social attributes and the ability to learn technical skills reflected the employability skills developed by Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and Business Council of Australia (BCA) and described the skills employers looked for in workers to meet their workplace skill needs (ACCI 2002).

Enterprises generally viewed work placement students positively and nominated 37 students, representing about five percent of all the WLMW 2004 work placement students, for the Western Metropolitan Region (WMR) Employer and Industry Awards. These Awards enabled students to be recognised for participating in vocational training and to be rewarded by industry sponsors. In the work placement category students were nominated by host enterprises for their outstanding performance in the workplace and were described by their workplace supervisors as *“punctual, well dressed, friendly team players who displayed enthusiasm, intelligence, initiative, motivation, a great attitude, willingness to listen and learn and required minimal supervision”*.

Most enterprises expressed satisfaction with Workplace Learning’s (WLMWs) work placement booking procedure that included a phone call to negotiate a suitable placement date and a confirmation letter containing student placement details. Enterprises indicated that generally they only required an introductory phone call from the student before the placement started but if they required a resume, application letter, formal interview or informal meeting with the student prior to the placement they expected WLMW to arrange this with the student and the enterprise.

When enterprises were asked for their recommendations for improvement to the program their responses summarised in Appendix 2 included: *“more monitoring and contact during the work placement, increased student knowledge of the industry and the enterprise prior to placement, meeting the student and better student preparation prior to the placement and provision of more information about the student, wanted a character reference from the student.”* Some stakeholders preferred applicants to be more carefully screened and these findings were similar to those noted by Malley et al

(1999), Smith and Wilson (2002) and Strathdee (2003) where employers indicated that they required more careful screening of applicants.

Others that responded commented that some students were not ready for work and were difficult *“at times school students need to be closely supervised and behave worse than our children; need to be better assessed to see if they are suitable for the industry; students of late tend to test the supervisors too much; students think it is a bludge to get out of school.”*

WLMW had a flexible approach when selecting and matching students with enterprises. A small number of enterprise specific requirements were advertised on the WLMW web site to enable students to select a more suitable placement. Some enterprises provided a limited number of details that included location; dress code and a list of tasks students may be required to carry out during work placement. The student could then view the information on the web site [www.wlmw.net](http://www.wlmw.net) when selecting and applying for a work placement. These assisted students to be better prepared for the placement and complete the placement.

Ensuring students were prepared for work placement and matching students and enterprises more effectively were themes identified in the survey and improving these services would contribute to enterprise satisfaction with the program. Preparation for the workplace and lack of appropriate screening and matching of students to particular workplaces were also issues identified in the research literature (Mulraney & Turner 2001). To achieve quality compliance (DEST 2004) Workplace Learning (WLMW) needed to ensure that individual enterprise requirements were considered to ensure suitable students and enterprises were well matched.

The need for improvement in understanding the workplace and matching students and enterprises more effectively can be addressed by adding more

information about particular enterprises and their requirements to the web site for students to view. WLMW will ask enterprises in the Evaluation Feedback Form to provide more detail about their individual workplaces and to provide more information about the fundamentals students should bring to their particular workplace. This information will be collected from returned forms and the feedback will be added to the web site to enable students to view it and be better prepared to complete a successful placement.

The relationship between work readiness and the ability to complete a successful work placement and placement cancellations was another issue identified in need of attention. Enterprises indicated understanding work placement cancellations, illness and absence procedures was *important* to them and that WLMW needed to provide them with more assistance in these areas. WLMW staff members had been monitoring work placement cancellations that were at about 20 percent throughout 2003 and 2004 but increased in 2005 due to increasing workload. WLMW staff reported that last minute cancellation of booked work placements by the student or the school was of great concern to enterprises. Student cancellations occurred for a variety of reasons including last minute changes due students having other commitments, timetable changes, family issues or that they had found an alternative placement they were more comfortable attending. Cancellations were also recorded on the WLMW database due to non attendance, not turning up on the first day or attending one or two days only or attending the first week only but not attending the second week and indicated a lack of work readiness, confidence and commitment to work placement by the student. A system that recorded the different reasons for student cancellations was introduced in 2005 to help identify the main causes of cancellations and will be part of the effort to examine the problem and identify strategies to reduce cancellations in the future.

Reasons for such a high rate of placement cancellations were complex as students were not always well equipped or ready to attend work placement for various reasons. Work placements had been the most common way of preparing vocational students to be work ready. WLMW will need to promote a range of work readiness models to schools and encourage students to select and develop work related projects from their own interests and ideas under the Adopt a Schools Program and this may have the added benefit of reducing work placement cancellations and enterprise dissatisfaction (DEST 2005; Turner 2002).

Clarification and documentation of work placement roles and responsibilities of the VET providers and WLMW including work placement cancellations are vital for the maintenance of cooperative working relationship between Workplace Learning (WLMW) schools and enterprises. This will also contribute to the development of a strategy to reduce placement cancellations that includes improved recording of cancellations together with closer attention to work readiness and better monitoring of students attending work placements.

### **Recommendations**

WLMW needs to promote the advantages of its work readiness program to ensure it is delivered to all participating VET providers as part of each student's work readiness preparation and teacher's professional development. The provision of adequate support by WLMW was seen as essential by enterprises and WLMW needs to focus on managing the work placement program adequately for enterprises. This also includes updating the web site with more information about specific workplace requirements to ensure students are more appropriately matched with enterprises.

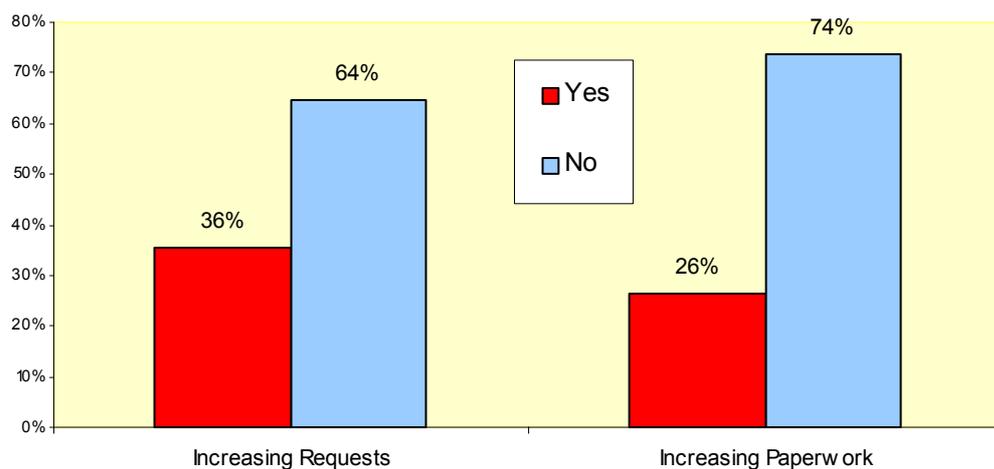
Agreement about the roles and responsibilities of schools and WLMW needs to be developed and documented for work placement cancellations and responding to enterprise requests for more support, information and site visits.

WLMW will continue to promote the Adopt a School program that offers a wider range of activities for learning about work that includes work placement industry visits, mentoring and work related projects.

### **Increasing demand and availability of work placements**

In the 2004 surveyed enterprises were asked if they were concerned about the increasing requests for work placements, 64 percent were not concerned and 36 percent expressed concern. When ringing employers to book placements in 2004 WLMW staff found many employers were happy to continue to take students, others requested a break after hosting one or two students. Others preferred 5 or 10 day block placements only and did not want to host students one day per week as requested by the school.

**Figure 5. Are you concerned?**



WLMW responded to this information by recording enterprise comments and

preferences on the database and when enterprises were contacted again these needs were taken into account to ensure they remained connected to the program.

Only a small number 12 percent of enterprises that completed evaluation forms in 2004 did not want to continue to host students. Reasons given were both enterprise and program management related issues. This was also the response from a small number, 8 percent, of the enterprises that were surveyed and were no longer willing to participate in the program. Reasons given reflected themes identified in the literature and included that “*the enterprise was too small; there was a lack of work and a lack of variety of tasks and a lack of staff suitable for supervising students*” (Little & Fallshaw, 2003; Malley et al 1999; Harris & Turner 2002).

Some of the survey respondents also cited some concern about the shortcomings of the WLMW work placement program. These enterprises expressed some concern with the quality of the work placement service that included “*the student was not interested; student did not turn up and that the support provided by WLMW and the schools was inadequate; would have liked more input and contact from school and WLMW during the work placement*”. These findings mirrored those of KPA Consulting (2004) that the demand was potentially overwhelming for enterprises, that placements were of variable quality, and that teachers had difficulty visiting and supporting students in the workplace. They emphasised the increasing need for a dedicated work placement coordinator to support the student and enterprise during the placement (NCVER 2005). Enterprise comments listed in Appendix 2 also reflected these broad themes and are summarised as follows: “*To have someone from WLMW or school to visit the students; phone call or meet supervisor early in placement to ensure all is going well; ensure they are matched to the appropriate industry of choice; for the students to come in*

*person to meet staff before commencement of the placement; résumé dropped off personally; to study what work placement they are willing to do; in the past we have had students with special needs and we were not informed of these beforehand; better preparation of students before they start; students need to understand the expectations of the workforce”.*

In 2005 there were five new VCAL schools in the Western Metropolitan Region that WLMW agreed to support with work placement coordination services. The workload increased in 2005 and as no extra resources were allocated for recruitment of new enterprises or for the continuing support of enterprises hosting students, the demand for work placements started to outstrip supply. During this time WLMW staff reported that enterprises expressed increasing dissatisfaction with the program. Many enterprises refused to take on students due to over-subscription and were no longer interested in participating in the program. This was also a theme identified in the HR-SCET (2004) report that there were a finite number of placements that could be accessed while maintaining a positive relationship with employers.

During 2005 many enterprises experienced increased demand for work placement as WLMW staff continued to contact regular program supporters rather than recruit new enterprises due to lack of time. Contacting and recruiting new enterprises was very time consuming and when demand for placements was so great and the focus was on processing work placement applications quickly, there was little time allocated for the vital recruitment of new enterprises. This pressure on staff also resulted in much less contact or support being provided to students and enterprises during the progress of work placements. Yet other enterprises listed on the database were not contacted regularly and did not have the opportunity to host a student and as a result withdrew from the program altogether and this corroborated Malley et al's

(1999) findings where enterprises became disengaged when they were not contacted on a regular basis.

During 2003 and 2004 students who were not found a placement were contacted and alternative placements were negotiated with them. This reduced the number of unsuccessful letters that were sent to students who could not be placed in the enterprises they requested, due to enterprises saying no and when no alternative placement could be found. In 2005 unsuccessful letters increased and were often sent to the student and school at the last minute. This resulted in them finding out at the last minute that no placement could be found for them. When the rest of their classmates were attending work placement these students had no other arrangements in place and no placement to attend. This was an unsatisfactory outcome for both the student and the school and the schools expressed concerns with this approach. Workplace Learning (WLMW) did not succeed in complying with the quality principles outlined in the DEST (2004) *Guidelines* that required them to inform schools in a timely manner that no placements could be found for their students to ensure these students were provided with alternative arrangements and other appropriate support.

In 2005 WLMW continued to agree to provide work placement services to all new VCAL schools, vocational programs and work experience programs. In 2002 WLMW secured 855 work placements for 34 schools, in 2003 they secured 960 work placements for 31 schools and in 2004, 1072 placements for 39 schools. In 2004 the Melton Brimbank LLEN gave WLMW some extra funds to provide work placements for the new VCAL schools within Melton Brimbank area. In 2005 this extra funding was no longer available, but WLMW continued to agree to provide work placement services to all existing and all new VCAL schools within the three LLEN regions with less staff than in previous years. This resulted in huge productivity gains in securing work

placement bookings but the goodwill WLMW had worked so hard to achieve with schools and enterprises was put at risk as WLMW had reached the limits of its ability and in some cases over extended its ability to provide adequate support to host enterprises and schools.

In 2005 DEST released *The Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisor (ANICA) directions paper* stating its intention to allocate Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) defined regional boundaries to work within (DEST 2005). The Australian Government's intention was to redistribute funding to 213 Local Community Partnerships to achieve national coverage within new geographic boundaries (DEST 2005). Local Community Partnerships were to submit a Request for Funding (RFF) for three years for the delivery of three specific services, SWL work placement program, and Adopt a School Program (ASP) which were existing programs that now would be expanded to include a Career and Transition Support (CTS) Program (DEST 2005).

Competition had driven WLMW to continue to expand and provide support to many more schools in 2005 at a level that could not be sustained due to funding and staffing constraints. The demand for work placement continued to increase and impact on enterprises' ability to remain engaged with education and training programs. In future Workplace Learning (WLMW) needs to endeavor to maintain a positive relationship with enterprises and provide the support they require and balance this with increasing requests for more access to workplaces.

With the expanded role for Local Community Partnerships outlined in the DEST (2005) *ANICA Directions Paper* it was hoped that WLMW could begin to address some of difficulties experienced in the 2005 program and help restore some of goodwill lost. The focus would be on delivering a quality service to enterprises and schools as well as continued improvements in productivity. WLMW needs to respond to enterprise feedback and contact the

enterprise by phone during the work placement to talk to both student and workplace supervisor to address any concerns raised.

### **Recommendations**

Enterprises indicated they required more phone contact during placements. WLMW will work to provide more effective support for students and enterprises during the progress of the work placement to ensure enterprises remain engaged in the program and to increase their participation in the program. WLMW will also work to encourage schools to visit or contact students during the work placement. WLMW will concentrate on recruiting new enterprises and maintaining regular contact with them. WLMW also needs to maintain regular contact with its current supporters and continue to give them the opportunity to host a student and remain connected with the program.

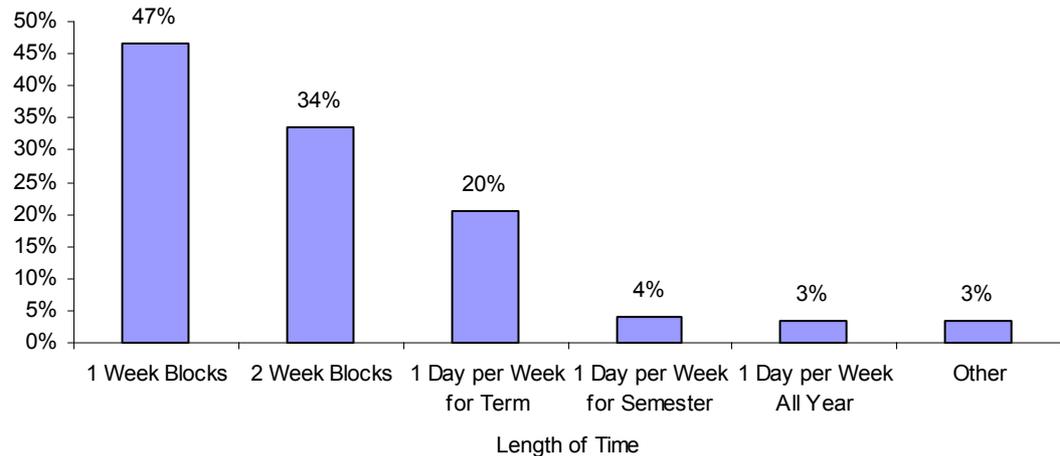
WLMW will continue to work with the local community and industry to identify enterprises that are not accessible by public transport and work on strategies to address the issue at the local level.

### **Preferred duration and pattern of work placements**

#### **What enterprises want**

Survey work placement Item 16 asked enterprises about their preferred length of time for hosting work a placement student. They indicated that they preferred block placements for five or ten days. Figure 6 shows most preferred block placements, as 81 percent preferred a pattern of week blocks, with half of the respondents' preferring one-week blocks and 34 percent two-week blocks.

**Figure 6. Preferred Length of Time Employers Willing to Host Student**



One day per week work placements were much less popular with only 20 percent of enterprises agreeing to host students for one day a week for one term. Only four percent agreed to host work placement students for one day per week for a semester and three percent for one day a week for the year.

When enterprises were asked about their preferred number of work placement students per year (survey Item 15) most agreed to host more than one student per year and some agreed to host up to 6 students per year. Most of the enterprises, 21 percent agreed to host two students per year and 19 percent agreed to host six per year, 14 percent agreed to host three or four students per year, 13 percent preferred one per year and a small number, 8 percent up to five per year.

The issue of managing requests for work placements early in the school year and assisting students to be work ready prior to attending work placement was partly resolved for Workplace Learning (WLMW) when occupational health and safety legislation was introduced. All students undertaking placements now have to complete accredited occupational health and safety training

relevant to the workplace where they will be placed before commencing the placement. This has resulted in the majority of work placements requests from schools to be later in the year giving both WLMW and the schools more time to prepare students for the workplace to develop work readiness skills.

But some schools, particularly those with VCAL students, continue to request work placements for extended periods of time. Length of time spent in the workplace was identified as a common management issue for those coordinating and organizing work placements (NCVER 2005; Taylor 2005). Workplace learning (WLMW) in responding to enterprise requirements continues to inform schools of enterprise preference for one-week block placements at network meetings and many schools have responded by requesting block placements of short duration instead of one day per week for extended periods. In Queensland there was a policy of securing longer placements in part-time School-based New Apprenticeship rather than work placements (McIntyre & Pithers 2000). This Queensland model where part-time School-based New Apprenticeships are paid as employees and spend one day per week in the workplace needs to be promoted by WLMW as a preferred option for teachers of students who favor spending extended time in the workplace and less time at school. WLMW needs to carefully negotiate the competing requirements and different interests of enterprises, schools and students when discussing what is considered a 'sufficient' time spent in the workplace.

### **Recommendation**

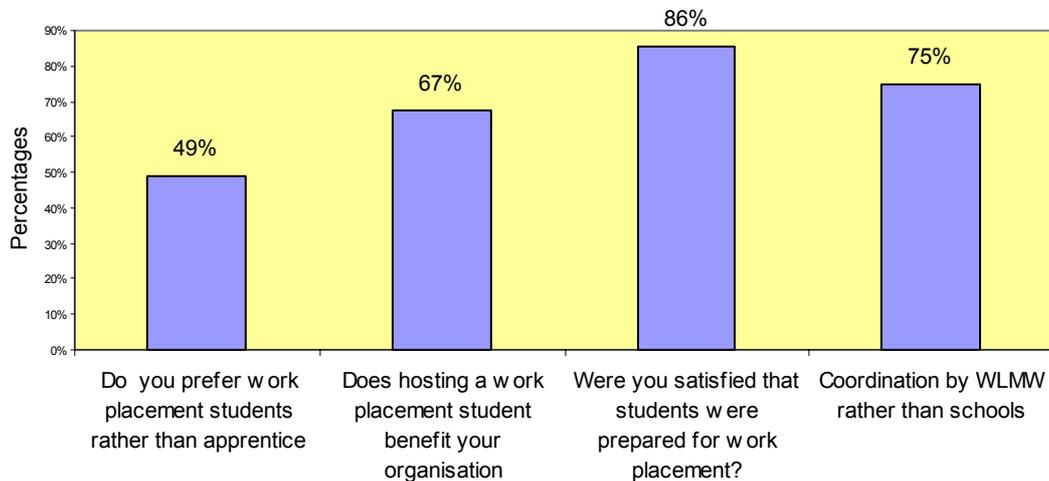
WLMW needs to continue to provide VET providers, schools and TAFE with information about enterprise preferences and advise them that if they request placements for extended periods of time students should be encouraged to apply for New Apprenticeship or traineeships or be employed as part-time employees in School-based New Apprentices. WLMW will continue to ask

enterprises if they are interested in employing an apprentice or trainee through the Evaluation Feedback Forms and continue to refer interested enterprises to the local Group Training Organisation (GTO), working with the schools and Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) Workplace Connect.

### **Coordinated single point enterprise contact**

It was discovered that 75 percent of the survey respondents preferred Workplace Learning (WLMW) to coordinate and manage the work placement program centrally rather than be contacted by individual teachers, schools, parents or students, as indicated in Figure 7. Demand for work placement had grown quickly and a coordinated ‘single point enterprise contact’ approach to ensure enterprises were not overwhelmed with requests was endorsed as the preferred approach by employers (VCAA 2005). Kelloch (2002) had also noted that a work placement coordinator who maintained a close relationship between schools and enterprises was seen as essential by both the enterprise and school staff to sustaining the program. WLMW coordinated placements centrally for clusters of schools, primarily within three LLEN regions; Wyndham Bayside LLEN, Brimbank Melton LLEN, Maribyrnong & Moonee Valley LLEN and in 2004-2005 some Capital City LLEN (CC LLEN) schools were also included. WLMW found it increasingly difficult to provide the level of coordination services that enterprises required as resources allocated in 2005 were not enough to keep pace with the growth in demand for work placements.

**Figure 7. What Employers Want**



WLMW had taken a flexible approach when coordinating placements for schools adapting to their individual needs and preferences. In an effort to reduce any potential burden for enterprises participating in work placement, as recommended by the DEST (2004) *Guidelines*, in the future WLMW needs to manage the demand for placements more sensitively to ensure enterprises are not overwhelmed with requests. The challenge will be to foster a ‘single point enterprise contact’ approach and balance this with the ability of each school to continue to develop relationships with the enterprises in their community. Minimising multiple contact approaches to enterprises when promoting industry education partnerships will require agreement about work placement roles and responsibilities and a great level of cooperation and coordination between the different stakeholders.

### **Recommendation**

WLMW will promote a coordinated enterprise contact approach across the western region of Melbourne to ensure enterprises are not unnecessarily bombarded with requests for work related activities from multiple sources and

in response to enterprise preferences adopt an approach that takes into account their needs and requirements.

### **Requests for further information, support and visits**

Enterprises indicated they were happy with the work placement booking service that included a phone call to negotiate suitable placement dates but stated that they wanted phone contact when students were at the workplace and required more support or a site visit at their request only if they were experiencing some difficulties with the students.

The 2004 Evaluation Forms provided feedback that can help clarify these results. When enterprises were asked if they would like WLMW to visit, or provide more information or support 76 percent stated they were happy with the service provided by WLMW. They required as listed *“a phone call during the placement, more support is required only if we have problems.”* They indicated a minimum requirement was a phone call from WLMW staff during the progress of the work placement. Phone calls to students and enterprises were carried out more regularly in 2003-2004 but did not take place in 2005 due to the increased demand for work placements and the resulting unmanageable workload. WLMW needs to respond to enterprise feedback and improve this area of the service. Taylor (2005) in his research into the level of program service also identified monitoring of students during the progress of work placements as generally poor and in need of improvement.

Twenty four percent of the enterprises that returned evaluations requested a site visit and more information and support from Workplace Learning (WLMW). WLMW will continue to ask enterprises through Evaluation Forms if they require further information support and visits and be more responsive to individual requests as a priority. This enables WLMW to identify need and

allocate resources more effectively as enterprises indicated they considered routine induction visits to the workplace of least importance to them.

**Recommendation**

Those enterprises that indicate they require further information, support and site visits will be contacted as a priority to have their particular needs addressed and concerns resolved to improve their satisfaction with the service.

## **Did the teacher visit during the work placement?**

A total of 39 schools, TAFE and ACE providers participated in the Workplace learning (WLMW) work placement program in 2004. Enterprises reported in the client satisfaction surveys, the Evaluations Forms, that of the schools they were in contact with, 25 percent had teachers who visited students during work placement but half of these visited only sometimes. About 28 percent of participating schools did not visit students at all. Enterprises generally expressed a desire for more contact, a phone call or site visit from the school during the work placement. Their comments are summarised as follows *“School teacher did not visit, would be good if teacher visits, no teacher did not visit, but it would be great, could site visits by teachers be scheduled to ensure supervisor is available, teacher failed to introduce herself, was noted on the premises but it was unclear if visit was formal or informal.”*

Maintaining a good relationship with enterprises was also seen as a critical element for a successful work placement program (Sheed et al 2003). It was found that contacting the student and the enterprise during the work placement not only provided support to the student and but was also a way of valuing the enterprises contribution (Sheed et al 2003). A common complaint by enterprises and students was that these workplace visits did not occur on a regular basis and often not at all. It was recommended that student performance was monitored in the workplace and even though this was done by workers charged with supervising the student on-the-job, the school also needed to be involved in this supervision (Misko 2000).

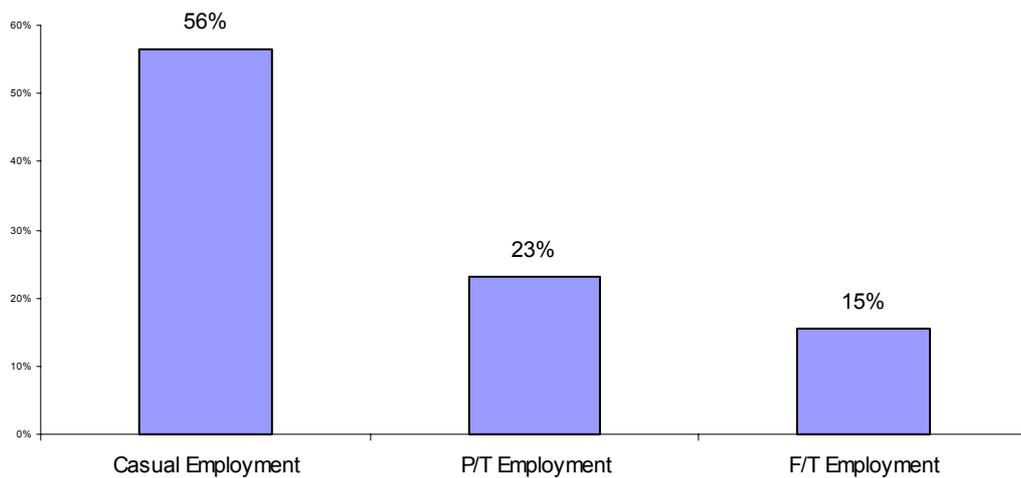
### **Recommendation**

Workplace Learning (WLMW) and the VET providers, schools and TAFE, need to work together to ensure enterprises and students are monitored and supported during work placement.

## Work placement and finding a job

The survey has shown that Workplace Learning (WLMW) has achieved the Government's transition policy objective and improved student transition outcomes. Work placement appears to be a successful pathway into employment immediately after school but this was not always sustainable employment. Figure 8 indicates that 32 percent of the enterprises surveyed had employed a work placement student but most were employed casually. Some 56 percent of these enterprises reported that the employment was on a casual basis, 23 percent were employed on a part-time basis and only 15 percent of these enterprises employed students on full-time basis. These work placements were targeted at real local job opportunities satisfying one of the objectives of achieving a successful transition to work for vocational students.

**Figure 8. Work Placement Led to 32% Employment**

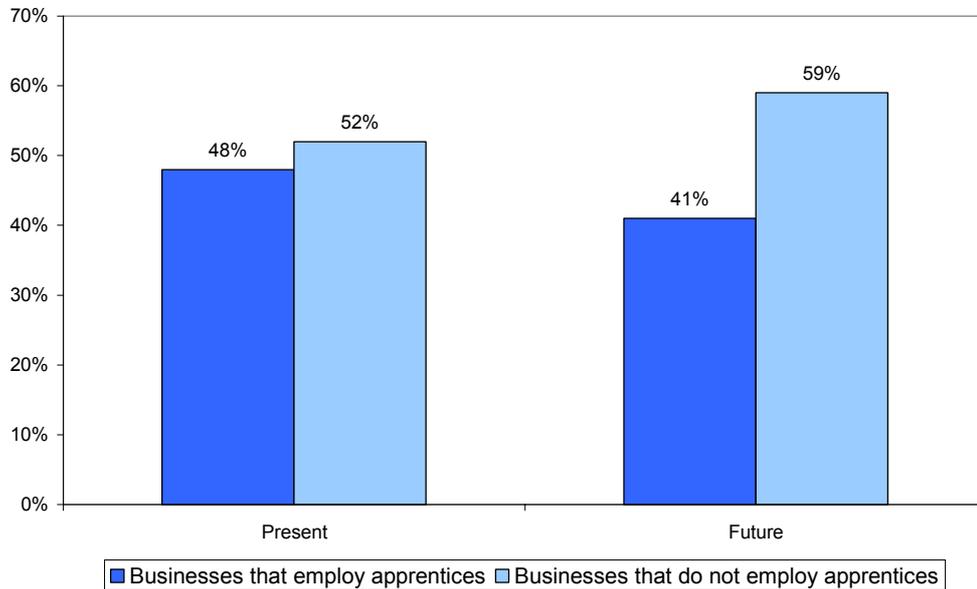


The challenge for WLMW is to increase the number of placements available to students in all industry groups particularly those experiencing skills shortages to provide students with a pathway to work. WLMW has a shortage of host enterprises in many industry groups on its placement database and a resulting shortage of available work placements on its website.

### **Finding apprenticeships and traineeships**

About 20 percent of School-based New Apprenticeships (SBNAs) had worked for the employer before commencing their SBNA; either as an ordinary part-time worker or as a work placement student (Smith & Wilson 2002). Workplace Learning (WLMW) staff also reported that some students had taken up School-based New Apprenticeships at their work placement employer. Other students had left school prior to completing year 12 to take up employment and a full-time New Apprenticeship or Traineeship at their work placement employer. Enterprises that had hosted work placement students were asked in the survey if they had employed an apprentice or trainee and whether they were considering employing one in the future. Figure 9 showed that 48 percent of program employers reported that they currently employed an apprentice or trainee, but only 41 percent said they would employ apprentices in the future. Therefore about half of the enterprises, that returned surveys, employed apprentices and trainees in 2004 but indicated that this would decrease by seven percent in the future.

**Figure 9. Apprenticeships - Present and Future**



There was some concern by the government, unions and industry groups that some enterprises preferred to host work placement students rather than employ an apprentice and participate in staff education and training (DEST 2004; HR-SCET 2004; Kelloch 2002). Survey data corroborated these findings as nearly half (49%) of the respondents stated 'yes' to the preference of hosting a work placement student rather than employ an apprentice. To help counter this trend WLMW needs to promote work placement as a short-term option as students are only paid \$5 per day. Short-term work placements provide students with the opportunity to develop industry specific skills as well as generic work readiness skills and increase the prospect for selection into employment, apprenticeships and further training. Those students who prefer to spend extended periods of time in the workplace or at TAFE will be encouraged to apply for a part-time School-based New Apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeships as the favored option. WLMW also needs to work closely with the VET providers to advance opportunities for girls and to ensure their

participation in training so their prospects for gaining full-time sustainable work improves.

### **Recommendation**

WLMW needs to inform schools and employers about the differences between Structure Workplace Learning (SWL) work placement programs, pre-apprenticeships and part-time School-based New Apprenticeships (SBNAs) and full-time New Apprenticeships and Traineeships and promote the advantages of each program.

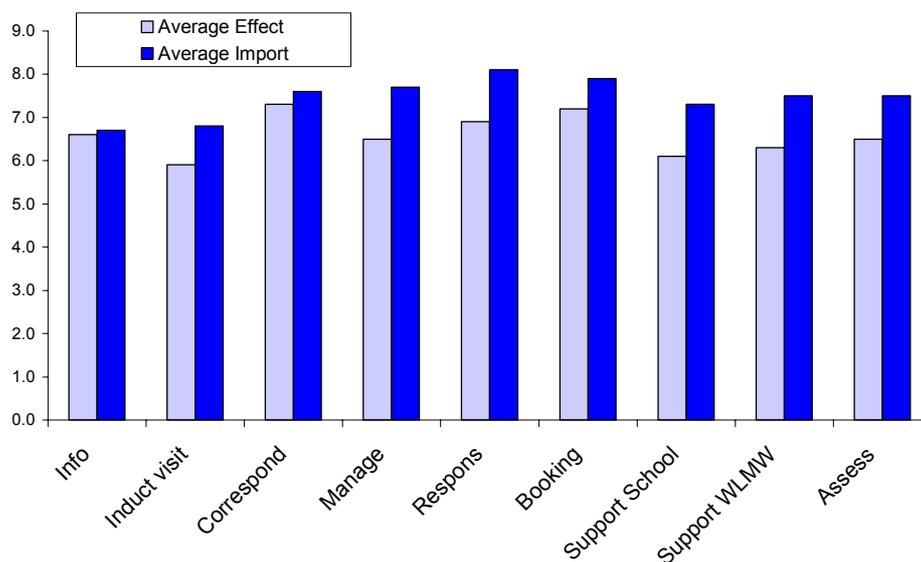
WLMW needs to work closely with VET providers (Secondary schools and TAFE) and the Group Training Company, Workplace Connect, to ensure students (particularly girls) and their parents have information about vocational options and pathways into local TAFE programs and local job opportunities.

## Discussion and interpretation of findings

### Detailed summary of *Effectiveness* and *Importance* findings

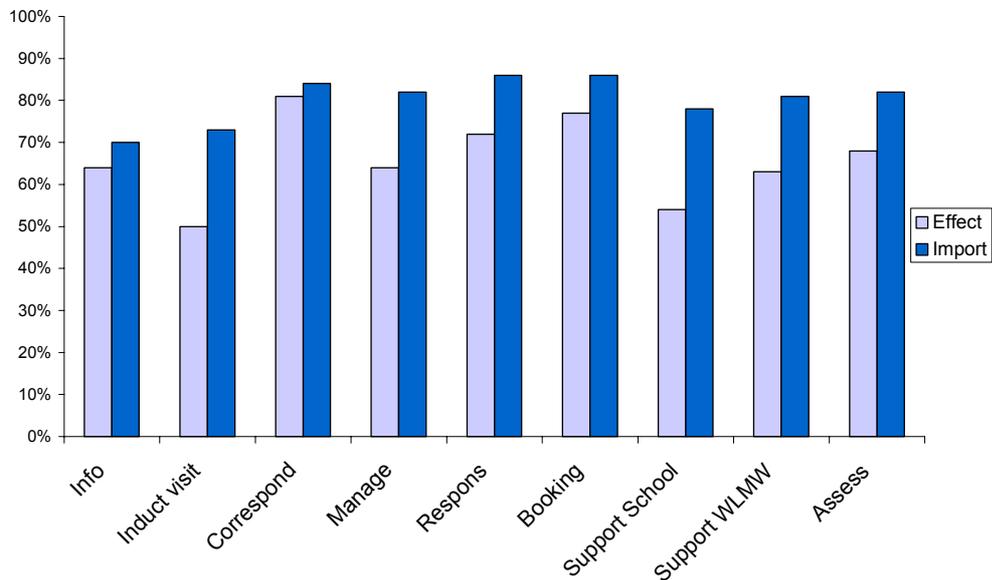
For the Likert-type items in the survey enterprises were asked to rate, on a 10-point scale, the perceived quality of the work placement service, the *Effectiveness* of the service provided and the *Importance* of the service to them. Enterprises were asked to rate the *effectiveness*, and *importance* of the work placement service on a Likert scale of 1 to 10, with 1 low, 10 high. A quartile score of 5.1 to 7.5 indicated a more positive or good outcome and a score of 7.6 to 10, the highest quartile, was the best possible result and considered a very good outcome.

**Figure 10.** Effectiveness vs Importance



Even though the results expressed as mean and median were useful measures Figure 11 illustrates the percentage of enterprises that rated the service a score of 6 or more and provided a more specific insight into the level of satisfaction with the WLMW work placement service.

**Figure 11. Effectiveness vs Importance Score of Six or More**



Enterprises indicated they were generally satisfied with the service provided by WLMW in 2004. Enterprises agreed that they were provided with a work placement service that was both *effective* and *important* to them. Understanding employer placement responsibilities (Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), WorkCover, legal forms and payment), booking work placements (confirmation and cancellation letters), understanding work placement procedures (cancellation, illness and absence), correspondence (confirmation letters, Certificates of Appreciation) and support provided by WLMW during placement (phone call, communication, assistance, feedback) and understanding WLMW processes and procedures for student evaluation, log books and assessment in the workplace were most *important* to enterprises. They are listed here in order of *importance* and were rated as the top six components of the service by enterprises. Enterprises indicated that ongoing administration and management from WLMW was *important* for the success of the work placement program. Components of the work placement service that were rated as the *least important* to enterprises were support from

schools during the work placement (school visit), WLMW induction visits to the workplace and general information about work placement (brochure info packs, CD, application forms).

It was found that employer understanding of work placement responsibilities, including OHS, WorkCover, legal forms, payment) and the WLMW work placement booking services (confirmation and cancellation letters) were of greatest *importance* to them. Most enterprises considered that WLMW did help them to understand their work placement responsibilities and that it was the most essential and *important* component of the service, but they also indicated as illustrated in Figure 11 that efforts to assist employers to understand work placement responsibilities could be improved and delivered more *effectively*. Enterprises also agreed that the WLMW booking service (confirmation and cancellation letters) was nearly as *important* to them as they rated this component of the service as the second most *important* and also indicated that it was delivered nearly as *effectively* as also seen in Figure 11.

The next most *important* components of the service were found to be the understanding of work placement procedures (cancellation, illness and absence). Understanding of these procedures was *important* but delivery of the service was not quite as *effective* and it was noted that this service could also be improved as illustrated in Figure 11.

WLMW correspondence (confirmation letters, Certificates of Appreciation) was considered to be the most *effective* component of the service as illustrated in Figure 11 and Table 1. Even though correspondence *importance* rating was higher than *effectiveness* rating (Table 1) the difference between them was quite small indicating that the service was considered both *important* and nearly as *effectively* delivered. Support provided by WLMW during work placement (phone call, communication, assistance, feedback) and work placement processes and procedures including student evaluation, log books

and assessment also rated reasonably well and were considered *important* components of the service. As illustrated in Table 1 most enterprises considered that these components of the service were not as *effectively* delivered and could be targeted for future improvement. During 2004 and 2005 enterprises were only contacted by phone after the work placement was completed. When responding the survey enterprises made it clear they preferred WLMW to phone employers and students at the workplace during the work placement. Therefore dissatisfaction with the support services WLMW provided were reflected by the lower *effectiveness* rating and could be improved if regular phone contact during work placements was implemented.

Support from schools during work placement (school visits) was also considered *important* but less important to them than contact from WLMW. Enterprises indicated they were concerned with the *effectiveness* of this component of the service and this reflected their dissatisfaction with some of the participating schools that did not contact students at all during work placement. Enterprises indicated they required increased contact from WLMW with the student and workplace supervisor during the progress of work placement.

WLMW workplace induction visits to participating enterprises and work placement information (brochure, info pack, CD application form) still rated reasonably well overall but both were considered the least *important* components of the work placement service as illustrated in Table 1. Induction visits to the workplace by WLMW were considered the second least *important* component of the service and were also rated as the least *effective* component of the service together with sending information packs. No worksite visits were carried out to support the work placement program in 2004 or 2005 even though some enterprises requested site visits via feedback forms. Although

most employers indicated they were satisfied with the 'induction' pre placement phone briefing and confirmation correspondence some employers repeatedly requested visits and further support from WLMW and the lack of response to their requests led to their dissatisfaction and disengagement from the program during 2004-2005.

Work placement information (brochures, info packs and CD) sent by WLMW were of least *importance* to enterprises but were considered relatively *effective*. As a result of these findings WLMW needs to reorganize its current priorities and focus more effort and resources on the components of the work placement service enterprises revealed as most *important* to them but that were delivered less *effectively*.

**Table 1. Comparison of Effectiveness and Importance findings**

<b>Component of the service in order of Effectiveness (E)</b>	<b>(E) Means</b>	<b>Component of the service in order of Importance (I)</b>	<b>(I) Means</b>
Item 3 Correspondence (confirmation letters, Certificates of Appreciation)	7.3	Item 5 Understanding employer responsibilities OHS, WorkCover, Legal forms, payment	8.1
Item 6 Booking work placement (confirmation, cancellation)	7.2	Item 6 Booking work placement (confirmation, cancellation)	7.9
Item 5 Understanding employer responsibilities OHS, WorkCover, Legal Forms, payment	6.9		
		Item 4 Understanding work placement procedures cancellation illness and absence	7.7
		Item 3 Correspondence (confirmation letters, Certificates of Appreciation)	7.6
Item 1 Information (Brochure, info pack, CD, application form)	6.6	Item 8 Support given from WLMW during placement	7.5
Item 4 Understanding work placement procedures cancellation, illness and absence	6.5		
Item 9 Processes and procedures, student evaluation, log books and assessment	6.5		
Item 8 Support given from WLMW during placement	6.3	Item 9 Processes and procedures, student evaluation, log books and assessment in the workplace	7.5
Item 7 Support given from school during placement	6.1	Item 7 Support given from school during placement	7.3
Item 2 Induction to work placement program (WLMW visit to the workplace)	5.9	Item 2 Induction to work placement (WLMW visit to the workplace)	6.8
		Item 1 Information (Brochure, info pack, CD, application form)	6.7

## Effectiveness findings

For the Likert-type items in the survey respondents were asked to rate, on a 10-point scale how effective WLMW was in all the areas of service listed. Was the service ‘not at all effective’ or ‘extremely effective?’

The following table provides a summary of the *Effectiveness* data.

Table 2. Summary of Effectiveness Data

1 Information	3%	2%	2%	2%	22%	12%	15%	20%	11%	6%	Mean 6.6 Median 7.0 STDEV 2.1
2 Induction visit	7%	2%	3%	5%	23%	15%	11%	11%	6%	7%	Mean 5.9 Median 6.0 STDEV 2.3
3 Correspondence	1%	2%	1%	4%	10%	20%	10%	15%	24%	12%	Mean 7.3 Median 8.0 STDEV 2.0
4 Understanding student procedures	2%	2%	0%	8%	21%	17%	14%	12%	15%	6%	Mean 6.5 Median 6.0 STDEV 2.0
5 Understanding employer responsibility	1%	2%	4%	2%	17%	14%	19%	13%	19%	8%	Mean 6.9 Median 7.0 STDEV 2.0
6 Bookings	0%	2%	0%	4%	13%	18%	15%	12%	22%	11%	Mean 7.2 Median 7.0 STDEV 1.9
7 Support from School	2%	5%	6%	7%	20%	10%	18%	11%	9%	6%	Mean 6.1 Median 6.0 STDEV 2.3
8 Support from WLMW	3%	6%	4%	4%	17%	15%	17%	13%	11%	7%	Mean 6.3 Median 6.0 STDEV 2.3
9 Understand evaluation, logbook, assessment	3%	2%	2%	6%	15%	18%	16%	11%	17%	6%	Mean 6.5 Median 7.0 STDEV 2.2

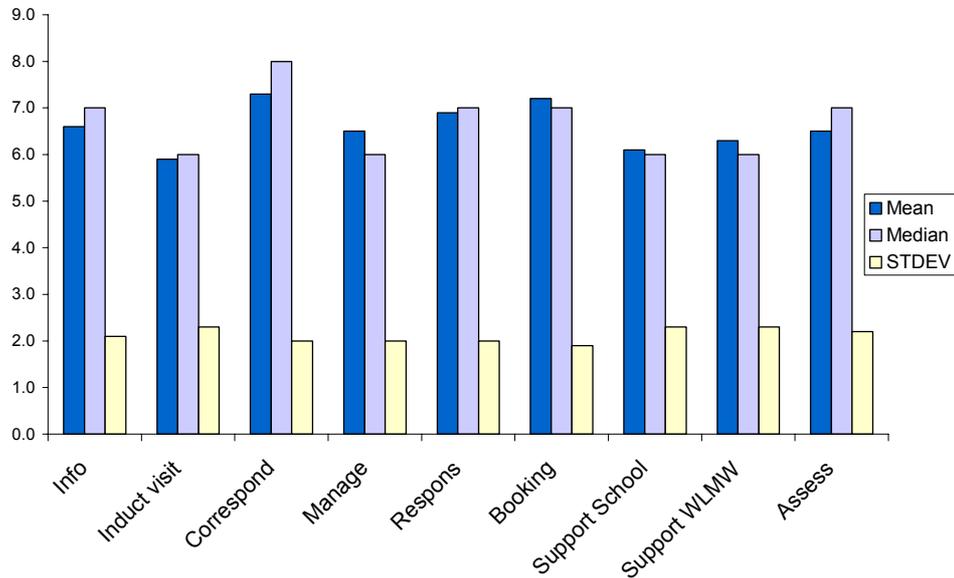
### Summary of effectiveness findings

Enterprises nominated the top six components of the service for *effectiveness* as illustrated in Figure 12 as correspondence, booking service, understanding employer responsibilities, information and understanding of cancellation, illness and absence procedures and student evaluation, log books and

assessment in the workplace. All scores for *effectiveness* were in the second highest quartile range of 5.1 to 7.5. WLMW correspondence and booking service were rated as the most *effective* components of WLMW work placement service by enterprises. Employer understanding of their responsibilities was next. This component of the service also rated reasonably highly and was considered a relatively *effective* part of WLMW service.

Provision of work placement information, understanding work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures and management of student evaluation logbooks and assessment were rated the next most *effective* components of the service. These work placement services that rated less well for *effectiveness* were identified by enterprises as areas requiring improvement. The support WLMW provided to enterprises during work placement rated next, support provided by schools and the induction to work placement program delivered were rated the least *effective* components of the service. Enterprises indicated that these three areas support provided by WLMW and schools and the induction program needed to be targeted for improvement.

**Figure 12. Employer Effectiveness Ratings**



## Detailed *effectiveness* findings

### Item 3 Correspondence from WLMW

Enterprises were asked to rate how *effective* WLMW were in all areas of quality service delivery. Item 3 asked enterprises how they rated the *effectiveness* of the correspondence they received from WLMW, including the confirmation letter and Certificates of Appreciation and Participation. 61 percent of the enterprises gave it a score of 7 and above on the Likert scale. Providing *effective* correspondence on average was 7.3, the highest rating given by the 122 enterprises that returned completed surveys. This rating was in the second highest quartile range, a rating of extremely *effective*, and a *good* result. Correspondence mean and median *effectiveness* ratings varied and were 7.3 & 8 respectively. The mean was lower than the median indicating that some enterprises gave correspondence a lower score, which reduced the overall rating average. The Standard Deviation of 2.4 also gave an

indication that there was quite a lot of variation in the responses to the question.

WLMW correspondence received the highest *effectiveness* rating, and hence was an endorsement of the quality correspondence WLMW sent to enterprises and the dedication of the customer service staff who actively participated in ensuring correspondence was of a high standard. Although enterprise indicated that WLMW had performed well in correspondence as it received the highest rating, the average rating could still be improved.

Correspondence in the form of the confirmation letter and ‘Certificates of Appreciation’ was central to WLMW communication with participating enterprises. Confirmation letters were sent to enterprises after initial phone contact had taken place to negotiate proposed placement suitability and preferred dates. If the enterprise agreed to host the student a confirmation letter was sent to confirm the student work placement booking and contained WLMW contact details and advised the enterprise to contact WLMW immediately if there were any concerns with student work placement progress. Work placement details were also attached and included student information and placement dates.

Provision of ‘Certificates of Appreciation’ to participating enterprises acknowledged their contribution to training students and helped to maintain goodwill for the program. Another Local Community Partnership (LCP) wanting to streamline its work placement services, when demand for their services was outstripping resources, asked enterprises what services they wished to retain? The distribution of ‘Certificates of Appreciation’ as an acknowledgement of host enterprise participation and contribution to student training was at the top of the list of services they wished the LCP to retain (G. Box, Pers. Comm., 2003).

## **Item 6 Booking work placements**

In Item 6 enterprises were asked to rate the work placement booking service. WLMW provided enterprises with a quality booking service that included telephone contact with each enterprise workplace supervisor to negotiate the request for work placement on behalf of the student, confirmation and cancellation letters.

WLMW had worked hard to provide a quality booking service to enterprises and they indicated in the survey that WLMW provided them with a quality booking service as they gave it the second highest *effectiveness* rating in the survey. 60 percent of the enterprises gave it a score of 7 and above on the Likert scale. They gave booking service a similar average and median *effectiveness* rating of 7.2 and 7.0 respectively and the Standard Deviation was 1.9.

This rating was again in the second highest quartile range, a rating of extremely *effective*, and a *good* result. This indicated that WLMW provided an *effective* booking service to enterprises participating in the work placement program. But as the booking service rated at the slightly lower end of the ratings scale it indicated that there was still room for some improvement to the service.

## **Item 5 Understanding employer responsibilities**

Item 5 asked enterprises to rate their understanding of employer responsibilities in the work placement program including their knowledge of WorkCover, legal forms, Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) and \$5.00 per day payment to students. 73 percent of enterprises that responded to the survey gave understanding of employer responsibilities a rating of 6 and above on the Likert scale. Understanding placement responsibilities mean and median *effectiveness* ratings were again similar at 6.9 and 7.0 respectively and

a Standard Deviation of 2.0. These were all in the second highest quartile range, and considered a *good* result.

This indicated that WLMW was reasonably *effective* at informing enterprises about work placement responsibilities and assisted employers understanding of their responsibilities. But as they were at a slightly lower end of the ratings scale this indicated there was room for improvement in this area of service and that enterprises required more information about Occupational Health and Safety, WorkCover, legal forms and payment.

### **Item 1 Information**

Item one asked enterprises how they rated the work placement information they received from WLMW. The information WLMW provided enterprises were in the form of brochures, information packs, CDs and program application forms. 64 percent of enterprises gave information a rating of 6 and above. The *effectiveness* of placement information averaged 6.6 and had a median of 7.0. But information mean and median varied and the Standard Deviation of 2.1 indicated that there was a variation in the responses for this item. Again lower scores given by some enterprises reduced the average *effectiveness* rating. These results were all in the second highest quartile range, and indicated a *good* result overall, but as they were at a slightly lower end of the ratings scale there was still room for improvement in this area of service. Enterprises were indicating they required more concise information about their placement responsibilities rather than lots of general program information.

#### **Item 4 Understanding work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures**

#### **Item 9 Management of student evaluation form, log books and workplace assessment**

In Item 4 enterprises were asked how *effective* WLMW was at helping them to understand work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures. 64 percent of the respondents gave understanding of these procedures a rating of 6 and above. *The effectiveness* rating for helping enterprises to understand work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures had a mean of 6.5 and median of 6.0. The results were again in the second highest quartile range, and were considered a *good* result and indicated that participating enterprises generally understood these procedures.

Item 9 asked how *effective* WLMW was at managing student work placement Evaluation, logbook and assessment processes and procedures and 68 percent rated it 6 and above on the Likert scale. Managing student work placement evaluation and assessment procedures, mean and median *effectiveness* rating varied, 6.5 & 7 respectively. The mean was lower than the median indicating that some enterprises gave it a lower score, which reduced the overall rating average. Although WLMW had performed well overall in managing student evaluation and assessment processes enterprises identified this component of the service in need of improvement.

#### **Item 8 Support given by WLMW during work placement**

Survey Item 8 asked enterprises to rate the support given by WLMW during the work placement. The support provided included communication, phone contact and assistance and feedback. 63 percent of survey respondents gave support a rating of 6 and above on the Likert scale. Support mean was 6.3 and median 6.0 and a Standard Deviation of 2. This rating was still in the second

highest quartile range, and a *good* result. This indicated that WLMW generally provided an *effective* support service to enterprises. But this rating was the third lowest of the *effectiveness* scores given; and clearly identified that the support WLMW provided enterprises was in need of improvement.

The Evaluation forms also provided WLMW with daily feedback on client satisfaction and these also helped to clarify these lower results. Enterprises clearly stated that they required phone contact when during the progress of student work placement, and that WLMW had failed to do this. Enterprises clearly indicated that they preferred to be contacted when a student was in the workplace and that this was a required component of the service.

#### **Item Support provided by schools and WLMW induction visit to the workplace**

Item 7 asked enterprises how they rated the support provided by the school during student work placements. Just over half of the respondents, 54 percent, gave it an *effectiveness* rating of 6 and above on the Likert scale. The mean was 6.1, median 6.0 and Standard Deviation of 2.3. Item 2 asked how they rated the induction visit to workplace by WLMW. Exactly half of the respondents rated this service 6 and above on the Likert scale with a mean 5.9, median 6.0 and Standard Deviation 2.3.

These ratings were still in the second highest quartile range and a *good* result and indicated that WLMW provided a reasonably *effective* induction service to enterprises participating in the work placement program and some schools were rated as providing reasonably *effective* support. But these *effectiveness* ratings were in the second lowest and lowest ratings respectively and need to be targeted for improvement. The Evaluation forms also provided WLMW with data that helped to clarify these lower results. When enterprises were asked if they would like WLMW to visit or provide more information or

support more than 76 percent said “no” indicating they preferred site visits only if they specifically requested it. No worksite visits were carried out even though some enterprises repeatedly requested site visits via feedback forms. Although most employers indicated they were satisfied with the work placement phone briefing and confirmation correspondence some employers who repeatedly requested visits and further support from WLMW indicated their dissatisfaction with the program. WLMW needs to be more responsive to enterprise requirements and only conduct visits when requested to reflect the enterprise preferences to improve the *effectiveness* of this component of the service.

### **Importance findings**

Enterprises were then asked how necessary was ongoing support from WLMW, to rate the *importance* of the services provided them. Was it ‘not required’ or ‘essential’? The following table provides a summary of the data.

**Table 3. Summary of Importance Data**

1 Information	5%	3%	2%	2%	16%	17%	11%	13%	16%	13%	Mean 6.7 Median 7.0 STDEV 2.4
2 Induction visit	5%	2%	1%	3%	15%	21%	9%	12%	15%	17%	Mean 6.8 Median 7.0 STDEV 2.5
3 Correspondence	2%	2%	0%	2%	10%	16%	13%	17%	16%	23%	Mean 7.6 Median 8.0 STDEV 2.1
4 Understanding student procedures	2%	2%	0%	2%	12%	10%	16%	12%	20%	25%	Mean 7.7 Median 8.0 STDEV 2.1
5 Understanding employer responsibility	2%	1%	1%	0%	10%	7%	13%	12%	20%	33%	Mean 8.1 Median 9.0 STDEV 2.0
6 Bookings	2%	0%	1%	1%	8%	7%	19%	16%	16%	27%	Mean 7.9 Median 8.0 STDEV 1.9
7 Support from School	7%	0%	0%	3%	10%	13%	14%	16%	8%	27%	Mean 7.3 Median 8.0 STDEV 2.5
8 Support from WLMW	3%	0%	0%	2%	11%	16%	12%	18%	14%	21%	Mean 7.5 Median 8.0 STDEV 2.1
9 Understand evaluation, log books, assessment	2%	1%	0%	2%	11%	16%	13%	16%	15%	23%	Mean 7.5 Median 8.0 STDEV 2.1

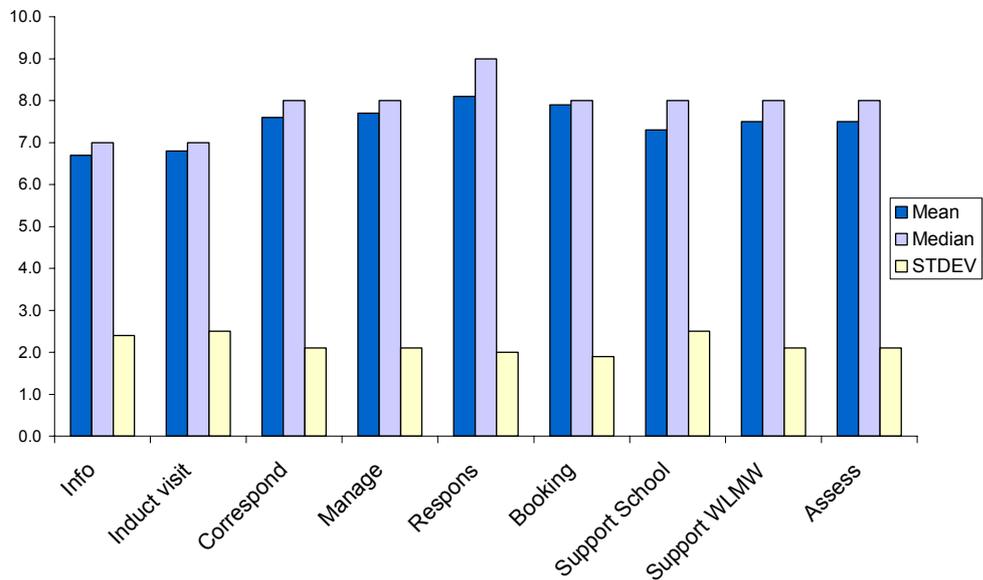
### Summary of *importance* findings

WLMW rated well overall for providing a work placement service that was *important* to enterprises. The top six components of the service listed here in order of *importance* rating were understanding employer responsibilities, booking service, understanding of work placement procedures such as cancellation, illness and absence procedures, correspondence, support from WLMW during work placement and understanding of student evaluation, log books and assessment in the workplace. The top four components of the service for *importance* were in the highest quartile range of 7.6 to 10 and the fifth and sixth components were in the second highest quartile of 5.1 to 7.5.

Understanding of work placement responsibilities and the WLMW work placement booking services (confirmation and cancellation letters) were identified by participating enterprises as the most *important* components of the work placement service. The next most *important* components identified were the following: understanding work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures followed by the correspondence sent to enterprises. Following closely behind in the ratings was the support provided by WLMW during work placements, and work placement procedures (student evaluation, logbooks and assessment) in the workplace. These also rated well and were also considered *important* components of the service. As a result WLMW will need to focus effort and resources on these components of the work placement service as they were nominated by enterprises as being as most *important* to them.

Components of the service rated as the least important to enterprises were support from schools, WLMW induction visits to the workplace and WLMW information about the work placement program. Induction visits to the workplace were considered to be the second least *important* component of the service even though enterprises considered them to be reasonably *effectively* delivered. As illustrated in the graphs (Figure 10, 11 and 13) induction visits were considered least *effective* but were also rated as the least *important* component of the work placement service together with sending WLMW information packs.

**Figure 13. Employer Importance Ratings**



## Detailed *importance* findings

### Item 5 Understanding employer responsibilities

Enterprises rated their understanding of work placement responsibilities as the most *important* service provided as 65 percent of respondents gave it a rating of 8 and above. This average rating score was within the highest quartile on the Likert scale and a very good result. Understanding employer responsibilities, in Figure 13, received an average rating of 8.1 a median of 9.0 and a Standard Deviation of 2.0, indicating that there were some lower ratings reducing the average rating.

When comparing understanding responsibilities *effectiveness* and *importance* in Figure 10, it was found that *importance* rated higher at 8.1, and was less *effective* on average at 6.9. This difference in averages was significant suggesting that even though most enterprises considered it was the most essential and *important* component of the service to them, that the

*effectiveness* of service delivery needed to be targeted for improvement and that they required more information about occupational health and safety, WorkCover, legal forms and payment for work placement.

#### **Item 6 Work placement booking service**

Enterprises rated Item 6 the work placement booking service as the second most *important* component of WLMW service. 78 percent of the respondents gave it a score of 7 and above and in the highest quartile of the Likert scale, a very good result signifying approval for this component of the service. In Figure 13 the *importance* of the booking service rated an average of 7.9; a median of 8.0 and a Standard Deviation of 1.9. In Figure 10 enterprises rated the service as more *important* on average at 7.9 than *effective* at 7.2. This was not a significant difference but indicated that WLMW still needs to improve its *effectiveness* rating in this component of the service.

#### **Item 4 Understanding work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures**

#### **Item 3 Correspondence**

The next most *important* components of the service were Item 4, understanding work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures, followed by Item 3 correspondence sent to enterprises and 73 percent of the respondents gave an understanding of work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures a rating of 7 and above, and 69 percent of the respondents gave the same rating for correspondence. Both were in the highest quartile and considered essential components of the service and a very good result. In Figure 13 understanding cancellation, illness and absence procedures and correspondence *importance* ratings averaged 7.7 and 7.6 respectively, and both had a median of 8.0 and a Standard Deviation of 2.1.

Again this indicated variation in the responses and that some respondents gave lower scores that reduced the average ratings overall.

When comparing *effectiveness* with *importance*, in Figure 10, it was found that the *effectiveness* average was lower at 7.7 than *importance* at 8.0. This difference between the averages shows that this area of the service also needs improvement. When comparing correspondence *effectiveness* and *importance*, it was found *effectiveness* averaged 7.3 and *importance* 7.6. Even though *importance* was greater than *effectiveness* the difference between them was small indicating that WLMW correspondence (confirmation letter and Certificates of Appreciation) was considered both an *important* and nearly as *effectively* delivered component of the work placement service.

#### **Item 8 Support from WLMW during work placement**

#### **Item 9 Understanding work placement procedures of workplace evaluation, log books and assessment**

Support from WLMW during the work placement and understanding workplace evaluation, log books and assessment were two components of the service that rated as *important* services and in the highest quartile, a very good result. 65 percent of the respondents gave support for WLMW a rating of 7 and above, and 67 percent gave the same rating for assessment. In Figure 13 *importance* ratings mean, median and Standard Deviation for support from WLMW and understanding assessment were 7.5, 8.0, & 2.1 respectively. The median ratings were higher than the mean indicating that some enterprises gave them lower scores, which reduced the average rating.

When comparing support for WLMW *effectiveness* and *importance*, in Figure 10, importance averaged 7.5 a higher rating than *effectiveness* at 6.3. WLMW support *effectiveness* rating needs to be improved. Some enterprises commented that they wanted “*more contact during the placement.*” WLMW

needs to ring students during the work placement and discuss any concerns with the workplace supervisor to improve satisfaction with this component of the service.

When comparing understanding workplace procedures of evaluation, log books and assessment *effectiveness* and *importance*, *importance* averaged 7.5 a higher rating than *effectiveness* at 6.5. Understanding workplace procedures *effectiveness* ratings needs to be improved. WLMW needs to focus attention and raise awareness of the *importance* to enterprises of understanding of work placement procedures of evaluation, log books and assessment in the workplace and assist them with these and to support schools to streamline workplace procedures including assessment log books.

#### **Item 7 Support from the schools, Item 2 Induction visit, Item 1 Information**

Enterprises rated all other services, support from the schools, WLMW induction visits and information provided by WLMW as *important* but of least *importance* to them overall. Support from schools was 7.3, 8.0 and 2.5. The median ratings were higher than the mean indicating that some enterprises gave them lower scores, which reduced the average rating. In Figure 13 induction visits averaged 6.8 and information 6.7, both had a median at 7.0 and a Standard Deviation of 2.4 and 2.5 respectively. The median was slightly higher than the averages indicating some enterprises again gave both slightly lower scores.

In Figure 10, support from schools *importance* rating averaged 7.3 and was again considerably lower for *effectiveness* at 6.1 as enterprises expressed some disappointment and that they required more school contact during the work placement “*school teacher did not visit, would be good if teacher visits.*”

In Figure 10 induction visits rated 6.8 for *importance* and 5.9 for *effectiveness*. Even though induction visits rated reasonably well they were considered the second lowest in *importance* and were considered not quite as *effectively* delivered. Although employers indicated they were satisfied with the pre placement phone briefing some employers requested visits and further support from WLMW and their dissatisfaction with the lack of response to their requests is reflected in this *effectiveness* rating.

Information provided rated 6.7 for *importance* and 6.6 for *effectiveness*. Information provided was ranked the least *important* component of the service but was still considered to be relatively *effective*.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

1. WLMW will document and develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with VET providers (secondary schools, TAFE, community organisations and other private providers) clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of each partner in the work placement service.
2. WLMW will provide enterprises with concise up to date information about work placement responsibilities, including information about occupational health and safety, WorkCover, legal forms and placement payment.
3. WLMW needs to provide more phone contact and support for students and enterprises during the progress of work placements.
4. WLMW needs to work with the VET providers (secondary schools, TAFE, community organisations and other private providers) to better coordinate and streamline student workplace assessment log books and feedback forms. The VET providers (secondary schools, TAFE, community organisations and other private providers) need to monitor placement progress of students in the workplace by carrying out visits to the workplace.
5. WLMW will work to ensure students and teachers have increased access to the WLMW induction to work placement program. This will ensure students are more work ready and better prepared to complete a successful placement.
6. WLMW will promote a more central and coordinated enterprise contact approaches to ensure enterprises are not bombarded with requests for work placements from multiple sources.

7. WLMW needs to ask enterprises through Evaluation Forms (client satisfaction surveys) if they require further information, support and site visits and be responsive to individual requests as a priority.
8. WLMW will add more detailed information to the web site to assist students to be informed about particular workplaces and be better equipped to complete the placement.
9. WLMW will continue to inform VET providers of enterprise preferences for short term work placements and continue to advise them that if they request placements for extended periods of time students should be encouraged to apply for School-based New Apprenticeships.
10. WLMW needs to focus on matching young people at risk of unemployment and underemployment with local enterprises that are experiencing skills shortages and require employees, new apprentices and trainees.
11. WLMW needs to recruit new enterprises in industry areas in geographic locations where there is a high demand for work placements from schools and in areas of skills shortages and employment growth.
12. WLMW will promote and market a range of vocational pathways to schools, the community and enterprises. WLMW needs to improve the quality of information sent to enterprises and ensure it is current, concise and standardized.
13. WLMW needs to continue to send client satisfaction surveys, Evaluation Forms, to enterprises, secondary schools and students to

provide feedback from them to ensure the work placement service is continually improved in response to their requirements.

14. WLMW will recruit a parent and a young person to the Management Committee to establish parents and young people as client groups with specific needs.

## ***Key Effectiveness and Importance findings***

Understanding employer placement responsibilities; the placement booking service; understanding of cancellation, illness and absence procedures; WLMW correspondence; support provided by Workplace Learning (WLMW) during work placement and understanding of student evaluation, log books and assessment in the workplace were rated as the most *important* components of the work placement services by enterprises. Components of the service that were rated as the *least important* were support from schools; WLMW induction site visits to the workplace; and general information WLMW provided enterprises about work placement. But enterprises indicated that ongoing support from Workplace Learning (WLMW) was *important* for the success of the work placement program.

Three quarters of the enterprises were happy with the support WLMW provided them in 2004. The support includes phone call during the work placement, communication, assistance and feedback by WLMW. But enterprise feedback indicated they wanted “*more contact during the placement.*” WLMW should speak to both student and workplace supervisor during the work placement to discuss any concerns. Enterprises indicated a preference for a phone call during the placement to monitor student work placement progression. This would lead to greater satisfaction with the service and hopefully increase enterprise participation and retention in the work placement program. This will enable WLMW to identify enterprise needs and allocate resources more effectively.

Enterprises commented that they required more school contact during the work placement “*school teacher did not visit, would be good if teacher visits.*” Increased contact with the student and workplace supervisor during the work placement by WLMW and the schools would increase enterprise

satisfaction and improve the *effectiveness* rating of these service components. Induction visits to the workplace were considered the second least *important* component of the program and rated as the least *effective* component of the service together with sending information packs. General work placement information sent by WLMW was of least *importance* to enterprises but what was sent was considered to be relatively *effective*.

As a result of these findings Workplace Learning (WLMW) needs to increase effort and resources on the components of the service enterprises revealed as most *important* to them but that were delivered less *effectively*. These included understanding employer responsibilities, WLMW booking service, understanding of cancellation, illness and absence procedures, correspondence, support provided by WLMW during work placement and evaluation, log books and assessment in the workplace. Components of the service rated as the *least important* were support from schools, induction visit to the workplace and general information about the work placement program.

## **Conclusion and Key Messages**

The study was an evaluation of Victoria University's Workplace Learning Melbourne West's (WLMW) work placement service to employers. Workplace Learning (WLMW) coordinated a 'work placement' service to employers and senior secondary and TAFE students from the Western Region of Melbourne. Most of the students were completing a work placement of about 10 day's on-the-job learning in industry to complement Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificate I-IV programs that were nationally recognised.

In 2004 a survey was mailed to about 432 enterprises participating in the work placement program and about one quarter (122) completed and returned surveys to WLMW. Just over one quarter (126) of the enterprises that hosted work placement students in 2004 also completed and returned Evaluation Forms to WLMW and together these two sources of data established the statistical background for the study.

The overall impression gained from the analysis of the 122 survey questionnaires and returned evaluation forms was that hosting students was positive for the majority of enterprises involved in the work placement program. The study showed that overall these enterprises enjoyed the experience and were willing to continue to participate if they were provided with adequate contact and support during the progress of work placements.

The study provided a particular insight into Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that hosted most of the work placement students for Workplace Learning (WLMW) and most of the work placement students nationally. Key messages were that enterprises felt they had only limited opportunity to express their needs to government, only had a minimal understanding of the newer education initiatives including Structured Workplace Learning (SWL),

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and School-based New Apprenticeships (SBNAs) and were concerned about the lack of real partnership between smaller businesses, educators and work placement coordinators (Harris and Turner 2002; Little & Fallshaw 2003). Small to Medium Enterprises also indicated that Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) like Workplace Learning (WLMW) needed to work with them in a partnership that was more consultative and collaborative.

Some of the survey respondents cited some concern with the quality of the work placement service. Enterprises indicated they wanted concise and easy to understand information about new education initiatives and more administrative assistance and support to understand program responsibilities. Enterprises made it clear that they required more support to understand work placement responsibilities including occupational health and safety (OHS), WorkCover, legal forms, payment and student management procedures including understanding work placement cancellation, illness and absence procedures and workplace assessment log books and feedback forms however most were unconcerned by the increasing time spent filling out paper work. Clarification and documentation of the roles and responsibilities of the VET providers and Workplace Learning when managing vocational work placement programs needed to be established as a priority for the maintenance of cooperative working relationship between all the stakeholders, Workplace Learning, VET providers and enterprises.

Enterprises reported they relied on WLMW to carry out the administrative aspects of the program and Kelloch (2002) and Malley et al (1999) also found that enterprises relied on extensive administrative support from the Local Community Partnerships like Workplace Learning and that this was essential to sustaining the relationship between VET providers and enterprises. Enterprises indicated that Local Community Partnerships (LCP) like

Workplace Learning were *important* for the success of vocational work placement program. They pointed out that contact during the placement to ensure any problems that arose were addressed immediately was critical for continued enterprise involvement. Enterprises required a phone call from Workplace Learning and a visit from the school during the progress of the placement. This support was seen as a way of acknowledging the employer's role and contribution to the programs. Taylor (2005) also found that Local Community Partnerships needed to improve the monitoring of students during work placement and argued that this was required to improve the quality of the programs. If enterprises required any further assistance from Workplace Learning in the form of site visits, support and information they preferred that this should be done in response to their specific requests.

The majority of enterprises agreed to continue to support the work placement program and agreed that the service benefited them. Mulraney & Turner (2001) also found that enterprises believed they benefited from the program as students made a valuable contribution to the workplace. But enterprises also indicated that they preferred vocational students who were completing year 11 and 12 and were talented and reliable with only a small number of enterprises willing to host students considered 'at risk' of leaving school or were disabled or had juvenile justice experience. Enterprises required the provision of additional intensive support when they hosted students with special needs. The Adopt a School Program needed to be promoted more widely as it provided an extensive range of industry based activities additional to work placements, that included school projects, industry tours, student mentoring and career shadowing that are industry based to improve employability skills and the job prospects of this group.

Demand for work placement has grown quickly in recent years and a coordinated 'single point enterprise contact' approach was preferred by

enterprises to ensure they were not overwhelmed with requests (VCAA 2005). The majority of enterprises indicated that they preferred Workplace Learning (WLMW) to coordinate the work placement bookings centrally rather than be contacted by individual teachers, schools, parents or students. WLMW needs to minimize multiple approaches to enterprises and to manage the demand for placements more sensitively and effectively (Taylor 2005). One of the key messages noted in the study and the literature was the need to balance the requirement for a coordinated 'single point enterprise contact' and the capacity of each VET provider (secondary schools, TAFE, community organisations and other private providers) to continue to develop closer partnerships with particular local enterprises in their community.

Survey respondents indicated that Workplace Learning had achieved the government policy objectives and improved student transition from school to training and employment. Participation in vocational work placement programs appeared to be a successful pathway into an apprenticeship and employment immediately after school but not always into full-time employment. A number of vocational work placement students had found paid employment, full-time and part-time New Apprenticeships with their host employers but most of the other students were only employed on a casual basis with only a small number employed on a part-time or full-time basis. The literature corroborated these findings as participation in work placement was found to be a successful pathway into New Apprenticeships or employment immediately after school but not always into sustainable employment (DEST 2004; Misko 2000; Smith & Wilson 2002; Smith & Dalton 2004). There was also some concern noted in the literature that enterprises preferred to host work placement students rather than employ an apprentice or trainee and survey data corroborated these findings as nearly half of the enterprises stated 'yes' they preferred hosting a work placement student rather than employ an apprentice or trainee (DEST 2004; HR-SCET

2004; Kelloch 2002). To help counter this trend Workplace Learning needs to promote work placement to both enterprises and VET providers as a short-term option as students are only paid \$5 per day. Length of time spent in the workplace was identified as a key management issue and enterprises revealed that they generally preferred placement duration of five or ten days in a block. Workplace Learning needs to promote the advantages of short-term work placements as enabling students to develop industry and employability skills and therefore increase the opportunity for successful selection into employment, apprenticeships and further training. Workplace Learning (WLMW) also needs to promote part-time School-based New Apprenticeships to VET providers as the preferred option for students who favored spending extended periods of time in the workplace and less time at school. Information about pre-apprenticeships, School-based New Apprenticeships and full-time New Apprenticeships needs to be distributed more widely to industry, particularly in areas of skills shortage and to school-based careers advisors, students and parents as the uptake of New Apprenticeships was commonly related to low awareness amongst businesses and the community (NCVER 2005; ABC 2005). WLMW also needed to ensure vocational programs and work placement opportunities were targeted to real local job opportunities (DEST 2004).

Another key message of the study was that most enterprises thought students were generally well prepared for work placement but others requested more information about the students they were hosting and suggested that their enterprises should be matched more effectively with particular students. Enterprises stated the need for students to understand more about their particular workplaces prior to attending work placement. Work placement cancellations were also of concern to enterprises as students were not always well equipped or ready to attend work placement for various reasons. Providing more opportunities for students to participate in a range of different

models of workplace learning as endorsed by the Adopt a School Program that caters to both enterprise and student needs would be useful in reducing placement cancellations and enterprise dissatisfaction.

Enterprises want to participate in a partnership between education and industry that was more consultative and collaborative and where feedback was sought and responded to. There was a need to continue to seek feedback from program participants to identify gaps in the service and to improve the service in response to not only the needs of participating enterprises but to the needs of all other stakeholders including students and schools.

While the overall sense of the findings was very positive, some major key messages were revealed. Understanding the employer's perspective as summarised in this study will contribute to the development of a more innovative service delivery model for Structured Workplace Learning work placement programs that takes the needs of enterprises into account that will in turn increase enterprise participation in the programs.

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6. Do you feel you have an effective voice in your community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. In your Industry?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. With Government?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**Work Placement**

9. Do you host work placement students?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
10.	<input type="checkbox"/> At present <input type="checkbox"/> In the past
11. Will you continue to host work placement students in 2004-2005?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
12. If NO what is stopping you from doing so? You may tick more than one	<input type="checkbox"/> Cost <input type="checkbox"/> Time <input type="checkbox"/> Bad experience with past student <input type="checkbox"/> Small enterprise only <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of staff suitable for supervising student <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of work/variety of tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Other
13. What are the reasons for hosting work placement students? You may tick more than one	<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment/selection of employees <input type="checkbox"/> Improved staff supervision skills <input type="checkbox"/> Increased productivity <input type="checkbox"/> Providing youth with a 'first step' <input type="checkbox"/> Personal satisfaction <input type="checkbox"/> Improved reputation in community <input type="checkbox"/> Other
14. Which of the following characteristics do you prefer your work placement students to have? You may tick more than one	<input type="checkbox"/> Talented, reliable student <input type="checkbox"/> Student 'at risk' of leaving school <input type="checkbox"/> Student with a disability <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Juvenile Justice experience <input type="checkbox"/> Year 10 student <input type="checkbox"/> Year 11 student <input type="checkbox"/> Year 12 student <input type="checkbox"/> Student completing VET in School (Yr 11 & 12 Industry Certificate) <input type="checkbox"/> Student completing Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) Practical Yr 11 & 12 <input type="checkbox"/> Other
15. What is your preferred number of work placement students per year? Tick one only	<input type="checkbox"/> One student per year <input type="checkbox"/> Two students per year <input type="checkbox"/> Three students per year <input type="checkbox"/> Four students per year <input type="checkbox"/> Five students per year <input type="checkbox"/> Six+ per year <input type="checkbox"/> Other
16. What is your preferred length of time for hosting work placement students? Tick one only	<input type="checkbox"/> One week blocks <input type="checkbox"/> Two week blocks <input type="checkbox"/> One day per week for term <input type="checkbox"/> One day per week for semester



	<i>Not at all effective</i>					<i>Extremely effective</i>				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3 Correspondence from WLMW (confirmation letters, Certificate of Appreciation)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4 Understanding of work placement procedures (cancellation, illness, absence procedures)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5 Understanding of employer responsibilities (OH&S, WorkCover, legal forms, payment)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b><i>Management of the Work Placement process</i></b>										
6 Booking work placements (confirmation letters, cancellations)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7 Support given from school during work placement (school visit)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8 Support given from WLMW during placement (phone call, communication, assistance, feedback)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 Work placement processes & procedures (WLMW student evaluation forms, logbook, workplace assessment)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**3. How necessary is ongoing support from WLMW?  
Rate the importance of the following service to you:**

	<i>Not Required</i>					<i>Essential</i>				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b><i>Administration and Information</i></b>										
1 Work placement information you received from WLMW (brochure, info pack, CD, application forms)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2 Induction to work placement (WLMW visit to workplace)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3 Correspondence from WLMW (confirmation letters, Certificate of Appreciation)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4 Understanding of work placement procedures (cancellation, illness, absence procedures)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5 Understanding of employer responsibilities (OH&S, WorkCover, legal forms, payment)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b><i>Management of the Work Placement process</i></b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6 Booking work placements (confirmation letters, cancellation)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7 Support given from school during work placement (school visit)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8 Support given from WLMW during placement (communication, phone call, assistance, feedback)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9 Work placement processes & procedures (WLMW student evaluation forms, logbook, workplace assessment)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

*On behalf of WLMW and Victoria University we would like to thank you for taking time to complete our survey. It is greatly appreciated and assists with the future improvement of our service to you. Your survey information will remain confidential, no individual names will be recorded and returned surveys will be kept securely locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office.*

## Appendix 2. Themed Color coded tabulated qualitative data 28 Dec 2004

### Summary of Survey Items 24, 25, 26 & 30

**ITEM 24 Does hosting a work placement student benefit your organisation?**

**ITEM 25 If YES in what way does it benefit your organisation?**

Employer No	"Did Benefit" Your Organisation (Comment)
	<b>Benefit of "Extra Productivity"</b>
1. A40	Increase in workload – extra help allows others to pursue other tasks
2. B19	Save us on manpower and wages
3. B23	Being a small business having an extra person in the salon helps the salon to run smoothly
4. F3	Most of them are pretty hard workers
5. C14	Improves productivity
6. H13	Extra person in the room to carry out tasks with children
7. D10	Provides help with projects that may have otherwise been put off
8. L8	Part of our "mission" Aspects of required work is performed Fulfil important roles that cannot be afforded
9. W27	Some students are a tremendous help
10. T4	Allows our regular staff to focus on other duties
11. W13	Another pair of hands to help out
12. W7	Workplace students assist in programs
13. Y4	Extra pair of hands
14. 30. L11	Good students are always a help
15. KK2	Extra help in the centre
16. WW7	Relieves teachers with duties that are time consuming in a busy schedule
17. H9	Can be helpful in achieving tasks
18. R20	Increased productivity, provide first step
19. P5	Extra set of hands
20. 121. OO1	Full time workers benefit
21. A8	Contributes to the improvement of internet company assets online
22. W11	More productivity
23. M19	If the student is capable assist us in day to day operations

24. S34	The benefit to my organisation comes from the individuals ability to listen and perform, it does not matter where he or she comes from No
25. V11	I can constantly re-evaluate our procedures and effectiveness
26.. L12	Extra help within the programme, training someone new for the profession
27. M35	Extra person to help in the environment and share in various areas
	<b>Benefits "Staff"</b>
28. C9	Helps staff to improve the skills in communication, supervision and writing
29. C15	Keeps teaching staff up to date with new initiatives and changes in industry
30. N3	Keeps staff in touch with new ideas, Assists staff in own development of supervisory skills and evaluation skills
31.. U2	Greater learning about young people (training for future)
32. Y4	It increases our awareness of youth issues
33. S6	Assists with motivation and morale, assistance for students to see a real workplace, current staff assists with supervision skills
34. M11	It gives staff an understanding of youth and issues affecting their careers
35. L17	Allows staff to train, and practice their training skills
36.. M27	Interaction with student and employees
37. T2	Allows staff to interact with students
38. D11	It gives opportunity for staff to supervise and teaches students more responsibility
39. U2	Greater learning about young people (training for future)
40. T7	Added enthusiasm and energy into the hotel
41. X1	Creates a better environment and atmosphere
42. S30	Staff get to work with young people
43. A12	Gives people opportunity to experience supervision of others
44. W24	Gives us practice working/teaching a new member, Gives the students in our centre the opportunity to

	work with other adults and youths, Promotes our service/profession
	<b>Benefits “Student Employment”</b>
45. C7	To find out if suitable for full-time employment
46. B14	Able to look at prospective candidate if looking for apprentice
47. B33	Have more chance to get right staff
48. S20	Possible recruitment, allowing our name to become larger in the community
49. M1	Future recruitment opportunities
50. H14 ?	Our employees get to train potential employees and give them and give them some good work experience
51. S25	Gives us the opportunity to judge the suitability of a prospective apprentice to the job
52. J1	Extra productivity, we like to employ the better students as casuals etc
53. S13	No Time consuming, usually not @ level we would consider employing
54. W2	Reinforces our values to give a young person some experience in the workforce, that will hopefully help them in successfully obtaining employment in that field in the future
	<b>Benefits “Industry”</b>
55. A29	Increases the number of experienced staff available in the industry
56. S3	If the student is genuinely interested and motivated to pursue career in industry
57. W24	Promotes our service/profession, Gives the students in our centre the opportunity to work with other adults and youths, Gives us practice working/teaching a new member
58. A28	Not benefit As I feel it should benefit the student more as it opens their eyes to what is expected in the industry
59.	training someone new for the profession, Extra help within the

	programme,
	<b>“Other” “Student” Benefits</b>
60. M30	Supports student achievement
61. E1	Providing positive practical experiences for people choosing a career path
62. D14	Gives them an understanding of what we do, also they gain valuable skills (we hope)
63. W22	Positive experience for students
64. YY3	Increased their knowledge
65. C33	They already have experience
66. D12	Broadens knowledge
67. E6	Yes if they are reliable and mature
68. T16	Good positive thing to do
69. F7	If person is reliable /aware of demands and responsibilities of working with us
70. V4	We believe that the students think childcare is about them playing – they last one or two days before they give up – finding out that it is demanding work
71. W28	Depends on students enthusiasm and capabilities
72. W33	Our elderly residents enjoy the company
73. T14	Not all were prepared for the 7.00am start, gives practical experience to students
	<b>Benefits “Your Community”</b>
74. H3	It shows we are community minded
75. K9	Well it lets people in the community know we are give opportunity to the youth of today
76. V8	Allows staff to support external community
77. S20	Possible recruitment, allowing our name to become larger in the community
78. Community Services Health, Ed	Helps to understand the community we live in
79. S27	Increased Community Awareness, employee satisfaction, Catholic ethos
80. B45	Reputation to help youth
81. S19	Overall reputation of Snap Good for my staff to help with student
82. S4	Good PR, extra pair of hands and opportunity to introduce youth to benefits of exercise
83. V15	Improved PR, some productivity increased, some fresh new ideas
84. RR35	Gives our organisation recognition

85. TT31	Good for youth, good for community, good for us, preschool
86. S20	Possible recruitment, allowing our name to become larger in the community

#### ITEM 26

If NO why does work placement NOT benefit your organisation?

Employer No	"NO" Benefit (Comment)
1. A28	I feel it should benefit the student more as it opens their eyes to what is expected in the industry
2. A26	Offers opportunity for the student only
	<b>Not Benefit as too much Time Training, Paper Work</b>
3. A9	Not enough time unless they have a great understanding of trade or tools
4. W23	Time, a lot of time training
5. M41	Time wasted due to retraining, and checking over work
6. Engineering?	Staff training required, but we will still help
7. T15	Time consuming
8. TT71	It takes up a lot of time
9. I1	Takes too much time
10. S13	Time consuming, usually not @ level we would consider employing
11. W8	Staff organisation time Most are prepared but One student did not turn up
12. L2	No, Time consuming students not here long enough to be taught proper skills, can be a hindrance
13. W27	Some students are a tremendous help but sometimes very time consuming (paper work has increased)
14. L3	One week not enough to train someone and inexperience
	<b>No Benefit as Students are not ready and difficult</b>
15. K8	We can't use the students as extra staff, and at times school students need to be closely supervised and behave worse than our children
16. BB29	Depending on student. They should be assessed to see if they are suitable for the 'industry' and for the workplace
17. K7	Difficult to place people under 18 in hotel

18. P11	Students not ready for our skilled electrical work
19. M4	We are an employer of people with disabilities Work placement of late tend to test the supervisors too much
20. C4	I still hope to find a work placement student who will benefit our organisation
21. V2	99% think it is a bludge to get out of school
22. M6	They are here but it is of no benefit to us especially if they are “duds” and you have to spoon feed them all they way

**ITEM 30 What are your recommendations for improvement to the program or other comment**

Program Improvement color coded into themes

	Improvement Comment
	<b>More contact and support during the work placement</b>
1. B19	To have someone from WLMW or school to visit the students
2. E6	Would prefer a personal visit by someone in charge of the student
3. W24	Phone call or meet supervisor during placement to ensure all is going well
4. F7	Coordination by outside staff
	<b>Better student preparation for work placement</b>
5.	More screening of students for particular job
6. A29	Need more formal induction process, I'm not sure what they are told before they come
7. F3	Resume
8. L11	Students to be more prepared in regards to five star environment
9.	<b>Student attributes needed in the workplace</b>
10. K9	Commitment, positive attitude, bright, eager to learn, alert
	<b>Commitment to the industry</b>
11. M19	Ensuring the student is well aware of the trade position they are entering into
12. L13	To study what work placement they are willing to do
13. L8	Ensure they are matched to the appropriate industry of choice



**Appendix 3**

**2004 ENTERPRISE WORKPLACE EVALUATION FOR STUDENT**

Please complete and return to WLMW in the reply paid envelope provided (DO NOT give to student)

Name of Enterprise:	
Placement Dates:	
Name of person completing evaluation:	
Name of students placed:	
Student's School:	
VET in VCE or VCAL	

**This section relates to your dealing with Workplace Learning Melbourne West WLMW in arranging to have a VET in VCE or VCAL student to undertake work placement with you:**

Staff	poor	satisfactory	good	very good	excellent
Contact was professional with good customer relations					
Provided adequate information regarding work placement					
I understood my obligations in hosting a work placement student					
Your degree of satisfaction with the program					

2(a) Did the student/s complete the specified placement time?

Yes  No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

2(b) Was the student prepared, motivated and interested in activities during the placement? Did you experience any difficulties? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2(c) Will you take more students this year and/or next year?

Yes  No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

2(d) Please circle the following

Size of Enterprise <5, 6-20, 20-100, >100, Multi-site, Multi-state



3. Did the school teacher visit during the work placement?

Yes  No

4. Would you like Workplace Learning (WLMW) to visit, or provide you with more information or support?

Yes  No  Comments \_\_\_\_\_

5. Does hosting a work placement student benefit your business/organization in any way?

Yes  No

If so in what way?  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Are you interested in taking on a trainee or apprentice now or in the future?

Yes  No  & **If YES do you want to more information about the process** Yes  No

Comment \_\_\_\_\_

**Award for Outstanding Work Placement Student of the Year**

If you believe the student should be nominated for the Award for Outstanding VET & Work Placement Student, please complete the following:

Comments on why you have recommended the student for nomination of the Award for Outstanding Work Placement Student of the Year.


Signed by employer \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking a work experience student and supporting student training, it is greatly appreciated

Warm Regards

The Workplace Learning Team at Victoria University  
Kerry Pantzopoulos, Nataline Vin, Kamma Clarke, Debbie Gray & Jodie Madigan