Furthering success

Education, training and employment transitions for disadvantaged older workers

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Executive summary

Key findings and emerging issues

There is an extremely limited focus on the employment pathways and related education and training opportunities for older disadvantaged workers at the local level. Where initiatives exist, they are, at best, fragmented and partial. This is at odds with the emerging environment, which will require the increasing participation of people aged over 45 years in work to meet the demands of industry.

There is a need to:

- increase the policy priority placed on older disadvantaged workers and coordinate whole-of-government approaches to maximise the use of resources and minimise overlaps
- increase the priority placed within local areas on supporting the employment pathways for older disadvantaged workers
- resource and facilitate innovations in service provision and integration across sectors at the local level
- increase age awareness and promote age-aware practices across the community, business, government and service providers.

Further key findings of the Furthering success project are as follows:

- There are approximately 700 000 people over the age of 45 years who can be classified as disadvantaged in relation to employment in Australia.
- Of these, 183 000 are registered with the Job Network and a smaller proportion are eligible for higher-level support, which is necessary for most to secure employment.
- The number who face disadvantage in employment over the age of 45 years is higher than that for younger people.
- A significant level of resource and infrastructure exists within Australian communities. However, it is yet to be mobilised so that it plays an active role in the provision of support and direction to older disadvantaged workers.
- Policy attention is just starting to turn towards this group and the barriers they face in securing employment. There is a need to accelerate policy in this area to respond to the significant and widespread disadvantages faced by the group.
- Because policy priorities for the group are in the emergent stage, there are limited resources to develop new and targeted support and training options. Little evidence of these is found on the ground.
However, some elements of good practice to support older disadvantaged workers are evident in the case study areas and provide insight for future directions.

This translates to an unmet opportunity to build integrated and effectively supported employment pathways through interagency and intersectoral collaboration.

Planned employment pathways for older workers are, in general, inexplicit or non-existent, indicating the need for innovations in developing and articulating plans which fully utilise the range of resources and services available, and support transitions across the stages of the plan to and from agencies.

A comprehensive understanding of the needs of the group is yet to be developed by service agencies.

Age perceptions based on embedded social stereotypes of work and ageing are evident, and need addressing at the individual, agency, business and broader community levels.

Service providers and older workers saw the age stereotypes held by employers as a significant barrier to the group’s employment opportunities.

Many older workers are not aware of the services for which they are eligible. Some are ineligible for certain services and others are not exposed to information explaining which services they can access. There are also individual older workers who are unwilling to depend on the system.

The needs of the group are complex and diverse, and cannot be adequately addressed through interventions delivered by a single service. They require a holistic view of the elements contributing to an individual’s work readiness and interventions which target these in a balanced and progressive manner.

The level of vocational advice available is inadequate, given the narrow range of jobs (often in declining occupations) targeted by the group.

Building a comprehensive understanding of the local job market within the context of broader labour market trends is a specialised activity requiring, amongst other things, significant interaction with local businesses. This is currently beyond the scope of existing resources at the local level.

This indicates the need for specific resources to build and disseminate local labour market intelligence and a broader understanding of labour market trends.

Similarly, the translation of this knowledge for practical use by agencies and individuals is a skilled task, also currently beyond the scope of existing service arrangements.

There is a clear opportunity to improve access to vocational and education training (VET) opportunities by streamlining information about the options available within a local area, thereby simplifying the process of assessment and access for agencies and older workers.

The adult and community education (ACE) and VET sectors and Job Network members have a clear role to play in the coordination and dissemination of information to the group.
Existing strengths and future opportunities

- There is a good level of take-up of training by Job Network clients, indicating that the group can be encouraged to participate in training if they receive the appropriate support.
- A number of agencies are having considerable success addressing numeracy and literacy issues as an integral component of life skills or vocational training.
- Multiple entry points to training are a strength of the system; however, improved information about options and a focus on articulating and facilitating transitions across levels of training is required.

This raises the following implementation questions:
- Who should be responsible for assisting the group to build and monitor the progress of viable plans outlining a clear pathway to employment?
- What incentives and conditions are required to ensure that collaboration between agencies exists to develop local innovations, to link older workers to employment, and to monitor and facilitate their transitions?

- The presence of skill shortages in most case study areas and predictions of labour supply pressures points to an increasing opportunity to engage employers and economic development agencies in local and regionally based strategies to appropriately skill and deploy older workers. This calls for:
  - a better understanding amongst employers and economic development agencies of the emerging environment, the capacity and potential contribution to be made by older workers and the role of the employment service and education and training system
  - a dialogue to identify the resources needed to facilitate local and regional-level innovation to address skill and labour supply needs through the deployment of older workers
  - facilitation that promotes objective and entrepreneurial connections between employers, employment development activities, employment services and education and training providers within a local area.

- Attention to these findings will transform the local environment to one where older disadvantaged workers have clearly articulated and supported pathways to employment.
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1 Furthering success: The project

1.1 Project context

The brief for the Furthering success project was to identify and analyse good practice in the provision of services and support to assist in increasing the employability of people aged 45 and over who are disadvantaged in the labour market. Its main aim was to describe the effectiveness of current employment pathways taken by this group and the role of the system, including participation in vocational and related education and training in supporting these pathways.

The objectives of the project were to answer the following questions:

- Could adult and community education (ACE), vocational education and training (VET) and the Job Network improve the promotion of formal education and training to this age group, and their engagement with learning?
- What are the key factors associated with the successful entry of older workers into formal education and training, their participation in it, and their transition to employment?
- Are there ways in which the linkages between ACE, VET, the Job Network and local employers can be improved to increase participation in education and training and improve transitions?
- What are the characteristics of good marketing, teaching and other system practices leading to successful outcomes in learning and moving into employment for this group? How are they implemented in practice?

The project methodology comprised four stages and included:

- a literature review
- case studies of ten locations around Australia
- a national survey of older disadvantaged workers
- a survey of service providers in case study locations
- interviews of older disadvantaged workers.

The project brief and methodology are outlined in detail in Appendices 2 and 3.
1.2 Introduction

It is common knowledge that falling fertility rates and increasing longevity are changing the age profile and structure of the Australian population and workforce. These trends are resulting in a decreasing proportion of younger workers, and a significant increase in the number of workers aged over 45 years. Migration will have no impact on reducing the ageing of the population.

The now static supply of younger workers will increasingly result in a reduction in the availability of workers at younger ages, requiring employers to recruit and retain older workers if they are to meet their labour demands. The post-war baby boom exacerbates these trends. Boomers are now reaching retirement age, which will result in an unprecedented proportion of the workforce retiring over a relatively short period of time. This environment is yet to fully evolve, so is of little comfort to many older workers who are currently unemployed and unable to secure a job, or whose employment is tenuous.

In general, Australian employers continue to target younger workers for both recruitment and retention. Few enterprises appreciate the need to respond to the steady ageing of the workforce with the introduction of strategies that encourage the retention of workers as they age and to maximise their productivity.

Although much attention has been given over recent years to the challenges that an ageing population and workforce will present to business in Australia, the current cohort of older workers are faced with limited opportunities during a period of transition from an extended era of oversupply of labour, to one where the inclusion of workers of all ages will be required to meet labour demands.

As this new era emerges, it will force the creation of new opportunities for workers who, in the past, have been overlooked. Employers will also find it increasingly difficult to directly match the competencies and experience of new recruits to their requirements, due to the rapid changes in the business environment and the shift in the availability of a ready supply of labour. This may encourage new partnerships between the enterprise, industry, and employment and education and training services, to prepare potential candidates for the employment opportunities on offer.

Today however, workers over the age of 45 years continue to be the first targeted for redundancy, and experience the highest levels of long-term unemployment and underemployment (ABS 1998, 2002). Their level of education attainment is lower than that of their younger counterparts, their qualifications less current, and as an age group, they experience the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy.
Establishing coherent pathways to assist the transitions of older, disadvantaged workers from unemployment or insecure work to viable employment requires a system that integrates public policy and related service approaches with the needs and preferences of employers and older workers.

Furthering success: education, training and employment transitions for disadvantaged older workers aims to better understand the barriers and opportunities to employment faced by this group, and the key role that vocational education and/or training can play in securing their ability to gain access to viable employment.

An overarching objective of the project commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) was to ‘provide evidence that can inform decisions about how education and training systems can be improved to respond to the needs of disadvantaged older workers’. This was based on an expectation that the project would document current good practices with the potential to inform policy development, and allow other service providers to draw on these experiences to build new approaches to service and support for older disadvantaged workers.

The project found no examples of fully integrated approaches to articulating and supporting employment pathways for older workers. What was found were elements of good practice embedded in ad hoc, and usually, single-agency approaches. Clearly the starting point for the promotion of good practice in supporting the employment pathways for older disadvantaged workers was not the documentation of good practice, but building an understanding of what is required to support local-level responsiveness to the needs of this group.

The report does this by drawing on the case studies of locations across Australia, the tracking interviews, a national survey of older workers and the survey of agencies in the case study sites, as well as the broader literature. It discusses how the system is currently working or not working for this group within their local area, and the shifts in policy and interventions required to improve their pathways to employment.

From this, a number of models have been developed to stimulate discussion about which optimum employment pathways are for older disadvantaged workers; which components contribute to an individual’s work readiness; how interventions should be targeted in a holistic approach to increase work readiness; the role that intersectoral partnerships play in supporting local responsiveness; and, finally the transformation required to establish an environment where older disadvantaged workers have clearly articulated and supported pathways to employment.

Where possible, case examples have been provided from the regions to illustrate the discussion in each section. Many of the cases describing service approaches are unevaluated, indicating the need for adequate attention and resources in order to evaluate and disseminate service approaches and experience in this area. Each section of the report concludes with a summary to highlight potential future directions for policy and service delivery.
1.3 Summary

Low levels of education attainment and a labour market which does not value the skills and capacity of older workers compromises the employment of older disadvantaged workers. The environment is changing, and in the near future, employers will increasingly be required to draw on this group to meet their labour demands. However, the changes may be too late for the current group of older workers. This indicates the need for targeted interventions to increase their ability to compete for employment. This can only be accomplished by a better understanding of the pathways that will secure their employment, along with an understanding of their resource, programme and support needs.

Key findings

- Falling birth rates and longer life spans in Australia have led to the ageing of the population and an increasingly aged labour force.
- The ageing population will challenge the economic environment and place pressure on labour supply.
- Older workers, often overlooked by employers, will increasingly be required to meet their demands for labour.

Opportunities

- The ageing labour market provides an incentive for targeted policy development to support the education, training and employment transitions of disadvantaged older workers. Proactive development will benefit older workers as well as future workers. Business will also draw benefits from a better prepared pool of older workers whose skills align with the requirements of businesses at a time when traditional pools of labour are shrinking.
- Creating a broader awareness of the relationship between ageing, labour supply and economic capacity generates a strong business case for overcoming historical barriers and cultural biases which, in the past, have restricted the continuing employment opportunities of workers as they have aged.
2 Who are older disadvantaged workers?

2.1 Definition

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) classifications, disadvantaged workers form a group comprised of a conglomerate of categories, which include: unemployed people; people who are not officially in the labour market but wanted to work, but have attained no formal education or no education past Year 10; people who are currently employed but are underemployed and low-skilled; and those who are at a potential risk of unemployment because they are in an unskilled job and have low educational attainment.

2.2 Older workers are not a homogeneous group

Disadvantaged older workers are not a homogeneous group. They vary greatly in terms of education and employment experience, geography, life course, attitude, culture and values, as well as minority group background (gender, ethnicity, health etc.).

The diversity of the group’s background and experience is evident amongst the case study participants, who range from retrenched rural bank managers to non-English speaking migrants displaced from urban manufacturing production lines.

2.3 Older workers experience different levels and types of disadvantage

Those participating in the project considered age discrimination by employers as the key to their disadvantage. Age perceptions and their impacts noted through the focus groups and interviews include:

- Negative stereotypes are held by employers of the capacity, skills and fit of older workers to the organisation.
- These stereotypes are embedded in broader community attitudes to age and are likely to be active within support and service agencies.
- Older workers can internalise these attitudes and self-discriminate based on their age. This can lead to their choosing not to take up education, training and or employment opportunities.
Although these perceptions affect the employment opportunities of older workers, these are not the only factors impacting upon this group's employment status. Other interrelated factors include:

- Many older workers have a poor level of understanding of the labour market and work arrangements. This limits the scope and focus of their job search.
- In some areas there are limited local employment opportunities, or a poor match between the jobs available and the skills and experience of older candidates.
- The poor match to local opportunities is sometimes the result of a shifting employment environment. The usually narrow skill base of older workers, which has often been developed in one area of work, reduces their ability to make transitions to new and emerging areas of work without targeted interventions.
- Compounding factors affecting the employability of the group are low levels of education attainment, and a lack of currency of attainment in general. This is often based in poor literacy and numeracy skills.
- Similarly, in many cases, it has been some time since the individual has sought work, resulting in outdated or low-level job search skills; that is, foundation skills, such as resume preparation, understanding of the application process and the importance of personal presentation.
- Many older workers do not have exposure to work-based technologies, limiting their opportunity to develop computer skills – a core requirement for most work.
- Many of the project participants experience health-related barriers to employment. Health is also a key barrier identified by service providers. The federal Department of Family and Community Services reports have shown that between 45 and 49% of Centrelink recipients surveyed reported having some ongoing medical condition, illness or addiction (including mental health) which made it difficult for them to find a job, or affected their ability to work (Carlie et al. 2002)
- The work available to the group is often insecure and low paid, reducing the incentive and motivation, in some cases, to seek and secure employment.
- In some rural areas the reputation of a family influences the opportunities of individual members.

2.4 The scope and scale of disadvantage

An estimated 700 000 older workers can be classified as disadvantaged. Although not a discrete group in official statistics, the numbers comprise 303 000 males (14% of the male population aged 45 to 64) and 390 000 females (18% of the female population aged 45 to 64) (see Figure 1).

A similar analysis of people aged between 15 to 44 years indicates that approximately 14% people are disadvantaged in the same manner (estimated at 1.2 million people aged 15 to 44 years).
Other differences showed that the proportions of older men and women not in the labour force but wanting to work, yet with low educational attainment (13% of people not in the labour force), are significantly higher than in younger groups (8%).

The older female population is more likely to be disadvantaged than younger women (1 in 7 younger women and 1 in 5.5 older women). Rates for the male populations are similar.

Older women are more often concentrated in insecure or declining areas of work compared with older men. This places them at risk of unemployment or underemployment; 19% of all employed women aged between 45 and 64 years are vulnerable to unemployment.

Figure 1 provides insight into the employment status of people aged 45 to 64 years in Australia. People in this age group can be considered to be in the second half of their working life, if 65 years is accepted as a nominal retirement age. It includes the proportion participating in the labour market, those in employment, unemployed and underemployed, as well as those not participating, including those who want to work. From this we can build a detailed picture of the current relationship of people in the 45 to 64 age group to employment, and highlight the considerable numbers who face disadvantage in employment.
Figure 1: Disadvantaged older workers

Source: ABS (2001) Confidential unit records files census household survey

LF: Labour force
Underemployed: People who are currently employed but are working fewer hours than they needed or wanted to undertake, and have attained no formal education or no education past Year 10
At risk: People who are at a potential risk of unemployment because they are in an unskilled job in a declining industry and have low educational attainment – no formal education or no education past Year 10
Unemployed people: Registered as unemployed and looking for work
2.5 Summary

Older disadvantaged workers are not a homogenous group. This is an important consideration in the development of strategies to boost their employment prospects. The group participating in the project consider that age bias is the key to their disadvantage. Age biases are embedded in our social values and are reflected in the workplace. However, both the research undertaken through the project and the broader literature indicate that the disadvantage faced by this group is also associated with their level of educational attainment, literacy and numeracy skills, and a range of interrelated environmental and individual characteristics.

Key findings

- Approximately one in six or 700 000 workers aged between 45 and 64 years can be classified as disadvantaged in Australia.
- Disadvantaged older workers have a diversity of backgrounds, employment histories and educational experiences, but have in common, employment status and the impact this has on their financial and social wellbeing.
- The literature on and the experience of older workers showed that age discrimination arising from socially based and ageist stereotypes is a critical component of this disadvantage.

Opportunities

- Building a better understanding of the disadvantages faced by older workers will assist in the targeting of interventions to assist their employment.
- The heterogeneity of disadvantaged older workers indicates the need for pathways from disadvantage, to non-vocational and/or vocational education and training which lead to, or encompass sustainable employment. These must be based on systemic models that are dynamic and responsive to their local context and the individual characteristics, values, competencies and health of older workers.
- Managing compounding influences on the level of disadvantage faced by older workers also supports their capacity to overcome barriers to employment. Examples of compounding influences can include the length of time disadvantaged; the strength of community, social and business networks; the level of awareness an individual has about her/his sustainable employment opportunities and suitability; and skill level and currency.
3 The local service environment

3.1 The current situation

The emphasis on education, training, employment and related service and support options for older workers is in its early stages. Some policies exist, in particular those relating to recipients of Australian Government and state government allowances as well as employment programmes and initiatives to encourage participation in training. However, these are at the emergent stage and are as yet to develop the level of responsiveness or reach to ensure the labour market opportunities of the group are fully optimised.

Support initiatives to enhance the employment opportunities for the group were identified in some areas. These provide insight to approaches that could be developed to articulate and support the employment pathways for older workers. However, the majority of employment support and education and training options available to older workers observed through the project were not targeted towards this group. For the most part, older disadvantaged workers must access the existing services and course and programme offerings available to people of all ages, and which may or may not meet the discrete needs or preferences of this group.

There is an obvious need to accelerate the transition of education and employment policies to reflect the shift in the labour market climate. Australia, like other developed countries, is moving from an extended period of high unemployment, with significant levels of youth unemployment and an early retirement culture, to one of reducing levels of unemployment. This will lead to labour supply shortages and the related need to extend working lives to meet labour force demands and offset the costs associated with an ageing population.

Examples of the emerging focus targeting older workers

Examples where an emerging focus on older workers and their vocational support needs were identified included:

- The Ballarat Learning City initiative which links agencies and employers to promote a focus on learning and development as an underpinning factor to economic and social development. The initiative identified the impact of an ageing workforce as a priority.

- The Queensland Department of Education and Training has moved to include mature-aged job seekers as a targeted group in its mainstream Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative. Tailored programmes include the Back to Work and Experience Pays programmes for older workers. Back to Work is a programme developed under the umbrella of Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. It aims to assist people aged 45 years and over with entry or re-entry into the workforce. The 60-
hour programme consists of five modules: workplace communication, computer fundamentals, job-seeking skills, word processing and hands-on computing.

- The Experience Pays programme, also a component of Breaking the Unemployment Cycle Initiative, provides a wage subsidy of up to $4400 to private and/or public sector employers who employ workers 45 years and over. However, the subsidy is conditional on older workers and employers meeting specific eligibility criteria. Older workers need to be at least 45 years; to have been unemployed for six months or longer and not be receiving Intensive Assistance Services from the Job Network prior to commencing employment. To be eligible, employers need to employ the worker for an average of 25 hours a week over a minimum three-month period.

3.2 The relevant service agencies

For the most part, the case study locations have well-developed infrastructure supporting economic development activity, the delivery of employment services and vocational education and training. Numerous organisations had a direct service delivery role or an influence on the employment opportunities available to older workers. Key players included:

- the ACE sector
- the technical and further education (TAFE) sector
- Centrelink
- Australian Government-funded Job Network agencies
- registered training organisations (RTOs), including private and non-profit training providers
- area consultative committees
- economic and related development bodies
- employers and their representative organisations.

All are active in the case study areas and represent a significant resource for local people.

3.2.1 Centrelink

Centrelink is a critical gateway to the support services available to older disadvantaged workers. The agency plays a dual role as both the regulator assessing and monitoring eligibility for Australian Government allowances, and the provider of support services. For many, it is the first service link in the employment pathway, often through the Personal Advisor service.

It is sometimes difficult for the older person to comprehend the regulatory and service role of the agency. Older workers participating in the project expressed widespread negativity toward the level and responsiveness of services delivered by the agency. The service offered by Centrelink’s Personal Advisors is viewed more positively. However, the service is still seen to be limited, and when referred to the Job Network, people usually felt that they went through the process again, resulting in a heightened sense of red tape and duplication.
Many older disadvantaged workers are poorly informed or confused about what Centrelink has to offer or are reluctant to submit to a dependency on the system. This often results in people not receiving the support they are eligible for and require to maximise their work readiness.

### 3.2.2 Vocational education and training

Older disadvantaged workers are able to enter the education and training system and access accredited vocational education and training at a variety of points. These include local learning centres and neighbourhood houses, larger ACE providers who also deliver accredited VET courses, Job Networks with RTO status, TAFE and other RTOs.

The multiple entry points are a positive aspect of the system, but also result in overlaps and gaps in the training offered. There is a need for consistent information which provides a full view of the education and training options available, details eligibility requirements, highlights access points, and promotes the resources and services available to support participation.

TAFE also plays an important role in developing and accrediting the vocational skills of older disadvantaged workers, but the sector is yet to fully respond to the needs of this group. Issues of access to the resources necessary to build responsive programmes, as a result of current policy priorities and the subsequent flow of funds, economies of scale and the debate about the appropriateness of age-specific delivery, are all issues which have been raised in the case studies. The view of the project is that TAFE is predominantly youth-focused and offers ‘formal’ education, which older disadvantaged workers approach with some trepidation.

### 3.2.3 Adult and community education

The size, reach and positioning of ACE providers varies considerably from area to area and state to state. ACE is governed by specific legislation in Victoria and New South Wales and operates under general education and training legislation in other states. Individual states and territories determine resource allocation for ACE, while the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) governs ACE providers who deliver VET courses.

In the case study areas the providers most familiar to older workers are neighbourhood houses and community-based centres of learning, yet more formalised learning environments do exist, for example, large ACE colleges in New South Wales.

However, common to all ACE providers, are their outcomes. Clemans, Hartley and Macrae (2003) have grouped these outcomes into three categories:

- *individual development outcomes*: knowledge, skills, a healthy and mature self-concept and supportive connections across private, public and work life
• **community development outcomes**: the knowledge and skills to develop a strong, identifiable community which values and embodies diversity, trust and reciprocity
• **economic development outcomes**: knowledge and skills to develop innovative and sustainable local economies which prosper by making the most of their diversity.

The majority of courses offered in the ACE sector are non-accredited and not directly vocationally focused. However, there has been a recent upsurge in the provision of accredited VET courses. This has been partly due to funding models within the sector, but more as a result of the ACE sector’s capacity to respond to local need and act as a transition platform into formal training and higher education.

The sector is particularly successful in attracting older women, and to a lesser degree, older men with lower levels of educational attainment. Older men from professional or para-professional backgrounds involved with the project were less likely to participate in ACE.

Although ACE providers participating in the project agree that they play an important role in reintroducing older disadvantaged workers to structured learning, they have neither the resources nor the mandate to assist with the development of employment goals or to support and monitor individual vocational pathways. Advice on pathways to support an individual’s vocational skill development, and transitions to employment are accordingly ad hoc.

### 3.2.4 Employment services

For eligible older workers, the Job Network plays a key role in identifying employment pathways and increasing the level of participation in training. Respondents to the survey who are Job Network clients report a high level of interest and participation in vocational education and training, indicating that the network is having considerable impact on mobilising this group to participate in training. However, as a group, only a small proportion of disadvantaged older workers are eligible for individualised support from the Job Network.

At the state level, significant employment programmes targeting older workers are the Mature Workers programme in New South Wales (since discontinued) and the Experience Counts programme in Western Australia. The Western Australia programme for disadvantaged older workers is a good example of the potential to integrate state and national programmes. In this case, providers have created broad access to older workers by capitalising on the resources available across the levels of government. In particular, Employment Directions Network (EDN) – a service provider in the Swan area of Perth – utilises these resources to support innovation across a wide range of services targeting different aspects of employability; that is, literacy and numeracy, job search skills, health issues and the development of vocational and job search skills etc. Their approach is detailed in Table 5 shown in Chapter 4.
3.3 Programmes and services: Information and marketing

Access to appropriate programmes and services depends on the effective promotion of the options available for older workers. As a group they are usually confused about what is available, the access points to services and programmes, and their eligibility for these. If they self-assess as ineligible for an Australian Government allowance, they also assume that they are ineligible for any level of support from the system. Some older workers choose not to access services for which they are eligible, as they associate dependence on the system with failure after a life of independence.

Service providers also report difficulty in tracking the availability of both support services and vocational training courses and the related eligibility or entry requirements. There is general consensus that current marketing services and training courses at the organisational level provide a fragmented view of the full range of options and support available. There is an obvious need for a more coordinated and accessible approach to the promotion of options across all providers at the local level. Such an approach will also help highlight duplication or gaps in provision.

The survey of older workers shows that most agencies use a variety of mediums to promote their services; however, word of mouth is the most common form of promotion. Many ACE providers rely solely on this method to promote their activities as they find it to be cost-effective and adequate for filling their courses. ACE providers agreed that this might limit the access of some older disadvantaged people who are not part of the networks through which word-of-mouth information circulates.

The most commonly used source of advice about training amongst survey respondents is the Job Network, with 52% of respondents claiming they have or would go to the Job Network for advice. This is not surprising as 54% of the sample were Job Network clients. Thirty-six per cent of older workers turn to press, radio or TV advertising; 28% select TAFE as a source of information; and around a quarter use the internet.

A slight anomaly exists between the top four advertising mediums used by service providers and the source of information used by older workers. Older workers do not nominate word of mouth as the most significant source of information, with 21% saying they receive information about options from family or friends. By contrast, Table 1 shows that word of mouth is the most common form of promotion used by service providers.
### Table 1: Type of advertising mediums used by service providers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Number of 'yes' responses</th>
<th>Percentage of all responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamphlets</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networks with other organisations</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local paper</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops/seminars</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careers, education and training fairs etc.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions for employers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 3.4 Summary

- Significant resources are available which can play an active role in the provision of services and support to assist the vocational pathways of older disadvantaged workers. However, a focus on the discrete support needs of the group and the development of new approaches to meeting their needs are yet to be fully developed.
- The ACE sector can play an important role in assisting the transition of older disadvantaged workers to more structured and vocationally oriented training. The sector is lacking the resources, or in many cases, the capacity to provide advice and support to enable such transitions.
- The multiple entry points to training and support services are both a strength and a weakness of the system. Overlaps in courses offered in some areas, gaps in others and confusion about access and eligibility are observed in most areas. This is exacerbated by single-agency, rather than centralised approaches to the promotion of services and training courses.

### Key findings

- An active focus on the education, training and employment transitions of disadvantaged older workers is in its early stages.
- Current programmes and courses are effective for some older workers, but options are rarely targeted towards this group, reflecting instead the existing service offerings, limiting the opportunities for full engagement of workers across ages.
- Numerous organisations have a direct service delivery role or an influence on the employment opportunities for older workers. These span the non-vocational and vocational education and training sector, employment services, social security, economic and related development bodies and employers.
- Centrelink is a critical gateway to support services, yet older workers find it difficult to differentiate the regulatory and the service roles of the agency.
The education and training sector offers multiple entry points into the system. However, consistent and comprehensive access and service coverage are not always prevalent.

**Opportunities**

- The acceleration of targeted policies to support the vocational pathways for older workers will pre-empt potential labour supply shortages.
- Centralised promotion of the training courses, employment programmes, support services and options available will create better access to appropriate programmes and services.
- The tailoring and re-bundling of service offerings will enhance the capacity of sectors to provide more comprehensive and targeted services to workers in this group.
4 Pathways to employment

4.1 The optimum path

If we assume that older disadvantaged workers with low levels of skills currency and educational attainment require training to improve employability, then ideally, the pathway would be linear and progressive, moving from the identification of a realistic employment goal, linking to appropriate and accessible training and then to employment at the completion of training.

Non-vocational barriers to employment, such as health and welfare issues, would be addressed through a plan developed at the commencement of the pathway. The plan would be monitored and reviewed in a timely manner, and assessments made of the capacity of the individual to undertake the next transition. This is indicated by the arrows in Figure 2. Attention would be given to ensure good job search skills are developed to support each stage of the pathway. Appropriate support would be provided to assist in the transitions along the way, such as that from the identification of the employment goal to participation in appropriate training, and from the completion of training to placement in employment.

Figure 2: The pathway and transitions to employment for individuals

This is an ideal model and not reflective of the experience of the older disadvantaged workers who participated in the project. Often the expectation of the individual is also one of linear and progressive transitions. When these do not occur, their self-esteem and motivation are affected, as well as their view of the value of the support and services they have received.

There is an obvious opportunity for innovations linking service providers. By establishing links between providers, a consistency in the level and focus of support for the individual as they move through each stage of the pathway can be maintained. Moreover, there is the potential, with the establishment of linked providers, for a system which targets new support and guidance arrangements at the transition points of the pathway.

This section of the report discusses each stage of the pathway and the transitions between each stage. It draws on the perspective of the experience of older workers and service
providers from the case study sites and the survey of older workers and providers. From this, a view of current good practices is formed, and opportunities to better support and integrate the pathways to employment for the group are highlighted.

4.2 Pathway step: Establishing realistic and resilient employment goals

The first stage of the pathway to employment is the identification of appropriate job opportunities that relate the experience, aspirations and potential of the older worker to local labour market opportunities. The employment opportunities for older candidates with limited, non-current or redundant work experience and qualifications are generally restricted to semi-skilled or unskilled positions. These positions are often poorly paid and the longer-term outcome for the older worker is likely to be tenuous.

At the national level, the Job Network plays the most consistent role in working with disadvantaged older workers to identify pathways to employment. These often include participation in training or education. Some states, particularly Western Australia, provide counselling and support for older workers through their employment programmes. In addition, career-planning support is available to the general public via twelve Career Information Centres nationally, and specialised career planning support is available to eligible unemployed people (Appendix 6).

Older workers who are ineligible for intensive job search support provided by the Job Network and who lacked access to state-level programmes have little or no opportunity to link to vocational counselling and job search support. This left the older worker relying on their often limited and outdated knowledge of the job market and job search skills to construct an employment pathway.

The level and depth of understanding of local employment conditions within the context of broader labour market trends is also limited amongst service providers. There is a significant opportunity to raise the level of understanding of the areas of employment growth and decline and the changing patterns and content of work at both the local and broader level. The translation of local employment opportunities for older, disadvantaged workers could also be enhanced through incentives for providers to build new and innovative approaches to linking with local employers to increase employment opportunities for the group.

The survey of disadvantaged older workers conducted as part of the project found that the group is most commonly seeking work in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, requiring a limited degree of technical skill or formal qualifications (refer to Table 2). The occupations where job search efforts are concentrated are of concern. These occupations have a higher-than-average mean age, often indicating that employers are likely to be seeking to renew their workforce through the recruitment of younger workers. The occupations are also clustered within industries in decline. Both factors raise questions about the sustainability of employment for older workers in these areas.
A TAFE access coordinator provider commented:

*In many cases they are told what they are going to do rather than exploring avenues that are more meaningful to them. Also older workers are likely to be facing career changes and need time to explore and try new industries. They need opportunities to be able to make informed decisions of what is available and appropriate for them.*
### Table 2: Employment sought by occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations*</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage of all responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process manuf./warehouse/factory work (excl. driver &amp; operator)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain/any job</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales/retailer (excl. admin &amp; accounts)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport/machine operator/driver</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/disability/age care</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism/hospitality/kitchenhand</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>289</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Summary of open-ended responses; categories are mutually exclusive.

Source: *Furthering success* (2003), Older disadvantaged workers survey

The occupations targeted by respondents suggest that a low barrier to entry rather than sustainability of employment is receiving priority in the establishment of employment goals. For example, nearly one in five survey respondents indicated that they would be interested in administrative and clerical work.

Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data for 2004 indicate a significant increase in employment of 15% over the last eight years. This is despite the fact that jobs sought by older workers have been largely in decline. For example, secretarial and personal assistant jobs declined by approximately 5300, jobs and elementary clerks declined by 3900 between August 1996 and February 2004. These occupations experienced the first and second largest decline across all occupations based on ABS Australian Standard Classification of Occupation (ASCO) codes (2nd digit level).

The second most sought after area of employment amongst respondents is factory work; that is, process workers, factory hands and packers. There is a 6% decline in these jobs over the same period, amounting to 1300 positions. Although these sectors are significant employers, the opportunities are declining, suggesting that there is a mismatch between the positions targeted by job seekers and those which would provide continuing and secure employment.

Nine per cent of survey respondents indicated an interest in work in retail sales, and while job growth in this area is strong (increasing by almost 11 000 jobs since mid-1996), opportunities are mainly part-time (67% of all jobs are part-time). There is also a substantial concentration of younger people in this occupation, with only one in seven jobs going to people aged over 45 years. A shift towards an age-free workplace culture is necessary to capitalise on these occupations for disadvantaged older workers.
Overall, transport, machine operator and driver jobs have had mixed results; however, within this group machine operators have suffered significant job losses, falling by over 30% or 3350 jobs. On the other hand, road and rail transport drivers and plant operator jobs have risen by almost 6000. However, these jobs have a higher-than-average proportion of workers aged 45 and over (49% and 36% of workers in road and rail transport and plant operation respectively). Occupational health and safety issues may be a concern for potential employers when considering an older candidate, given the physical intensity of these jobs.

Occupations such as those in the health and education services area provide better potential for sustainable employment, but are only identified by only a small number of respondents. Although these occupations require higher-skill levels, entry-level pathways are available through vocational training, traineeships and apprenticeships. In Whyalla for example, the health sector introduced a pathways traineeship for kitchen hands and manual workers in the local hospital. In Western Australia workplace assessment training was successful in supporting older people to gain employment as tutors within the education sector.

There is a diverse range of occupations with low barriers to entry indicating future opportunity and security for disadvantaged older workers. A few examples include handypersons, which have grown 82.4% or by 1450 jobs in the last eight years. Caravan and camping ground managers, which, although operating from a low base, experienced 141% growth and has the potential to provide entry into the travel and tourism industry. Gaming workers are also increasing in number (130%). Workers who have a lifelong technical background may look to technical sales representative roles. Jobs in these areas have increased by 2200 in the last eight years.

There is a clear need for support agencies to work with disadvantaged older workers to explore and establish a comprehensive employment plan, rather than one which is short-term and single-dimensional. These plans must promote the medium-to-long-term contribution that work experience and further training will make to employment pathways to better paid and more secure work.

Optimal targeting of appropriate and sustainable employment for this group of people, particularly for the establishment of an employment plan, will depend on the following:

- early intervention in the unemployment cycle to offset the cycle of decline associated with periods of unemployment
- access to services with a high level of understanding of local employment trends and conditions in the context of the broader labour market environment
- the ability and commitment of employment service providers to build employment plans that go beyond short-term employment goals to enhance the level of choice of work, and reasonable remuneration to strengthen the long-term employability of the individual
- initiatives that link the labour needs of local business to skill development opportunities for older disadvantaged workers, thereby clearly identifying the employment goal and the related transitions at the outset of the pathway.
The case studies below highlight early interventions designed to offset the impact of unemployment, and approaches to assisting with the establishment of employment goals.

The need for early intervention

Three examples of integrated approaches which intervene in the early stage of unemployment are:

- Brisbane south has developed an early intervention model that supports the transitions of older workers before disadvantage becomes entrenched. A pool of mentors drawn from local small-to-medium-sized businesses has been established to provide older job seekers with motivational training and to help them adjust to change. The programme is funded through the Queenslanders Working Together programme and is run through the city council.

- An approach by the Swan TAFE is the translation of the New Opportunities for Women programme to support the needs of older workers. The courses particularly target the psychological transitions that men face in unemployment and re-employment, including lack of confidence, resignation to the situation and an inability to make the next move.

- The eXcalibre project in Western Sydney was funded under the Australian Government's Regional Assistance Programme through the Grow Area Consultative Committee. It provided a professional and social support network for older workers, particularly those from a managerial or professional background. The programme recognised the importance of bridging emotional, self-help and technical skills to enhance the employability of older workers. The project addressed issues such as low self-esteem and self-help capabilities, while at the same time, building business skills. It also promoted the value of older workers to employers by lobbying business, producing information kits and presenting to business in public forums. The project worked across various levels, which assisted individuals to recognise that their barriers to employment may not be adequately addressed through the development of relevant vocational skills. The success of the project was fuelled by the enthusiasm of the older participants, who used the initial project as the impetus to continue and broaden their objectives and to engage the interest of government, business and the media in the plight of older workers. Future plans include setting up a specialist recruitment agency.

Supporting the establishment of viable employment goals

A local Job Network provider in Whyalla ran an in-house course over 100 hours which took an integrated approach to the range of barriers facing older job seekers at the outset of their employment path by providing:

- a career counseling programme
• job search assistance, which included support in developing resumes, application letters, interview techniques and mock interviews

• a focus on building OHS awareness

• attention to personal grooming

• skills in conflict resolution

• hot canvassing for jobs and industry visits.

The programme also provided access to a broad range of career information, and included visits to further education institutions, including universities and TAFEs, to introduce older workers to the learning environment.

4.3 Transition point: The link to education and training

Improving the vocational skills of older disadvantaged workers is a key to increasing their work readiness. For many, the step to committing to training is difficult. Issues such as literacy and numeracy, low levels of confidence in their ability to succeed and poor or remote past experience of formal learning must be addressed.

The establishment of a clear employment goal underpins the ability of the individual and their support agency to target appropriate training. It is not a matter of accessing any training remotely related to the job the individual is seeking, but having the ability to target training which best suits the employment goal.

Although continuing skill development is increasingly recognised as a requirement across working life, ABS 2001 Census data indicate a low level of participation in education and training by people aged 45 years and over in Australia. The experiences of older workers who participated in the case studies reveal that individuals generally see the relationship between skill development and work readiness and want to participate in training, yet in some cases, individual circumstances limit their capacity to do so.

The survey of older workers confirms that the primary motivation for education or training participation is to secure employment. Around two-thirds of older workers surveyed were training for a new area of work or to update their existing skills.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assistance</th>
<th>Number of ‘yes’ responses</th>
<th>Percentage of all responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information on the jobs available</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The type of training suited to area of work</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where courses are being offered</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training times/course duration</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Furthering success* (2003), Older disadvantaged workers survey

A provider commented:

> Older workers need to embrace accredited training as this fits with the picture of career development rather than just job placement. They want to see ongoing security in the working environment after the insecurity they have faced and the knowledge that they are just becoming older and the difficulty level of finding ongoing secure employment may become harder.
There is a clear need for up-to-date, comprehensive, localised information about the availability and accessibility of training that relates closely to the skills required for the employment opportunities targeted by disadvantaged older workers. While older workers participating in the case studies were willing to participate in training, they were normally unclear about what is available to support their participation in training, where advice and funding support might come from, and how to target training to best improve their employment prospects.

Both providers and older workers suggested that there is a need for reliable labour market information and advice. Areas to be targeted include information and advice about making career changes. Also important is support for identifying and accessing training that directly relates to their vocational goals and re-skilling options. This need has been identified in many other reviews of older workers including *Age matters*, the 2000 report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations.

The effective targeting of training to opportunities in the labour market for older disadvantaged workers requires the ability of local providers to actively identify these areas. In Tamworth and Ballarat, service providers are partnering with industry to audit the skills held by individuals to enable them to be connected to industry needs.

**Tamworth Development Corporation Limited (TDC)**

The TDC commenced an industry and skills audit of the region in late 2003. The enterprise-level survey aimed to collect employment and skills information covering past, present and future needs of local businesses. The results of the survey are intended to support workforce planning at the enterprise level and to assist training and employment service providers to appropriately target their resources. For example, the initiative could help to assess the need for apprentices across Tamworth. It is clear that initiatives such as this have the capacity to direct a focus on the creation of employment opportunities for older workers.

Betty’s experience is amongst a number of examples where an individual has made the successful step from training to employment.

**Betty’s story**

Betty is around 50. She started her career as a teacher, but when she travelled overseas she could not use her Australian qualifications so she retrained as a secretary. She returned to Australia and operated a local retail business with her partner. When the business foundered, Betty needed to find alternative work. She looked at what she considered possible and set her employment goal, to work as a medical receptionist. Betty felt a severe lack of confidence; she realised she would need new skills so she undertook courses in computing, bookkeeping and business. She studied at both the Adult Education Centre and at TAFE. She acquired a certificate II at TAFE and felt confident enough to apply for office and secretarial jobs. Against strong competition she managed to secure a secure full-time job with a local doctor.

Betty’s success lay in her ability to clearly identify her employment goal and to pursue and complete training that developed vocational skills closely related to that goal.
4.3.1 Recognition of prior learning

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) has the opportunity to play an important role in providing incentives for older disadvantaged workers to participate in education and/or training. One training provider stated: ‘We actively employ RPL, through recognition of current skills assessments, and credit transfer. This recognition of life skills is very important to the self-worth and subsequent motivation of the over 45s’.

Statistics reveal that RPL is used for only a very small percentage of lower-level courses – usually those which range from preparatory courses through to level II. These are the very courses that older disadvantaged workers are most likely to target. Barriers to RPL identified through the project included: concerns amongst training staff of the validity of RPL; the associated time and cost; the bureaucratic nature of the process; and the expertise required by the participant to successfully complete the RPL requirements.

There is some scepticism amongst older workers about RPL. A number of older workers participating in the project recounted their experience of seeking RPL to enter a TAFE course, only to find that the process required documentation, which they are unable to produce, or that the effort required hardly appeared to be worthwhile. For many, the process of documentation is difficult, particularly if they are unemployed and lacking the support of their previous employer to verify experience and competence. Similar experiences were recounted about the unwillingness of TAFE to provide credit transfer for ACE courses.

In focus group discussions, older workers claimed the process of meeting RPL criteria is convoluted. They suggested that training staff are generally unsupportive and, in some circumstances, raise obstacles. A training provider noted that some older workers just have not acquired adequate levels of competency through their working life, ‘You can have one year’s experience, thirty times.’

While the success of older disadvantaged workers in utilising RPL appears to be limited, there has been more success when proactive assistance is received from a third party, most noticeably state governments. Their ability to meet the cost to the institutions and apply community pressure on providers to take action are key factors in the instances where RPL is successfully applied. However, state government assistance is usually limited to areas undergoing major structural change resulting in the redundancy of workers, often in a reasonably tight geographic area.

Redundancies at the Rockhampton Abattoir led to a package of assistance, which included the provision of RPL assistance to help the transition of displaced people to jobs available in the construction industry. The department was able to secure recognition of the technical skills of the retrenched workers, including those which appeared not to be related to the proposed new areas of work, such as the knife skills of boners. As a result, training was fast-tracked to allow workers to secure a construction industry ticket in 26 months rather than the typical 48 months. 626 workers were assisted by this programme. Tracking of these workers’ transitions past the training was beyond the scope of the programme design.
4.3.2 To ACE and on to further education and training

Of interest to this project is if, and how, older disadvantaged workers made the transition to ACE and then on to further education or training.

Poor numeracy and literacy levels, and low levels and distant experience of education indicate that the local and less structured nature of training offered through smaller and local-level ACE providers would provide an accessible entry point. From this point an older person could build confidence and base skills to assist with the transition to a higher level and more structured training.

A number of examples of the ability of ACE providers to attract older people, particularly women, are identified in the case study areas. There are, however, few examples of programmes targeting older workers, particularly those designed to promote the vocational pathway of this group.

There is a generally agreed view amongst job seekers and providers that ACE could and should act as a stepping stone or provide ‘the basics’ for the move to the next stage. ‘It builds an individual’s capacity.’ On the other hand, it is observed that an individual’s path through and/or use of the ACE system is very difficult to track over time, with each short course seen as a discrete event. A community house education provider in Melbourne’s East attributed this to both the funding and culture of ACE.

We are in a constant battle to remain in operation. We have a number of enthusiastic people who are often joining groups and volunteering their time – it is easy to know what those people are doing, but for the most – people come and go as they please – it’s a friendly, flexible environment in that way – and although we would like to encourage further attachment – it’s just not viable.

Some providers who participated in the focus groups bemoaned the shift in current years in the emphasis from ‘general education’ towards ‘vocational education’. It is suggested that the sector is not as strong today, as there are fewer non-vocational adult programmes. Some considered that the VET agenda ‘has swamped the adult learning agenda’.

Common strengths of the ACE sector are the relaxed environment, community focus and low-entry barriers for disadvantaged groups, including older workers. The concern is that if ACE continues to adopt an increasingly vocational focus, it may threaten its ability to attract people to, and support them in, a non-threatening learning environment.
4.4 Pathway step: Training participation

Aspects governing the participation in and completion of training for older workers in the project include the level of information available about training options, the relevance of content, availability, cost, flexibility, mode of delivery, and nature and level of support available to the individual during the training.

4.4.1 Cost

Cost is a key factor affecting participation. Older workers in general are unclear about training subsidies or other cost assistance available to them. Project team members also had difficulty accessing detailed and consistent information about eligibility requirements and application of the training accounts managed by the Job Network. Older workers experienced varied success in accessing training through these accounts, and the operationalisation of the accounts varies across case study areas. The cost of accessing suitable vocational training is even more difficult for those who are not clients of the Job Network. Although there is usually provision within TAFE for disadvantaged people, the provisions are not promoted or well understood.

4.4.2 Content and mode

Individuals often have difficulty identifying courses that meet their skill requirements. This is due to a lack of information about the options available and a lack of training available in the area sought. Poorly targeted or selected training invariably weakens the relationship between the skills developed by the individual and those required to achieve their employment goal.

The delivery modes most suitable for older learners are well documented. As this group is not identified as a discrete target within the education and training sector, there are few examples within the mainstream offerings of modes of training delivery specific to the group. The Queensland Government's Community Responsive Training Programme was one example of responsive training to be identified.

The Community Responsive Training Programme, Queensland

The Queensland Department of Education and Training’s Community Training Partnerships Programme provides a mechanism for responding to significant skills development needs within communities through strategic intervention. The programme provides funds to enable identification and delivery of training to meet local industry and workforce needs to increase vocational qualifications and lead to sustainable employment. Incorporated community bodies, industry organisations, local councils and regional development organisations can apply for funding under this programme.

The programme aims to help people in Queensland communities to access accredited training, including basic literacy and numeracy skill development, employment (either full-time or part-time, paid or voluntary), entry to further education or training matched to the skill needs of local industry, entry into apprenticeships or traineeships, or to undertake other skill development of benefit to the community.
The programme was a response to a departmental review of processes for responding to language, literacy and numeracy issues. A clear need was identified to increase the flexibility and commitment of the department and providers in responding rapidly to the language, literacy and numeracy needs of the community. Part of this was the need to improve clarity of communication with stakeholders and to provide appropriate resources within the department to support the above.

The Community Responsive Training Programme provides an example of a model to encourage the proactive, flexible and responsive delivery of training to older people. The programme provides accredited training in an informal and supportive learning environment, often within local community organisations.

4.5 Transition point: The link to employment

The transition from training to employment should be made easier if the employment opportunity is matched to the individual's employment goals at the outset of the pathway. However, factors impeding this transition are:

- changing labour market conditions
- the ability of the individual to promote their skills and experience through the recruitment process
- employer attitudes.

4.5.1 Linking training to employment

Education and training programmes that incorporate or support workplace experience can encourage greater participation and retention in training and provide a direct link to work. They can also enhance employment outcomes for older workers since exposure to the capacities of older workers can help break down the ‘age bound’ perspectives held by many employers.

The link between work experience and employment outcomes is firmly established. Entry-level workplace training and work experience take many forms. Programmes linking training and employment range from formal employment arrangements such as cadetships, apprenticeships, traineeships and internships, through to programme-specific and short-term work experience placements, company visits and volunteering. These options present significant opportunities for older disadvantaged workers, which are as yet to be developed.

Training innovations that link to work experience and result in direct employment outcomes should become more widespread as employers find that the ready supply of skilled workers is reducing in a number of areas. This trend will continue as workforce growth slows and the age profile of the available labour increases.
BEST Employment, a Victorian Job Network provider developed a partnership with a local labour hire company to capture job opportunities with local employers who were having difficulty in recruiting welders. The partnership with the labour hire company and TAFE developed, and delivered a tailored and accelerated pre-employment training programme to prepare workers for welding jobs. Workers were able to fine-tune their skills in the workplace via the programme’s work experience programme. It also introduced them to the employer and other workers within the business. This approach led to good employment outcomes for both older and younger participants. Many of those participating in the programme were aged 45 years and over.

Employers also play an important role in upgrading the skills of their older workers and showing confidence in their ability to learn new skills and return the investments made in their development. Investments in training not only enhance the employability of the individual, but will also be increasingly required as the availability of recently skilled younger workers reduces. As in the case of Tassal described below, regulatory requirements can at times have a positive impact by providing a training incentive for both the worker and the employer.

**Huon: Tassal**

Tassal, a major aquaculture industry employer introduced a traineeship (Certificate III in Seafood Handling), which had a good level of take-up by workers aged 45 years and over. Workers reported significant benefits resulting from the training, including increased confidence in their learning capacity, increased self-esteem and broader employment opportunities. The company also offered workplace training, which included the opportunity to acquire a range of skills broader than the actual task, for example, communication skills, teamwork and leadership. The company benefited from a more highly skilled, stable and loyal workforce.

The Tassal example highlights a number of positive features of a training policy introduced by an employer. Firstly, it showed that the employer had confidence in their workers and that they took responsibility for and valued training. It illustrated how training can improve soft and general life skills as well as technical skills. The strong relationship between training and retention is also clearly shown.

For many of the workers at Tassal, their last learning experience was in the distant past, and until the company encouraged their participation in training, they were not confident of their ability to learn. They showed significant pride in the certification they achieved. Some positions at Tassal were required by regulation to have set levels of certification, and this certification was necessary for accessing opportunities for promotion and more secure employment. It was not a company requirement to offer these opportunities to their older workers. The company realised that the training requirement provided them with an
opportunity to encourage the group to participate in training and to enhance their continuing relevance to the workplace.

The four case examples below illustrate the active role employers can take to support the local economy and labour market. Benefits derived for employers can include access to a skilled and dedicated pool of labour; marketing and public relations opportunities; the development of sustainable business practices and triple-bottom-line principles; human resource cost savings; and in some cases, the availability of government subsidies and other incentives.

**Tamworth: the New England Area Health Service**

The New England Area Health Service provides an example of an industry where employment prospects will grow and where entry can still be achieved with minimal qualifications. Currently, entry into the industry can be through engagement, for example as a casual cleaner or casual cook. Some ‘existing worker’ traineeships are available for these positions and they pay higher rates than normal entry-level traineeships. Engagement prospects are helped if volunteering has been undertaken. The lowest level of qualification is Assistant in Nursing, through a Certificate III in Community Services (Aged Care Work). This can lead to certificate IV to become an enrolled nurse and then to the full registered nurse qualification. Pathways such as this are crucial for disadvantaged older workers, as they are within reach, and overcome the concern their training may not lead anywhere.

**Queensland Government industry-based programme: the National Retail Association**

The National Retail Association is providing around 120 hours of accredited training (three weeks) in modules from the Retail Training Package with one week of on-the-job work experience. Training is provided at a dedicated industry skill centre. In the case of the Pharmacy guild programme, industry training is provided for participants and they are then placed in work experience with the guild’s members. The pharmacies in the guild are community-based and have an older clientele who are responding positively to receiving service from older employees.

In another instance, the programme operates in a shopping complex, and training is closely related to what employers in the complex require. Trainees are able to gain experience in a range of retail situations. Because trainees are on site, they can readily fill in when staff shortages are experienced, as employers have direct knowledge of their skills and abilities.

The two programmes are enthusiastically received by industry. They are under review and the Department of Education and Training estimates that 225 of the 450 assisted by the programmes will achieve an employment outcome.

This example demonstrates the willingness of industry to play an active lead role in local employment and training initiatives. Through the association with business, employment outcomes appear to be stronger in general when compared with many programmes led by the services sector. An important benefit for businesses is the ability of older employees to successfully relate to the customer.
There is an opportunity for economic development agencies to play a role in linking the development of older disadvantaged workers to jobs generated through their industry, attraction and development activities, and promote the need to upgrade skills throughout working life to employers. However, these opportunities are commonly not realised as the focus of the development activity is on business support rather than taking a holistic view which would capture the full potential of the initiative for local people.

Cairns: Economic development reflecting the ‘knowledge’ of the local labour market

The Cairns Chamber of Commerce provided an example of the interrelationship between the capacity and skills base of the local labour market, and strategic and economic planning and development. They recently developed the Tropical Knowledge Concept initiative. The development of Cairns has been shaped by the tropical climate and environment; the town is bounded by floodplains and mangrove swamp, forcing development up along the east coast. The chamber identified a niche market for Cairns to package local knowledge and expertise in tropical regional development as a commercial product for developing areas around the world with similar tropical climates. The concept also spans transportation, health, education, architecture, and tourism for tropical regions. It is envisaged that the initiative will draw support and collaboration from Advance Cairns, the business community, education providers and RTOs to ensure its success. The initiative will have a significant impact on the economy and contribute to significant job creation for the Cairns community.

The key features of this example include the connection between economic, industry and employment development; the identification of the competitive advantages; and their entrepreneurial approach to the creation of an opportunity to provide further employment opportunities for local people.

4.5.2 Age awareness

Small-to-medium-sized enterprises identified through the research are generally unaware, or only beginning to become aware of the links between population ageing and business sustainability.

The project confirmed the following four common beliefs held by employers regarding recruitment, training and opportunity (reported by Mason & Randell 1997):

- There is a perceived additional cost associated with employing older workers compared with younger workers. (One employment service provider made a common point in their survey response: ‘Employers prefer to pay junior wages’.)
- Older workers are already provided for at the ‘front-end’ of their working life.
- Older workers do not have the capacity to benefit from education and training.
- Older workers should give way to their younger counterparts. Another provider reflected entrenched community views: ‘People should retire at 55 and let the young have the opportunity to take up their position in the workforce’.
Job seekers suggested that an information campaign is needed to change such attitudes. Examples of efforts to change stereotypes about older workers include:

- the 45 plus Workforce Inc. peer support, lobby and professional development group in Melbourne’s east
- the New Work Network lobby group in Brisbane South which seeks to have the different needs and work aspirations of older people recognised – typically a member may have a ‘portfolio’ of work options
- the Queensland Government’s Department of Education and Training pilot programme in South Brisbane called ‘45 jobs in 45 weeks for the over 45’s’, a campaign to promote the employment of people aged 45 and over
- the Cairns Chamber of Commerce’s Tropical Knowledge Concept which has promoted knowledge as a competitive advantage – encompassing and valuing the wisdom and knowledge of older workers.

The effectiveness of these groups and programmes is not established. The United Kingdom Government’s evaluation of campaigns to address ageist stereotypes found that little impact is made by short-term, high-cost media campaigns, and that ongoing and multi-tiered approaches that challenge ageist stereotypes are needed to change attitudes. This indicates that the advocacy activities of groups are one component of a broader strategy that will create the desired change in attitudes over time.

4.6 Case study examples of integrated approaches to supporting disadvantaged older workers

Two examples were identified through the case studies that provide insight into how services can be integrated for older workers at the agency or community level. These examples highlight the components of the model, the strengths documented through the project, and areas where they could be developed further.

4.6.1 Manjimup

Manjimup is a rural community in the south-west corner of Western Australia with approximately 10,000 residents. Two-thirds of the population have not attained schooling beyond Year 10 and more than one in four people have low levels of English language skills.

Since 2001 many of the timber mills, once the backbone of employment in the Manjimup district, have closed due to changes in state government policy governing the regulation of the industry. A Worker Assistance Package (WAP) was introduced to compensate the region for the impact of the changes and to support workers who were consequently displaced from the timber industry. Many of workers in the WAP were aged 45 and over.
Table 4: The Worker Assistance Package

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Package components</th>
<th>Strengths of the model</th>
<th>Opportunities to strengthen model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A redundancy payment</td>
<td>• Strong links with the local community</td>
<td>• Providing a less arbitrary period of assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Retraining</td>
<td>• Responsive to individual needs</td>
<td>• An expansion of the scope of education and training options, which were limited because of the capacity of TAFE to fund course delivery, due to low class numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wage subsidy to employers who take on workers</td>
<td>• Staff who related to the experience of the timber workers</td>
<td>• Focus on changing the attitudes of timber workers to training and re-skilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relocation, rent and mortgage assistance</td>
<td>• A relatively high level of flexibility in the programme. The flexibility extended to referring people to, and assisting financially with access to psychological and mental health services</td>
<td>• Improving the level of integration with social security provisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Referrals and monitoring</td>
<td>• Early intervention and pre-redundancy support</td>
<td>• Managing resentment from displaced workers in other industries who have not received the same level of assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A 10-day changing nature of work, information and skills assessment course</td>
<td>• Referrals – linking people with support agencies such as financial counselling, individual counselling and advice from the Business Enterprise Centre</td>
<td>• The development of long term options for secure and sustainable employment in the area</td>
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</table>

The Worker Assistance Package has been effective in raising the level of competency of individuals and in supporting the management of health-related issues. Collaboration between service providers and the Timber Industry Restructure Assistance Centre (which acts as a government service hub) underpins the model’s success. The support for the WAP by the local community is also critical, as it is seen by residents as central to the survival of their town.

The components of WAP are also effective in managing the transition between redundancy and unemployment. The programme supports older workers who are able to get a job with a local employer by providing financial and policy incentives to recruit, retrain and retain timber workers. However, the success of the model is dependent upon the local and broader economic environment. Re-employment opportunities are limited
by the stagnant nature of the local economy, indicating the need for an integrated economic development strategy. Timber workers who are unable to gain employment struggle to maintain motivation which results in reduced confidence, disillusionment about their opportunities and compounds financial challenges.

Rural and regional development is an ongoing focus for state and federal public policy, and the experience in Manjimup will continue to be at the forefront of future policy development in the future. If combined with a strong and adequately resourced local economic development plan, the WAP offers a valuable model for supporting employment and training transitions for disadvantaged older workers.

### 4.6.2 City of Swan

The City of Swan is the largest metropolitan local government area (LGA) in Western Australia and one of the fastest growing urban corridors in Australia. Traditionally a strong working class area, the population profile has changed over the past two decades and is likely to continue to become more socio-economically diverse. However, a number of low-income areas remain. These include pockets of public housing within the city boundaries and communities in the hills area, where older people on low incomes reside. Limited transport options in the local area compounds the disadvantage faced by those on low incomes.

Twenty per cent of the population is aged between 45 and 64 years. Sixty-one per cent of this group have low levels of education, with the highest level of schooling usually being Year 10 or below. Swan also has a high proportion of older people from migrant backgrounds with 48.4% of people aged 45 to 64 years not born in Australia. Three per cent of the population of the Swan LGA is Indigenous. This is the largest Indigenous population of any LGA in the Perth metropolitan area.

Close to half of the people aged 45 to 64 years in the area are not participating in the labour market. A further 5.5% of this group are unemployed and one in three employed older workers have part-time jobs compared with one in four nationally. This indicates a higher-than-average level of underemployment. To support the needs of this group, the Western Australian Department of Education and Training has developed a regional Employment Directions Network (EDN). The Midland EDN is one of five metropolitan-based centres.

### Table 5: Summary of the Employment Directions Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of the EDN model</th>
<th>• Highly flexible training assistance for those who are unemployed. Up to $350 to $500 is made available to individuals.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Profit From Experience is a state government programme run through the EDN and available free to people aged 45 plus who are unemployed or under-employed. This programme aims to empower mature-aged workers to explore a range of work options by focusing on the benefits of maturity, promoting an understanding of employability skills, offering career guidance and training options, and providing user-friendly information about the federal and state financial assistance and support available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Free access to computers and the internet are provided.
• A resume-writing programme and career exploration tools are offered.
• A referral service is available.
• Profit from Experience programme is offered.
• Career development (through information and pathways either back into employment or towards a career change) is facilitated.
• Enterprising Futures, a programme to help people explore self-employment options is available.
• Link training (first aid and Certificate IV Workplace Training and Assessment) is available.

### Strengths of the model

- The programme takes a holistic view and is embedded in the local community.
- Personal assistance from a staff member is always available.
- The centre is open to everyone, whether or not they are employed. This broad base of access is particularly relevant to this group who are often illegible for federally provided services.
- EDN has a strong emphasis on self-help, empowerment and access to information, but no job referral role. Staff pointed out that they are not case managers or mentors.
- The community-linked model is regarded by the service and by some older workers as especially appropriate for older people.
- The programme includes considerable flexibility, so that an individualised service can be offered. People can walk in off the street and use the services. Once they are logged into the system and have an ID, they can search at any time.
- Staff focus on solutions for clients rather than on their problems.
- Clients view them as open, friendly and caring.
- The centre is well resourced and staff are able to refer to a range of other agencies and services.
- The network is marketed through local community newspapers, networks in the community, word of mouth and brochures at shopping centres.
- Other organisations and providers are invited to visit the centre to see the services in operation.

### Opportunities to strengthen model

- Training assistance could be expanded to all EDN users rather than just concentrating on the unemployed.
- Greater levels of awareness and appreciation could increase use by other providers and target groups of EDN services.
- Increased portability of services would make them more readily available to older workers who cannot
The EDN plays an important role for mature-aged workers, especially in providing easy, general access to information about the range of federal and state programmes and assistance available. EDN also provides a chance to explore values and the impact that changes in the nature of work, competencies and labour market has on individuals; that is, disadvantaged older workers are left unprepared and alienated from the workforce as a result of these changes. Both group and individual support is available and the guidelines for financial assistance are comparatively flexible.

However, EDN acknowledges that there is still much to be done for disadvantaged older workers, especially the most disadvantaged, including those with injuries, psychiatric or intellectual disabilities, low levels of English language skills, Indigenous workers and those who lack confidence and motivation. More broadly, the disadvantage across the community is exacerbated by the export of accessible but low-paid work and the import of higher paid white-collar jobs which are less accessible to EDN’s clients.

EDN offers crucial support for older workers; however, the opportunity exists to complement this organisation’s framework and to address the broader problems experienced by the region. This could be achieved by engaging other stakeholders and creating an inter-sectoral support structure. Such a structure would be based on a shared responsibility between individuals, employers, services providers and policy-makers.

### 4.7 Building effective pathways to employment

Figure 3 shows the support needed by individuals, as well as the service capabilities required by providers, to ensure successful transitions to employment for older disadvantaged workers. It highlights the importance of providers understanding and responding to the employment goal the individual is pursuing, and their pathway activities and experiences to date. This process would require:

- protocols and systems in place to provide a feedback loop to providers
- clearly defined roles in the provision of support for pathway transitions
- delivery of targeted and effective programmes at each step of the pathway
- active monitoring of progress and adjustment to the plan
- provision of timely referral to address non-vocational barriers to employment.
Figure 3: Individual needs and service capabilities related to the pathway to employment

4.8 Summary

Targeting realistic and sustainable employment goals forms the foundation of the employment pathway for older, disadvantaged people. Ideally, the pathway would be linear, with each transition, a progression to employment. This requires all relevant service providers to hold a coherent view of the journey underway, and to understand their role in facilitating transitions and resourcing each stage of the pathway.

Older disadvantaged workers also have an expectation that their pathways to employment will be linear and incremental, with each step leading them closer to their goal. In many cases this is not the reality. Limited eligibility for services, poorly coordinated service provision, confusion about the resources and support available, a lack of capacity amongst service providers to direct the job search to areas of employment growth and to then assist access to related training, is evident.

The marketing of programmes and services to the group could be better targeted. As a group, older workers are more likely to self-assess as ineligible for services, or to consider
that the services and programmes available are directed to, or more suitable for younger people.

There is also considerable opportunity to link the activities of economic development agencies and employers to the building of employment pathways for older disadvantaged workers.

**Key findings**

- Pathways to employment for older workers are not clearly established or resourced.
- Providers delivering services and support to the group normally do not have a view of the individual’s employment goal, and how, as a provider, they can help further that goal.
- The service experience of older workers is mixed; however, there is considerable dissatisfaction with the responsiveness and level of service provided by Centrelink.
- Older workers who are Job Network clients have a significantly higher level of participation in training than the general population aged 45 years and over.
- However, access to full Job Network services is limited to a small percentage of those identified as disadvantaged.
- A number of integrated approaches to service delivery for the group are identified. These are the exception rather than the norm.

**Opportunities**

Opportunities exist:

- to clearly articulate employment pathways for older disadvantaged workers to support transitions from quality vocational advice to appropriate education and training and then to employment
- to engage vocational and non-vocational service providers, education and training providers, economic development agencies and employers in securing pathways and to support the transitions of older workers to employment.
5 Older workers, work readiness and employability skills

5.1 The work readiness model

As well as clarifying pathways to employment for older workers, it is also necessary to understand the individual and broader factors affecting work readiness.

The range, complexity and interrelationship of barriers faced by disadvantaged older workers indicate the need for integrated approaches that support vocational pathways and respond effectively to non-vocational barriers to employment.

To achieve this, the elements contributing to an individual’s work readiness must be considered, and a balance of interventions targeting each of the elements delivered. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health’s ‘Workability’ model translates well to a concept of work readiness.

The model determines the elements that contribute to an individual’s ‘workability’ as their health, competence, values and work. The first three relate to the individual and the last to the environment of work. The model is described as a house with four floors which must be in balance if good levels of work readiness are to be achieved. The house sits in and is influenced by the broader environments of family and friends, and government policy and services.

If we translate the model to one of work readiness for older workers, the content in each of the floors changes, but the elements that describe workability remain the same. The first floor relates to an individual’s health status which is an underpinning factor in their capacity to secure and retain work, and is particularly significant for disadvantaged older workers. The second floor relates to competence, including the skills built up over the individual’s work history, formal qualifications and the relevance of those skills and competencies to the current labour market. As well as vocational competence, older workers also require well-developed job search skills to compete effectively for work. The third floor relates to individual values. These can be broad-ranging, but include motivation, attachment to work, and perspectives about age.

The fourth floor is the work environment. To be work ready, it is not enough that the health, skills and values of older workers are appropriate, the work environment must also be responsive. There must be a match between the available work and the skills and motivation of the older worker. The work environment may also need to adapt to health-related deficiencies or consider the preferences of older workers for the way in which their work is structured. The workplace must also have a positive view of the capacity and fit of older workers and their ability to make an equal contribution to productivity.

In the broader environment, the Furthering success case studies and surveys have highlighted the role of family and friends in providing support to older workers as they seek transitions
to employment. Cases have been identified where a lack of support has led to the individual withdrawing from training and job search.

Alignment of the government policy and service environments is also critical. Government policy and services must intervene effectively at each of the levels – health, competence, values and the work environment if an individual's work readiness is to be maximised. This requires policy approaches which cross portfolio boundaries. Service partnerships that are innovative in the way they respond to the discrete challenges faced by older workers and which provide seamless delivery are also needed.

**Figure 4: Work readiness a model**

Source: Adapted from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health ‘Workability’ framework.

It is important to examine in more detail how older disadvantaged workers relate to each of the elements of work readiness.
5.1.1 Health

As the population ages, changes in the age structure are projected to bring associated disabilities. Between the ages of 55 and 64 years approximately 18 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women suffer from a mild disability (Brooke 2002).

A confronting aspect of the Furthering success project is the number of older, disadvantaged workers interviewed who suffer from health problems which affect their employment prospects — often seriously. Many representatives of placement agencies commented on the pressing need in their day-to-day work to address the physical and mental health requirements of their older clients before providing vocational assistance. A major barrier faced by older workers with pre-existing injury or illness is the view of employers that they present an unacceptable risk, regardless of the relationship between the injury or illness and the function of the job.

The incidence of health-related barriers to employment identified through the project is consistent with broader research findings. Between 45 and 49% of Centrelink recipients report having some ongoing medical condition, illness or addiction (including mental health) which made it difficult for them to find a job, or affected their ability to work (Carlie et al. 2002).

Pauline: the impact of injury on work readiness

At 48 Pauline has been unemployed for eight months. She has always been active and outgoing, and until recently, worked 60 hours a week as a house manager on a luxury yacht. The work was physically demanding, Pauline suffered a stress-related breakdown and became a WorkCover client. She was unable to return to her previous position and has been unsuccessful in her job applications, even though she felt they related well to her previous work history and skills. She believes her employability is compromised by her WorkCover status.

Jennifer: overcoming employer prejudice

Jennifer moved to the country from Melbourne thirty years ago. She initially managed a general store then moved into healthcare where she sustained a work-related injury and was subsequently made redundant. Jennifer received assistance from the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) and undertook a 12-month computer-training course at TAFE. She believes that local employers will not consider her, given her history of injury. Jennifer is doing office work for a friend, but the business is struggling and she expects to lose her position again shortly.

In both cases, the individuals have consistent work histories, considerable transferable skills and are actively seeking work. However, the perception amongst employers of the risk associated with a pre-existing illness or injury acts as a considerable barrier.
This highlights the need to integrate health services with vocational pathways developed for older workers and to re-educate employers about the work capacity of older workers who suffer from an illness or prior injury.

5.1.2 Competence

Older disadvantaged workers as a group have the lowest levels of educational attainment, literacy, numeracy skills and proficiency in information technology. Formal qualifications are an increasing priority for employers in a competitive environment of accelerating change. This is driving a need for continual up-skilling and re-skilling – placing older workers at significant disadvantage in competing for employment. There is also a need to recognise the generic transferable skills of older workers which may place them at a significant advantage in competing for employment compared with their younger, less experienced counterparts.

The following summary of Australian statistics highlights the link between low levels of education attainment amongst older workers as a group compared with their younger colleagues, and the related impact on their employment status.

- The 2001 ABS Census reported that 4% of people over the age of 45 years undertook formal study, compared with 56% of people aged 15 to 24 years. This confirms the fact that, despite the acknowledged need for continual skilling across working life, our education and training resources are mainly directed at people under the age of 25.
- Approximately 960 000 older employees aged between 45 and 64 years did not go to school or finished at Year 10 or below (48% of all employees). It is estimated that a further 21 000 people who are self-employed or contributing family workers have attained a low level of education (53% of all workers).
- Fifty-eight per cent of full-time unemployed and 52% of part-time unemployed older workers aged between 45 and 64 years did not go to school or did not finish Year 10 or below.
- An even higher proportion of older people, who are not in the labour force, did not go to school or did not finish Year 10 or below. Sixty-seven per cent of females and 63% of males aged 45 to 64 years are included in this category.
- Forty-six per cent of employed workers aged 45 to 64 years did not complete post-school education, compared with 58% of unemployed workers and 67% of people not in the labour force aged 45 to 64 years.
- Of the employed workers in this age group who completed a qualification, 60% completed it prior to 1980 (55% for unemployed people and 59% for people not in the labour force), drawing into question the currency of formal skills across workers in this age group.
- Only 14% of all unemployed workers, 10% of employed workers and 5% of people not in the labour force aged 45 to 64 years completed their qualification between 1996 and 2001.

1 Numbers are estimates only and based on ABS Census 1% Confidentialised Unit Record File Records, 2001. Refer to the ABS 2001, ‘Technical paper – Census of Population and Housing, household sample file’, cat no:2037.0, for a detailed discussion of the sample, estimates and error etc.
The low level of educational attainment amongst disadvantaged older workers and the lack of currency of qualifications that they do hold are well recognised as significant barriers to be addressed. However, the work readiness model highlights that interventions that focus simply on building the competence of older workers are unlikely to deliver sustainable employment outcomes.

Recent work by government and industry has identified the work readiness skills underpinning competence. The identification of these skills provides an opportunity for focusing on the development of skills for disadvantaged mature-age workers relevant to the Australian context.

The Employability Skills Framework, developed by the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for use at all education levels provides a guide for employees to improve their career potential, and for recruiters and HR professionals who are developing guidance in this area. This framework could provide a tool to identify how disadvantaged older workers can maximise their potential to enter the active workforce.

Employability skills were defined as ‘skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions’. This is also relevant to this study in that it is recognised that portable skills development is essential to the sustainable employment of disadvantaged adult workers.

The key employability skills identified in the Employability Skills Framework are:

1. Communication
2. Teamwork
3. Problem-solving
4. Planning and organising
5. Initiative and enterprise
6. Self-management
7. Learning
8. Technology **PC ADDED TECHNOLOGY**

In addition to these eight work readiness skill groupings, businesses participating in the research stressed the need for entry-level and ongoing employees to exhibit a broad range of personal attributes. These attributes (discussed at 5.1.3) were identified as central to the concept of an Employability Skills Framework. Many of the businesses also suggested that educators should review and redevelop their curriculum and change delivery methodology to support the development and recording of the employability skills (Appendix 5).

5.1.3 **Values/attributes**

The values and attitudes held by disadvantaged older workers contribute to their work readiness. The Business Council of Australia (BCA) and Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) identified the value related characteristics sought by employers in their 2002 report, *Employability skills for the future*. The identified attributes include loyalty, commitment, honesty and integrity, enthusiasm, reliability and positive self-esteem.
These attributes relate closely to those identified through the project as supporting work readiness. These included a positive self-image of their age and capacity; a strong desire and interest in work; adaptability; motivation and commitment to overcome obstacles along the path to employment; a sense of control and a willingness to accept responsibility for their pathway to employment; and a positive attitude and response to the service environment.

However, many of these values/attributes are affected by the experience of unemployment and need to be addressed as part of an integrated approach to improving an individual’s work readiness.

For many older workers participating in the project, the longer the period of unemployment, the more likely they were to be discouraged and to feel that their employment opportunities were limited. They increasingly perceive that they have virtually no possibility of securing a job because of their age.

Older workers who have been retrenched after a continuous working history often found their first months of unemployment particularly traumatic. This was further compounded by a sense of displacement – leading to low self-esteem. The shock associated with their unemployment acts as a major barrier to their employability.

Older workers show a lack of understanding of the changing nature of work which often translates to an outdated view of the jobs they consider ‘acceptable’. For example, older workers who limit their search to full-time positions neglect the fact that one in four Australian jobs is casual and that casual employment can provide a pathway to full-time work (ABS 1999). Some disadvantaged individuals are fatalistic and accept that they are not readily employable and build lifestyles that do not assist their job search efforts. They have lost interest and hope, and as one Job Network member stated: ‘Attitudinal factors have become more potent than skills in gaining employment’.

In contrast, older workers who have achieved positive outcomes considered that these are partly attributable to their motivation and positive outlook. Older workers who value education and training are more likely to be self-confident – enabling them to justify and better manage the opportunities associated with participation, in terms of financial outlays and time commitment.

Interventions are necessary to combat the emergence of negative values which compromise work readiness and are best targeted in the early stages of unemployment or prior to displacement for work.

5.1.4 Work environment

In the same way that individuals are expected to develop their skills and characteristics to ‘fit’ the work environment, employers must take into account the skills, experience, health, capacity and work preferences of workers at different stages of their working lives. In many cases this requires a transformation based on the examination of age factors influencing recruitment processes, training allocation and participation, the retention of workers and occupational health and safety practices.
Organisations which pay attention to these factors will be well positioned to attract and retain people, as the supply of workers as we enter the next decade increasingly falls short of demand in most industries and occupations.

It has been found that widespread and entrenched prejudice currently affects the retention and engagement of new staff aged 45 years and over. This is reflected in recruitment data from large companies and many surveys of the age preferences for new staff.

As well as understanding the need to continue developing and retaining workers as they age, service providers and employers need to acknowledge that older people experience significant levels of stress when confronted by the need for occupational change. The stress of changing careers is often further exacerbated by other challenges, such as poor health, care responsibilities for family members, relationship issues and financial pressures. Many experience a significant loss of confidence during this period of change. A greater awareness and responsiveness amongst employers and co-workers of these challenges would assist mature-aged workers who are undergoing transition back to work, or to a new area of work.

5.2 Summary

The work readiness model highlights the importance of intervention across health, competence, values and work arrangements to provide a holistic support system for older disadvantaged workers. An important aspect of the model is achieving balance between each of its components and for understanding the influence of the broader social, service delivery and public policy environments.

The model provides a framework against which to assess the discrete needs of the individual and the more generic needs of the broader group of older workers. It also provides a context in which to assess the availability of support services and their responsiveness to the opportunities and needs of the group.

Work readiness skills are a critical area for examination for older workers. These skills refer to those required to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to employment, including self-employment. There are eight groupings of work readiness skills, all of which are important to older workers.

Key findings

- The role of public policy in this environment is to support the connection between disadvantaged older workers and work, by integrating social, economic, industry and labour market development.
- Current interventions are not balanced or connected across the components of work readiness but tend to have a discrete focus on single elements. Often the focus is limited to changing individual capacities, such as competence.
- Health status presents a significant disadvantage for many older workers, again highlighting the need for support structures which consider health as part of an integrated approach to building an individual’s work readiness.
Age perceptions are another critical issue and need to be addressed across all sectors.

The recognition and recording of the eight groupings of employability skills are important to support older workers to engage and reengage in the workforce.

**Opportunity**

- Integrated public policy and service approaches would provide balanced interventions which holistically address the elements impacting on an individual’s work readiness.

- Work on developing the Certificate I in Employability Skills provides an opportunity for employer-based curricula and assessment for this qualification, and for other higher-level training qualifications. The opportunity to link trainers and employers is substantial and can recognise the value of the older worker. If older workers can list their experience on this site, this will enable employers to best target recruitment, and to provide the employees with a means of advertising themselves.
6 Building intersectoral partnerships

6.1 Defining and supporting local partnerships

A central finding of the project is the necessity for the development of effective, supportive and articulated pathways to employment for older disadvantaged workers. These would be best accomplished through the establishment of intersectoral and interagency partnerships. Partnerships at the local level would address the critical gap identified in the integration of support and resources and facilitate the employment pathways of older disadvantaged workers. As a Job Network provider commented: ‘The system is a jigsaw that doesn’t fit together’.

International evaluation of public policy targeted at addressing disadvantages faced by older workers has found that policy approaches which cross portfolio boundaries have been the most successful. In the same way, integrated approaches based on collaboration supported by partnerships at the agency level are also needed to deliver holistic support and service to this group.

A reasonable objective for such partnerships might be to establish a holistic, inclusive, cross-sectoral education, training and employment system for disadvantaged older workers. Not surprisingly, few partnerships of this nature were identified.

Existing partnerships are usually programme-focused and operate at a very local level. Programmes delivered through these partnerships are often informal, partial, or related to specific, often short-term initiatives.

More often than not, good practice examples operating at a micro level engage some of the relevant stakeholders, but not all. Results, although successful for some older individuals, have little impact on delivering sustainable employment pathways to the broader group of older workers in those communities.

Partnership arrangements need to be flexible and innovative to suit circumstances. They can be multi-faceted and operate at different levels and timeframes and across different sectors. For example, they may be short-term project-specific, or they may be longer-term standing arrangements.

Local partnerships to build and support employment pathways for older workers will derive the greatest benefit and capacity, with the inclusion of representatives from across the sectors to include:

- government
- employers and their representative bodies
- economic development agencies
- education and training providers
- employment service providers
- community members, including older disadvantaged workers
- unions.

The national survey of providers involved in the project provided insight into the various ways in which employment and training organisations have partnered with other providers to help older disadvantaged workers. It is apparent from Table 6 that the nature of such partnerships is informal rather than formal, with some 23% having informal networks, and only some 14% reporting the existence of formal networks. Only 16% reported partnering on programmes and projects, with around 10% sharing facilities and resources.

### Table 6: Current partnership activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of partnership</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referrals</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletters/brochures</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online forums and websites</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal networking</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal networks</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share facilities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share other resources</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner on programmes/projects</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Furthering success* (2003), Service provider quantitative survey

Factors contributing to successful interagency and intersectoral partnerships identified through the agency survey and the project workshop are:

- an unambiguous commitment to improving employment outcomes for older disadvantaged workers
- recognition of existing partnerships and building on these where appropriate to include a focus on innovation to support disadvantaged older workers
- a skilled facilitator who is viewed by each of the partners as an objective intermediary or ‘honest broker’ to support the establishment and activities of the partnership. The facilitator must also have the capacity to bridge sectoral interests and priorities, perspectives and language

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2 Formal networks consist of a collection of nodes (people, organisations or groups) linked in some way. They are generally fully or partly funded, have regular meetings, centralised resources and articulated goals and objectives. Informal networks, in contrast, may have common nodes, but are linked in a less structured way. For example, meetings may be held occasionally or in an ad hoc, casual manner and generally act as forums for sharing information and ideas.
a clearly defined and communicated mandate and strategic plan, developed by members of the partnership and underpinned by operating principles. The plan should include a focus on short-term outcomes or ‘early wins’

- the need for each member to clearly define the contribution they will make to the partnership and the benefits they expect to derive
- clear protocols and operating procedures
- attention to effective communicating across partners
- conflict-resolution procedures and skills
- an acknowledgement of areas of conflict of interest and competitive forces that may impact on the partnership and approaches to deal with these
- adequate resources to facilitate coordination between organisations
- a shared awareness amongst partners of the disadvantages faced by older workers, their support and service needs and the employment and training environment
- willingness to share resources and adapt service content and approaches
- an ability to attract additional resources to support the strategic activities of the partnership
- a commitment to evidence-based approaches, and to building on knowledge and experience
- an external view which builds on the knowledge and learning of others
- an ability to innovate and cooperate to achieve the desired outcomes
- realistic timelines that allow relationships to develop, a shared outlook to be built, and strategies to be constructed
- monitoring and review of outcomes against the strategic plan – adjustment and update of plans.

The role of the partnership could include:

- clear articulation of pathways to employment for older disadvantaged workers and the identification of provider and employer roles and responsibilities in supporting these pathways
- innovation in the content and delivery of services and programmes to support pathways
- building awareness of local employment opportunities
- connecting training to defined opportunities
- coordinating the resources of different sectors to focus on agreed outcomes for older workers
- mapping services and programme support needs of older workers against current offerings to identify areas of overlap, underservicing, and/or fragmentation
- promoting the capacities, skills and contribution of older workers.

The Victorian State Government Neighbourhood Renewal programme provides significant insight into success factors in building local partnerships, which include and support disadvantaged community groups. The programme operates across public housing neighbourhoods in Victoria. It has identified that these areas have significant concentrations
of disadvantaged people whose disadvantages cross many areas, including financial, health, employment, education and training, local amenity and safety.

The programme educates and engages local providers who have a role to play in developing and targeting interventions with the aim of addressing the multiple disadvantages of the neighbourhood. The approach is integrated and holistic. Local residents are central to the renewal process and sit alongside the various government representatives and service providers on sub-committees.
Key lessons from the programme are:

- the need for integrated approaches to the multiple disadvantages faced by residents in the public housing areas
- the importance of leveraging the partnerships with all levels of government and service providers who have resources and expertise to contribute to the renewal process
- the need for systems that support quality approaches to planning, implementation and review
- the requirement for access to appropriate levels of resources to educate, enable and support initiatives
- the role of expert leadership to facilitate, engage, motivate and stimulate innovation.

An integrated local partnership

The Victorian State Government’s Wendouree West Neighbourhood Renewal programme is facilitating the renewal of a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Ballarat. The neighbourhood has a high concentration of public housing tenants who are long-term unemployed and often experience intergenerational unemployment.

The renewal process is dependent upon the inclusion of partners from all sectors and providers who could help improve the neighbourhood and the opportunities available to residents.

Resident participation is integral to the model with an early focus on the development of their skills and confidence through training and participation in a residents’ group.

The project uses whatever assistance is available, for example, community and adult education providers for the provision of training and support for residents. The Wendouree West Community Action Plan is an amalgamation of plans developed by sub-committees in a number of areas, including health and wellbeing, community safety, local amenity, and employment and learning. The plan required the endorsement of the residents group.

The employment and learning–working group developed a detailed plan supported by local Job Network members, ACE providers, TAFE and employers. One initiative under the plan is the development of new training positions through the Victorian Government’s Community Jobs Programme which provides fully paid work experience and accredited training directly related to the employment opportunities of local people.

While not directed entirely towards mature-aged workers, the Renewal Plan incorporates three important elements likely to contribute to longer-term solutions for employment of older disadvantaged workers.

- It is multi-tiered, involving cooperation between state and local government, education training and employment service providers, employers and members of the local community.
- It is firmly embedded in the local community, through the residents’ group and the sub-committees which represent and confer closely with other community members.
- It takes a holistic view, which acknowledges the close connections between work, vocational, and life skills, health, and the role of a supportive community.

6.1 Summary

There are a broad number and range of service providers and organisations which can contribute to securing employment pathways for older disadvantaged workers. The current system is ad hoc and does not fully optimise the opportunities for this group. Local partnerships that clearly articulate the benefits for each of the partners, and effectively mobilise their expertise and resources will have a significant impact on the education, training and employment opportunities of older workers.

Key findings
- Lack of intersectoral and interagency partnerships are identified as a critical gap in integrating support and resources to facilitate the employment pathways of older disadvantaged workers.
- Existing partnerships tend to be fragmented, informal and (even) unintended. They lack an integrated strategy and are often the result of circumstantial community interrelationships rather than planned interventions.
- These partnerships were often the legacy of the objectives of different and unrelated sectors with conflicts of interest and lacking the resources or mandate to achieve integration in relation to pathways for older workers.
- They often bore no strategic relationship to employment, education and training services or the particular disadvantages of older individuals in regions.
- New forms of intersectoral partnerships are needed to articulate and support the pathways of older disadvantaged workers.
- The composition and relationship of such partnerships would vary across states, regions and localities.

Opportunities
- The promotion of new approaches to older worker advocacy would build age awareness and combat age discrimination at the agency, employer and community level.
- The development of new incentives for business would promote the need and opportunity for continuing vocational skill development across working life. There is also a significant opportunity to promote and adapt existing programmes, such as the New Apprenticeships programme to create opportunities for older disadvantaged workers.
- The allocation of new resources would build local labour market intelligence and systems to disseminate information to individuals and service providers about the changing nature of work and emerging and declining areas of employment.
- The facilitation and resourcing of local partnerships would build and support employment pathways for older workers. These should include representatives from across sectors, such as government, employers and their representative bodies, economic development agencies, education and training providers, employment service providers, community members, including older disadvantaged workers, and unions.
- The role of the partnerships would be to create and articulate pathways to employment for older disadvantaged workers and to identify the role and responsibilities of providers and employers in supporting the pathways.
- To succeed, the partnerships would require leadership, resources and the capacity to plan and operate efficiently.
The challenge of transformation

Many of the elements which address the support and development needs of unemployed people are in already place with governments and providers already having committed considerable resources and effort to help unemployed people (in general) to re-enter the workforce. However, the reach of current service provision is limited. The system also acknowledges and responds, to a certain degree, to non-vocational barriers to employment, for example, the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services and the referral process of Centrelink’s Personal Advisors. However, there is a need for better integration, targeting and extension of the reach of services to disadvantaged older workers.

Through its employability model, the Furthering success project has mapped the elements which support the employment pathways of older, disadvantaged workers. This and the pathway’s model provide frameworks to consider gaps in resources and services and, in turn, areas for improvement.

This project has identified a significant opportunity to close the gaps and remove overlaps in service and to improve the articulation of employment pathways for older disadvantaged workers. A priority supporting this opportunity is the development of interagency and intersectoral partnerships. These partnerships would have the capacity to clearly define and promote the employment pathways for older workers and clarify the services required and those available. This in turn would facilitate the integration of approaches to targeted interventions in supporting the diverse needs of older disadvantaged workers.

Transformation must occur across the elements of the work readiness ‘house’ and its environment, if local partnerships are to be formed and pathways to employment for older workers are to be optimised. Such an approach would incorporate all relevant components, including public policy, service delivery, economic development, community and business sectors and the individual. The following diagram defines the elements in a future scenario that would underpin a transformation in the access to and relevance of programmes and services for older workers.
## Table 7: Transforming work readiness pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lack of integration of policy approaches within and across levels of government | **Age awareness underpins interventions at all levels** |
|  | Connectivity between portfolios coordinated at each level of government |
|  | Connectivity of policy and programmes coordinated across levels of government |
|  | Policy priority actively targeting older disadvantaged workers |
| **Economic development** |  
Almost no integration of economic development with employment creation for older disadvantaged workers |  
Active participation in local partnerships should translate employment generated from economic development activity to opportunities for this target group |
|  | Targeted development activity to generate job opportunities should match the capacities of disadvantaged older workers |
| **Service delivery** |  
Low-level understanding of labour market trends and emerging employment opportunities amongst older workers and service providers |  
Information should be systematically disseminated to service providers to increase understanding of disadvantage faced by older workers and of targeted service delivery approaches |
|  | Information should be systematically disseminated to increase understanding of labour market trends and opportunities |
|  | Strategic partnerships should be established between providers and sectors to facilitate innovation to support employability |
| **Community** |  
Extremely limited understanding of the issues facing older workers, the impact of demographic change and few responsive local level partnerships |  
Facilitation of cross-sectoral and agency partnerships to support older workers |
| **Work** |  
Limited responsiveness amongst employers to the creation of opportunities for older workers |  
Information should be systematically disseminated to increase positive perceptions of the capacity and fit of older workers |
|  | Active participation in partnerships with employers should be facilitated to communicate work opportunities and to translate pathways |
| **Individuals** |  
Limited access to services and support that address broad-based and diverse barriers to employment. No clear articulated pathways to employment supported by targeted approaches |  
Broad based awareness and dissemination of access to support services and relevant education and training to address the components of employability, health, competence and values |
|  | Active employment plans developed which clearly articulate a targeted and sustainable employment goal and pathway |
8 Conclusion

The *Furthering success* project sought to understand the education, training and employment experiences of disadvantaged older workers in Australia by investigating how the broader environment supports the transitions of older workers, into and through non-accredited and accredited training to secure employment. The project concluded that the service environment is not directly targeting the needs of older disadvantaged workers and that service provision is often fragmented, overlapping or deficient. Provision is usually based in a low level of awareness of the needs of the group and influenced by age perceptions of the capacity and fit of workers, as they age, to employment opportunities.

The high number of older disadvantaged workers and their level of disadvantage compared with that of their younger counterparts clearly indicate the need for targeted public policy and service provision for the group.

As the nature of labour supply changes in Australia, a significant opportunity is presented to secure the employment future for older workers.

8.1 Pathways for individuals

The research shows that the Australian education, training and employment system offers multiple entry points. However, disadvantaged older workers generally enter the system through Centrelink or the ACE sector. Only a minority of the older workers participating in the research had a strong appreciation and awareness of the education and training options and support services available to help them to move from unemployment through education and/or training into work.

The project found that, because of their limited work horizons and relatively large financial and other commitments, older job seekers placed priority on reducing what they believe could be an extended period of job search. This priority affected their view of the utility of further education and training. The older workers interviewed showed a clear preference for training courses of a shorter duration, yet they appreciated comprehensive tutorage and mentoring, as well as time to practise new skills, for example, open access to computers.

Older job seekers generally preferred to undertake courses in an environment they believed to be sympathetic to older learners. Many interviewees were reluctant to study in what they considered to be a ‘school’ environment and felt insecure about studying with young people who have more current skills – particularly in the use of computers. Many older workers, particularly women, felt that ACE offered them more than mainstream TAFE. However, semi-professionals, who were often retrenched, tended to prefer professional and formal learning environments. There was general support for specific-purpose ACE, TAFE and RTO programmes targeted at older job seekers.

The choices made by older workers in selecting their training courses are often haphazard and ill-informed. There is a lack of centralised information and advice about education and training options, and current and future areas of skill demand in the local labour market.
Older workers registered with the Job Network and Centrelink are regularly directed towards job search and job ready skills, rather than given career and job advice relevant to their local area. This indicates the need for more clearly articulated employment plans which highlight the role of education and training in achieving the individual’s employment goal.

Education and training providers lack the resources needed to provide broad advice about labour market and employment trends, except in special circumstances where they have secured limited funding for specific-purpose programmes. Funding for such programmes is usually acquired via a competitive tendering basis. The provision of such advice would require significant local knowledge predicated on links to employers and systems to monitor local employment trends.

Older workers undertaking training have limited specific advice available about how specific programmes might articulate to further training to build appropriate competencies and qualifications. There is no formal advice, for example, about how the individual could progress from ACE courses to relevant TAFE programmes. Older workers learn about support such as credit transfer and RPL through ACE staff, or by inquiring through TAFE. However, provider advice is usually inconsistent and ad hoc.

There are some examples of integrated services at the agency level which address the diverse needs presented by the group; however, this is the exception rather than the norm. Similarly, service and agency partnerships between key players are not widespread, yet have the potential to benefit older job seekers. Those that are active have often arisen in response to local labour market crises which affected the whole community, for example, closure of a key industry. The nature of these cooperative arrangements differed, ranging from ‘organic’ community responses to those driven by government.

Often the key feature of successful arrangements is the involvement of state and local government agencies. Most local councils have an economic development unit, responsible for industry strategy and which collaborates with state bodies to implement state industry strategies. These bodies, along with local employer associations, are usually the most useful source of information about future areas of job growth. However, they are not actively promoting the job opportunities their development activities have generated to local people.

In most areas links between key organisations are not strong and their focus on older workers is tied to mainstream programmes and courses.

### 8.2 Where to next?

On balance, while there is some appreciation amongst providers of the desirability of providing holistic and ‘whole of government’ approaches, the system lacks the level of attention and coordination needed to support older workers. Most employment and training providers understand that older workers need special assistance but do not have a clear view of the nature of assistance required, nor do they have the opportunity to integrate interventions. They also indicated that additional resources are required to adequately support older disadvantaged job seekers.
There is considerable strength amongst providers of education, training and employment services across the country. There is an abundance of players involved at all government levels and across all sectors, with the capacity to significantly improve the level of services offered to older disadvantaged job seekers, and to secure improved employment outcomes, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. A clear policy priority for the group, an increased awareness of disadvantaged older workers’ needs, and adequate resourcing are all necessary for effecting a coordinated response to securing this group’s employment pathways.

Regional labour markets vary, and educational, training and employment arrangements need to be flexible to reflect those differences. Similarly, any efforts or programmes aiming to improve the situation of older job seekers must be both flexible and coordinated. Where coordination arrangements exist at the regional level, these should be acknowledged and utilised.

It is unlikely that the education, training and employment outcomes of disadvantaged older job seekers will improve without a mechanism for cross-agency/sectoral coordination which responds in an integrated way to the elements contributing to the work readiness of the individual. Assessment and joint planning at the regional level could provide an appropriate platform for addressing the needs of this group. Such mechanisms would also provide a useful means for properly allocating and dispersing any targeted programme funds.

There is no doubt that clear and supported pathways to employment must be developed to improve the work readiness of older disadvantaged job seekers. This calls for new levels of local service and resource coordination, and the need for new services; for example, vocational advice to be built into a detailed understanding of the local labour market and broader trends.

A transformation must occur which integrates policy approaches and builds interactive cross-sectoral and interagency partnerships with the capacity to innovate and improve the work readiness of older disadvantaged workers.

Public policy has an unambiguous leadership role in stimulating this transformation. It can highlight the needs of the group, combat ageist stereotypes which compromise their employment prospects, and facilitate and provide resources for innovation in partnerships and service delivery approaches.
## Appendix 1: Acronyms and terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Area consultative committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Adult and community education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEC</td>
<td>Business education centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW</td>
<td>Back to Work (Queensland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CETCH</td>
<td>Continuing Education and Training Committee for the Huon (Huon, Tasmania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLAN</td>
<td>Community Learning Advancement Networks (Tasmania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLI</td>
<td>Community Learning Initiatives (Tasmania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Queensland and Western Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSP</td>
<td>Disability Support Pension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPET</td>
<td>Job Placement, Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local government area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINC</td>
<td>Learning and Information Network Centre (Huon, Tasmania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLEN</td>
<td>Local Learning and Employment Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAEP</td>
<td>Mature Age Entry Programme (Queensland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRA</td>
<td>Midland Redevelopment Authority (Swan, Western Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEIS</td>
<td>New Enterprise Incentive Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCC</td>
<td>Recognition of current competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>Recognition of prior learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Registered training organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational education and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIS</td>
<td>VET in Schools (Tasmania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAP</td>
<td>Worker Assistance Programme (Manjimup, Western Australia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFD</td>
<td>Work for the Dole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accreditation</strong></td>
<td>Recognition and acceptance of the academic standards of a course or programme of study by an outside accrediting agency association or body such as an examination board or a professional and qualifying body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case study sites or regions</strong></td>
<td>Sites or regions refer to the areas cased studied as part of the <em>Furthering success</em> project. These include ten metropolitan, rural and regional areas across Australia. Appendix 4 provides a description of each of the case study sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course</strong></td>
<td>Educational unit within the curriculum dealing systematically with a particular subject or discipline for a given period of time (Source: <a href="http://www.voced.edu.au/thes.htm">http://www.voced.edu.au/thes.htm</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disadvantaged older workers</strong></td>
<td>According to Australian Bureau of Statistics classifications, disadvantaged workers form a group comprised of a conglomerate of categories which include unemployed people registered with Centrelink and/or the Job Network; people who are not officially in the labour market but wanted to work, but have attained no formal education or no education past Year 10; people who are currently employed but are underemployed and low skilled; or at a potential risk of unemployment because they are in an unskilled job and have low educational attainment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme</strong></td>
<td>Training activities and related support services defined in terms of objectives target population, disadvantaged older workers, contents and results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Providers</strong></td>
<td>There are numerous providers involved in assisting older disadvantaged workers to gain the skills and knowledge needed to secure meaningful and continuing employment. The education, training and employment sectors involve government, community and private sector-funded bodies operating at national, state and local levels. The key players include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ACE sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- TAFE sector
- Centrelink
- Federally funded Job Network Agencies
- Registered training organisations (RTOs) including private and non-profit training providers
- Economic and related development bodies
- Employers and their representative organisations
Appendix 2: The project brief

The Department of Education, Science and Training’s *Furthering success* project brief was to build on the outcomes of *Securing success* – a project conducted in 2002 to identify and analyse good practice in helping the over 45s to identify and participate in vocational and related education and training and other practices to enhance their work readiness. The project was targeted at people who are disadvantaged in the labour market.

*Furthering success* focused on older workers with low levels of educational attainment to investigate:

- the factors that motivate the target group to participate in vocational and related education and training
- the capacity for the ACE and VET sectors and Job Network members to promote formal education opportunities to the target group and increase participation rates.

The focus in this area also included:

- the investigation of opportunities to build links across ACE, VET and the Job Network which would facilitate access to and participation in learning and maximise employment outcomes for the target group
- the key factors in managing pathways into formal education and training to work outcomes and the practices and systems which most effectively support these transitions.

The project ran from July 2003 to April 2004 and was funded by DEST as part of the development of a comprehensive government strategy designed to ensure that policies and programmes encourage and facilitate economic and social participation by mature-aged people, defined as those aged 45 years and over (DEST 2003).

The objectives and outcomes for the *Furthering Success* project as specified by DEST are listed in Part one: Background and methodology, Project background and supporting material.
Appendix 3: The project methodology

The project methodology sought to incorporate empirical research findings and practical insight drawn from the experience of older disadvantaged workers, employers and employment, education, training and other providers.

Through this approach it was intended to identify the subtle interplay of factors which influence successful employment outcomes for disadvantaged older workers.

The project methodology incorporated four stages:

**Stage 1: The literature review and project plan**
A detailed plan was developed at the start of the project and followed by a comprehensive literature search which identified relevant national and international literature. A key finding of the search was the limited documented experience regarding successful approaches to supporting the pathways of older, disadvantaged workers through vocational education and training to employment.

**Stage 2: The preliminary scoping and report**

**Stage 3: The research and discussion paper**
This paper reported on information collected through the case studies of ten locations across Australia, and quantitative surveys of older workers and service providers.

**Stage 4: The stakeholder workshop and final report**
The stakeholder workshop was held in November 2003 and provided an opportunity for representatives from each of the case study sites, the project team and key stakeholders to review and discuss the project findings. The output of the workshop assisted in the drafting of the project report.

*The case study sites*

The ten case study sites selected across Australia were the major focus of the project. Following is a list of the sites investigated:

- Manjimup, Western Australia
- City of Swan, Western Australia
The sites were selected to represent the broad Australian context as closely as possible. They included a mix of rural, regional and urban infrastructures, a diversity of population and a range of core industries. Education and training providers and area consultative committees were contacted to help identify areas which have activities targeted at older, disadvantaged workers.

**The surveys**

**Older disadvantaged workers**

The older worker quantitative survey was conducted through a partnership with Job Network members, state-based employment services and other providers identified during the case study visits.

Due to the collection method used, older workers in the sample were more likely to be attached to the education, training and employment system than represent the general population of older disadvantaged workers. The bias in the data should be taken into consideration; however, the focus on older workers who are attached to the system in some way provided the opportunity to obtain insight into the factors contributing to successful transitions.

The final sample of older workers collected fell short of the target numbers due to a number of limitations including:

- changes in Job Network personnel that required the renegotiation of arrangements, resulting in reduced targets
- the coinciding commencement of the third Job Network contract period and the need for providers to focus on core business during that period
- lower than expected returns.
The National Employment Services Association was engaged as a project partner and all Job Network members were contacted to invite and encourage their participation in the project. Thirteen participated in the distribution of the survey to their clients.

A total of 2445 surveys were distributed across Job Network members, state-based employment services and the education and training sector. Of these, 440 responses were received between October 2003 and January 2004, representing an 18% return rate. Respondents had the opportunity to complete either a hard copy or a web-enabled survey.

The need for future approaches that better engage the target group was highlighted by the disappointing response level.

Due to the limited response, data gathered through the sample of older disadvantaged workers were treated as indicative rather than conclusive.

**The service providers**

A survey of relevant providers within the case study areas was also carried out to provide consistent information about their perspectives of the needs and opportunities of disadvantaged older workers. ACE and VET providers, local government economic development agencies, and employment service providers were among the survey participants.

**Tracking interviews**

Two older workers were identified in each of the ten case study sites. They were interviewed at three of the project stages to gain insight to their personal experience in their pathway to employment. This insight has been incorporated into the report and the individual case studies.
Appendix 4: Case study summaries

The ten regional case studies were undertaken from August to October 2003. The sites were selected to enable an exploration of education and training pathways to employment for disadvantaged older workers in diverse geographic settings, demographic backgrounds, industry environments and labour markets. Four metropolitan, three regional and three rural/remote sites were included. The following summaries illustrate the diversity of locations and environments and indicate the key themes from the sites.

Ballarat, Victoria

Ballarat is a major Victorian regional centre situated approximately 100 km north-west of Melbourne. The retail, finance, property and business sectors predominate in the region, although manufacturing remains relatively strong, despite a reduced share of the labour market in recent decades. Ballarat is also Victoria’s regional information technology hub. Employers are mixed in their attitudes to employing older workers. Some say that what matters are skills and experience rather than age. Most stakeholders believe, however, that age discrimination is relatively widespread. There is also a lack of understanding of the benefits of employing mature-aged workers and the impact of the coming shortage of younger skilled workers. Some small-to-medium business owners are sceptical of the impact of any government initiative to encourage change, other than a direct financial incentive. They argue that the reality for small businesses is an immediate focus on financial survival. Any incentive to employ older workers must therefore be kept simple and free from ‘red tape’ and ‘paperwork’.

There are 17 000 people aged between 45 and 64 years in Ballarat. Over half of this group are not in the labour market, and of those who are, 5.5% are unemployed and one in three workers are employed part-time. Fifty-six per cent of people aged 45 to 64 years have low education attainment – a Year 10 schooling or less. The most disadvantaged are particularly daunted by training and don’t believe it is going to lead to a job. The courses available are often not appropriate for them. Other older workers ‘have a mindset that they don’t have to up-skill’.

Ballarat has established itself as a ‘Learning City’ to support the needs of disadvantaged older workers (amongst other groups). It promotes and facilitates lifelong learning and ultimately the quality of life for people in Ballarat by supporting the establishment of partnerships, and business, community and other networks focused on learning opportunities. The Learning City provides a mechanism for closer cooperation and understanding between education and training providers and employers.
In its early stage of development, actions and outcomes from the Learning City have been limited. Barriers to partnership development and collaborative action have included competition between education and training providers and employer organisations which are also registered training organisations, and employer concerns about the flexibility of TAFE to respond to their needs. Funding and other constraints tend to keep providers focused largely on their own area. Funding generally targets specific groups or industries and there are limited opportunities for a broad partnership approach. Effective management of these issues – both at a local and policy level – can remove these problems and capitalise on the strengths of the Learning City model to deliver positive lifelong education, training and employment outcomes.

Brisbane South, Queensland

Brisbane South is a large metropolitan region incorporating a significant portion of the Brisbane economy and workforce. Across the region, employment growth has been strong and unemployment is at a 20-year low. Much of the growth in employment is being driven by the services sector, with ongoing decline in jobs in the primary and secondary sectors. One in five residents in Brisbane South are aged between 45 and 64 years. Almost two-thirds of this group’s highest level of education is Year 10 or below.

Brisbane South has many innovative programmes and initiatives active in the region including:

- **The Back to Work (BTW) initiative**: this initiative is targeted at job seekers aged 45 years and over who have been unemployed for at least three months. BTW provides IT training and job search techniques, in particular to those in rural and remote areas, and is delivered through some 50 learning centres throughout the state. In 2003–04 it provided career advice, job search and basic information technology skills training to 862 mature-age job seekers.

- **The Mature Age Entry Programme (MAEP)**: this programme provides funding to 13 TAFEs to deliver programmes for mature-aged job seekers who would have met the eligibility criteria that ‘existing worker’ traineeships have met. MAEP has been valuable in engaging older people in training, allowing them to continue working while training, and to obtain a recognised and portable qualification.

- **Learning circles**: these circles comprise around 10–15 people who meet on a regular basis to learn about and discuss issues of concern to them. Meetings might be held at a participant’s house.

- **The New Work Network**: this group lobbies to have the different needs and work aspirations of older people recognised.

- **45 Jobs in 45 Weeks for the Over 45s**: commencing in 2002, this ‘jobs drive’ was developed and driven through a community partnership between the Department of Education and Training, local MPs, the local press, the Chamber of Commerce and others. The pilot
programme was extremely successful – exceeding its target by placing more than 70 people, with over 300 enquiries about the programme.

Each of these initiatives provided a positive model to address the specific advocacy, training and employment needs of a small number of disadvantaged older workers. Although the individuals involved gained significant benefit from the programme, outcomes were negligible for the region as whole. Stakeholders missed the opportunity to take a coordinated approach to their strategies, with programmes often replicating, rather than expanding and building on existing programmes, and missing the components needed to adequately assist this group. However, the region showed considerable scope to develop more effective and ongoing networks between local players which would benefit a broader group of disadvantaged older workers.

Cairns, Queensland

Cairns is some 1700 km north of Brisbane and is the regional centre for Far North Queensland. The Cairns economy is highly vulnerable, dominated by industry fluctuations in tourism, agriculture, mining, manufacturing and fishing. Tourism is especially important to the region.

The most recent Census data indicate a population of 126 364 in Cairns with approximately 21% aged between 45 and 64 years. Close to 60% of this age group have a Year 10 schooling qualification or below. Many reports from older workers in Cairns implied a thirst for learning, yet the presence of multiple barriers to education and training has made them disillusioned and discontent with the sector. While the area consultative committee has made significant regional attempts to profile the value of older workers to employers through the Employer of the Year for Older Workers campaign, the disadvantage faced by this group remained largely hidden.

The city also has one of the largest Indigenous populations in Australia, with 7% of people either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Due to the region’s high concentration of Indigenous people, a strong and effective partnership has emerged – the Cape York Partnerships (CYP). The aim of CYP is to ‘work with public and private providers to develop and implement a comprehensive agenda to achieve the fundamental structural changes necessary to enable communities, clans, families, and individuals to move beyond passive welfare, to effect a social recovery and to actively participate in the economy’ (Smith 2002).

From this partnership a unique and innovative training and employment strategy has emerged which aims ‘to fund the right training in the right place at the right time’. Three RTOs are delivering training programmes to the region. These are the Tropical North Queensland TAFE, Cairns Regional Group Training (CRGT) and the Australian College of Tropical Agriculture, all of which have strict content and delivery of programmes to:
• be demand-driven, not supply-driven
• meet the needs of individuals and communities
• be flexible with the community determining the needs and validity
• provide relevant skills to participate in the local economy
• involve practical, on-the-job learning
• use responsive delivery modes, funded for real costs.

(<http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com>)

Outcomes of this strategy have been very strong for Indigenous communities in the FNQ region. Principles from the CYP models have the potential to be replicated for wider application to disadvantaged older workers.

City of Swan, Western Australia

The City of Swan is the largest metropolitan LGA in Western Australia and one of the fastest growing urban corridors in Australia. Traditionally a strong working class area, the population profile has changed over the past two decades and is likely to continue to become more socio-economically diverse. However, some low-income areas remain, including public housing pockets within the city boundaries and communities in the hills area, which include older people on low incomes and with limited transport options.

Twenty per cent of the population are aged between 45 and 64 years and 61% of this group have attained low levels of education, with the highest level of schooling being Year 10 or below. Swan also has a high proportion of migrants. The percentage of people aged 45 to 64 years who are not born in Australia is 48.4%. The city also has the largest Indigenous population (2.9% of the Swan’s LGA population) of any LGA in metropolitan Perth.

Close to half of the people aged 45 to 64 years in the area are not participating in the labour market. A further 5.5% of this group are unemployed and one in three employed older workers has part-time jobs. To support the needs of this group, the Western Australian Department of Education and Training (DET) has developed a regional Employment Directions Network (EDN). The Midland EDN is one of five metropolitan-based centres.

The EDN plays an important role for mature-aged workers, especially in providing easy access to information about Australian Government and state programmes and assistance. It also provides a chance to explore the values and personal implications of changes in the nature of work, competencies and the labour market, changes which are currently leaving many disadvantaged older workers unprepared and alienated. Both group and individual support is available and the guidelines for financial assistance are comparatively flexible.
However, the EDN acknowledges that there is still much to be done for disadvantaged older workers – especially those most disadvantaged, for example, those with injuries, psychiatric and intellectual disabilities, low levels of English language skills, Indigenous workers and those who lack confidence and motivation. More broadly, disadvantage across the community remains, with the continuous daily export of low-paid jobs into surrounding areas and import of higher paid white-collar workers.

The EDN offers crucial support for older workers, yet there is scope to complement their framework and address the broader regional problems identified by engaging other stakeholders (beyond referral) to create an intersectoral support structure. This view is reflected in the work readiness model which demonstrates the importance of a coordinated response, as well as shared responsibility between individuals, employers, service providers and policy-makers.

**Huon Valley, Tasmania**

The Huon Valley is 39 km south of Hobart. It includes a number of small settlements, the largest of which is Huonville. One-quarter of Huon Valley residents are aged between 45 and 64 years. Yet, of this group, two-thirds do not participate in the labour market and their highest level of schooling is Year 10 or below.

The Huon Valley economy is based on primary production, and a thriving aquaculture industry. Its economy has experienced boom conditions over the last three or four years as a result of considerable changes, with an influx of new residents from the mainland. This follows many flat years. For the over-45 group, securing seasonal work is easy, but seasons are short and finding permanent work is difficult. No specific initiatives for older workers in the region are described. However, there are examples of one-off opportunities. New employers to the region have focused their recruitment strategies on drawing labour from the mainland. This approach has been at a cost to local residents. Future attempts to skill local people for new job opportunities in the region would require leadership by employers, backed by public policy and active local agency coordination.

Mindsets to formal education and training participation in the region need to change to ensure that this approach is effective. The region’s workforce has traditionally undertaken on-the-job training, with a limited focus on formal qualifications. While this focus remains, efforts by the Continuing Education and Training Committee for the Huon (CETCH) are starting to change this. CETCH is a small RTO in a role comparable to TAFE outreach. With the truncated secondary provision and traditional anti-education attitudes in the region, CETCH has been very important in facilitating access to VET – especially for young people. Its main contact with older people is with teachers seeking Certificate IV Workplace Training and with mechanics seeking to upgrade their skills. Older people are not not targeted due to the size of the RTO. However, CETCH aims to fill a niche for flexible delivery for people lacking (or with limited) time, confidence and self-esteem.
Liverpool/Western Sydney, New South Wales

Liverpool and Fairfield are less than an hour’s drive from the centre of Sydney. Liverpool is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia and Fairfield is one of the most culturally diverse. The economy is based on heavy industry, manufacturing, processing, warehousing and trucking. There is also some agricultural production in the outer fringes.

Older disadvantaged workers in the region perceive age discrimination as their main employment barrier. Older workers feel their experience is undervalued – particularly in relation to their understanding of occupational health and safety issues, their general life skills, assertiveness and loyalty. However, there are also examples of increasing employer awareness of older worker issues. Initiatives include industry bodies promoting the value of older workers, and employers removing age inquiries from their application forms. However, employers feared claims and increased premiums as a result of older workers’ health issues.

Older workers in the region are often retrenched with the purchase of new IT equipment – third generation equipment that older workers ‘don’t have a handle on’. Older workers tended not to be retrained as it is perceived as expensive and there are many younger workers with IT skills who are seen as better long-term prospects.

The Liverpool learning sector appears to be fragmented, lacking strategic direction and generally unresponsive to the retraining needs of this group. For many ‘learners’ there is a lack of clarity about what is available to them, where advice and funding support might come from, and how learning might improve their chances in the labour market.

Organisations in a position to facilitate pathways for older workers are not doing so. Flexible, ‘soft’, entry-level courses offered by many providers (ACE, TAFE, RTOs and Job Network trainers) are, to a large extent, in competition with each other. Multiple and apparently surplus offerings of the BITES programme illustrates this point.

Macarthur Community College – the main ACE provider – felt training dollars attached to older workers are directed to Job Network and TAFE providers. While TAFE might refer people to ACE for courses they are not providing, relations are strained by TAFE’s frequent failure to recognise ACE certificates/attainments. Macarthur College felt that TAFE looks at ACE as lesser competition and promotes its courses as not ‘up to scratch’.

Productive partnerships might be developed in the Liverpool area if organisations identified clearer roles for themselves in relation to worker and labour market needs. For example, in the area where the ACE sector is doing well – in attracting a more educated group of work-seekers with enough background and motivation to find their own way into training and employment – ACE might put effort into partnering with employment providers, employers
and the TAFE (for RPL) rather than its heavy, expensive and apparently fruitless promotion of duplicated courses.

**Manjimup, Western Australia**

Manjimup is a rural community in the south-west corner of Western Australia. There are approximately 10,000 residents, of whom two-thirds have not attained schooling beyond Year 10 and more than one in four do not speak English very well. Since 2001, many of the timber mills – which were once the backbone of the Manjimup district – have closed due to state public policy. In response to this, a Worker Assistance Package (WAP) was introduced to support displaced timber industry workers in making the transition to new regional industry sectors. Many of the workers in the WAP are aged 45 and over.

The WAP has proven effective in raising the competency level of individuals and supporting the management of health-related issues. Service provider collaboration is proactive and supported by the local community and the Timber Industry Restructure Assistance Centre, which acts as a government service hub.

While the WAP components are effective in managing the transition between redundancy and unemployment, the broader economic environment offered limited re-employment opportunities due to stagnant local business activity. The programme supported older workers who were able to get a job with a local employer by providing financial and policy incentives to recruit, retrain and retain timber workers. However, the economic difficulties faced by this region are beyond the scope of the local community and focused more on broader economic development policy at the state and national level. Timber workers who are unable to gain employment struggled to maintain a strong value system, had reduced confidence and disillusionment about their opportunities, and faced financial challenges.

Rural and regional development is an ongoing focus for state and federal public policy, and the experience in Manjimup will continue to be at the forefront of future policy development. Combined with a strong local economic development plan, the WAP offers a valuable model for disadvantaged older worker transitions.

**Melbourne East, Victoria**

The Melbourne East region comprises six LGAs. It is an area of predominantly white-collar workers with a higher-than-average income and lower-than-average unemployment rate, compared with state and national averages. Approximately one-quarter of the population is aged 45 to 64 years, with half of this group educated past Year 10.
Economic activity centres largely on property and business services, retail and construction industries. Small businesses predominate, but there are some large enterprises. Disadvantaged older workers in the Melbourne East region believe the negative perceptions that businesses have of older people are a major barrier to gaining employment in the region. Without a change of employer attitudes, they feel that any system to assist older workers would be ineffective. They suggest that organisations need to be enlightened through evidence and hard data, and that messages need to have a global perspective.

A central focus of this case study was examination of the extent to which community partnerships are active in addressing the employment, education and training needs of disadvantaged older workers. Collaboration across the sectors is seen as critical as the services required for successful transitions into employment span all stakeholders. Despite a clearly identified need for regional partnerships, there were only a few good examples of successful these.

The Business Support Service Project is one example of a collaborative partnership spanning state and local-level organisations. Key stakeholders include the Over 50s Association, Equal Opportunity Commission, Swinburne University, MYOB and 45 Plus Workforce Inc., all of whom are involved in the development and delivery of a course for people aged 45 and over.

This course seeks to capitalise on the growing needs of small businesses and labour hire organisations by developing appropriately trained people with wide-ranging skills who are competent in bookkeeping and accounting activities and can act as receptionists. Key requirements of this training partnership are:

- a skill assessment method to ensure that the course meets the majority of students’ training needs
- the provision of flexible training to cater for different skill levels
- a structured vocational placement component to overcome the employment barrier of ‘recent experience’ in the role.

Mt Evelyn, a town in the outer suburbs of Melbourne East, has also developed a learning community model which reinforces the concept of localised innovation. The model addresses the education, training and employment needs of the community and is based on the concept of learning for work and life as the foundation for individual and community development. The approach emerged from the need to find solutions for problems of haphazard community planning, a lack of leadership and focus, community exclusion from decision-making, and no money for township planning development. Through the Community Link, residents of all ages (approximately 50% would be older learners) engage with learning, participate in non-accredited and accredited training, contribute to local development and gain valuable paid and unpaid work experience.
The Victorian Government Department of Education and Training has also established two Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) in the Melbourne East region. LLENs are networks of partners who work together towards improving employment, training and education in the region. They focus on regional sustainability through the promotion of partnerships between industry and learning organisations and through the development and facilitation of innovative responses to employment issues. Although the networks focus on youth, members feel they have the capacity to incorporate the needs of people of all ages. The networks are generally regarded positively, but members state that an ongoing impetus and collective focus is needed. The two regions in which they operate are very large, making it difficult to incorporate all key stakeholders. Organisations involved with the LLENs repeatedly stressed that it takes a considerable amount of time to develop truly effective partnerships, otherwise they tend to be superficial and based only on self-interest.

These examples provided highlight a number of key success factors for successful older worker partnerships. These include:

- strong leadership that is embedded in the community
- a clear impetus or mandate to form a partnership, based on an assessment of local development and older worker needs
- centralisation of information and access to partner services by older workers
- the importance of empowering and building the skills and confidence of older community members.

Despite the efforts of some to bring together education, training and employment sectors, most stakeholders remained bound by their silo frameworks in terms of structure, funding and tendering processes and regulation. By overcoming these challenges, a comprehensive range of strategies to address the education, training and employment needs of disadvantaged older workers can be realised.
Tamworth, New South Wales

Tamworth is the major business centre of the north-west and New England region of New South Wales. Its economy is based primarily on servicing the rich and diverse agricultural activities surrounding the town. The equine industry and associated events, including the Tamworth Music Festival, provide a strong base for tourism in the area.

There are approximately 8300 people in Tamworth aged 45 and 64 years. This age group makes up over a third of the region’s labour force. Seventy-one per cent of this group have not studied beyond Year 10 (or less).

Programmes offered by the Tamworth Adult Education Centre provide a key entry point into education and training for this group of older disadvantaged workers to advance their qualifications. Older people responded positively to the centre, especially to its non-institutional nature, informal environment, flexibility, relatively low course costs and short vocationally relevant courses. Nevertheless, reaching those in need of assistance remains difficult, as the majority of this group requires more advice and support in making decisions about available programmes. Some face-to-face advice is needed, perhaps in the form of mentoring.

Older workers in the region identified a number of factors they felt would allow their pathways through training and employment to be more successful. These included:

- clearer and simpler information about entitlements and access to training
- more and better targeted programmes for mature-aged workers, especially short, sharp, work-focused training in areas of demand
- a reform of employer culture. Job seekers suggested that an information campaign is needed to change biased attitudes towards older workers and address the associated stigma
- providers such as Centrelink employing older people who are more likely to be in tune with and sympathetic to the needs of older job seekers
- addressing employer attitudes towards job seekers who have workers compensation. Not all such workers are a risk and they should be given a fair go when applying for work
- increasing local attempts to highlight and overcome the many traditional small town prejudices which can stand in the way of job seekers, for example, religious and ethnic prejudices, especially against Indigenous people, traditional notions of appropriate work for men and women, prejudices against single mothers, and long-held personal prejudices resulting from the past behaviour of individuals.
Whyalla, South Australia

Whyalla is South Australia’s second largest city located on the north-west coast of Spencer Gulf. Since the late 1970s, Whyalla has experienced high rates of unemployment and the region is now beginning to face fourth-generation unemployment. Sixty per cent of workers aged 45 to 64 years do not participate in the labour market; more than half of these lack any post-Year 10 qualifications.

The area is a traditional manufacturing hub, with limited job opportunities for older workers due to industry restructuring. For a regional centre, however, Whyalla has very good infrastructure. There is an educational and cultural precinct with a TAFE, a range of high schools and primary schools, as well as the only South Australian university campus located outside Adelaide. There is also a hospital and an airport.

Despite the strong physical resource base, it is often challenging to run programmes and services. In the TAFE for example, providers commented that funding could be capital city-centric, drawing resources out of Whyalla and the surrounding rural areas for cost savings. Programmes taken on campus with only a small number of local people are financially unviable and therefore not run. Flexible delivery and open learning training modes are often offered as an alternative to on-campus courses. Yet older workers reported that they found this type of learning difficult.

There is scepticism about the purpose of training older workers in vocational areas, as there are limited prospects of their obtaining employment after completion of a course. Furthermore, it is unlikely that older people could move out of the Whyalla area to seek employment, due to the cost of living in other parts of South Australia.

Evidence of a disjunction between the available pool of older workers and employment opportunities in the region signalled a lack of coordination in addressing the disadvantage faced by older people in Whyalla between industry, education and employment service providers. There is, however, a high level of optimism amongst economic development stakeholders that there could be opportunities to develop strategies in the future. Successful programmes have already been undertaken to get young people into employment. These could be adapted for older residents. The Youth Employment Programme (YEP) for example, funded by the South Australian Office of Employment and facilitated by the Whyalla Economic Board, worked with secondary educators, Spencer TAFE, One Steel and fifteen other engineering companies. The project successfully trained thirty unemployed youth (15 to 24 years) in a first year apprenticeship in mechanical or electrical fields. This programme has doubled the pool of available candidates in the area, with all students expecting employment in 2004.
This section notes recent work on work readiness skills by government and industry and considers how this can be linked to the Furthering success outcomes. This link provides an opportunity for disadvantaged mature-aged workers to develop and utilise the work readiness skills that have been identified in the Australian context to increase opportunities for gaining and retaining employment.

The concept of defining generic work readiness skills is not new. Key workplace competencies were of interest to Britain, Australia and America in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The driving influence was workplace change and the consequent need to ensure the supply of essential generic skills that employers needed in this environment. In 1992 the Mayer Key Competencies were developed for the Australian situation. The Mayer Key Competencies Framework identified the generic work skills that people need for effective participation in the workforce. These competencies were subsequently embedded in various training packages but not formally implemented into school curriculum.

A related concern developed during the 1990s in Europe and Britain in relation to focusing on the needs of individuals to maintain their own skills for work readiness. This was driven by the same forces as those interested in lifelong learning. Workplace changes also demanded new mixes of skills and higher-level skills and there was a growing demand for better leadership and management skills (Karpin 1995). There was an increasing focus on enterprise and innovation skills at the Australian National Innovation Summit in 2000. Ministers (MCEETYA 1999) adopted a definition for enterprise skills and action research and further developmental work on enterprise skills is ongoing in the schools sector.

In 2001, Australian industry groups raised the need to identify the generic work readiness skills required for today’s high-performance workplace and the implications for school and training environments. The Business Council of Australia (BCA) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) led the DEST and ANTA-funded international literature research and focus group work that underpinned the development of a national Employability Skills Framework. This framework sets out key skills and attributes that people need to be work ready and to contribute to their success in other domains of life.

The Employability Skills Framework was developed for use at all education levels and provides a guide for employees to improve their career potential, and for recruiters and HR professionals in developing guidance in this area. This framework could provide a tool for use in identifying how disadvantaged older workers can maximise their potential to enter the active workforce.
Employability skills were defined as ‘skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions’. This is also relevant to this study in that it is recognised that portable skills development is essential to the sustainable employment of disadvantaged adult workers.

The key work readiness skills identified in the Employability Skills Framework are:
1. communication
2. team work
3. problem-solving
4. planning and organising
5. initiative and enterprise
6. self-management
7. learning
8. technology.

In addition to these eight skills groupings, businesses participating in the research placed strong emphasis on the need for both entry-level and ongoing employees to exhibit a broad range of personal attributes. These attributes (discussed at 5.1.3) were identified as central to the concept of an Employability Skills Framework. Many of the businesses also suggested that educators review and redevelop their curriculum and change delivery methodology to support the development and recording of work readiness skills.

As at July 2004, the Australian Government and most state and territory education ministers agreed that the eight skills groupings of the Employability Skills Framework listed ‘include skills that young people require for successful transition from school to a range of destinations, including work’.

This initiative will help address some of the issues identified in the study. Most importantly, it will provide a clearer starting point for adults entering or renewing study.

The Australian Government is progressing the work readiness skills agenda through several initiatives. One initiative to be completed in 2004 covers the development of a strategy to support the universal recognition and recording of work readiness skills. The project objective is to develop an work readiness skills recognition and recording model relevant to schools, vocational education and training, higher education and the broader community, including workplaces.

The work readiness skills recognition and recording model which has been developed in this initiative through consultation with stakeholders is a non-prescriptive model for skills portfolios. The preferred model does not prescribe a particular approach to the evidence provided in a skills portfolio, nor does the preferred model includes a formal assessment approach to the work readiness skills. However, it does allow for external verification of work readiness skills. In relation to next steps, there is recognition that guidance and advice will be needed for any implementation. The initiative recommends some trialling across the education, training and community sectors.
Another initiative to be completed in 2004–05 covers the development of a new VET qualification – Certificate I in Employability Skills. This initiative will focus on the eight groupings of employability skills: communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, planning and organising, technology, learning and initiative and enterprise. It is expected that technical skills will also be included in the model for this qualification as the context for the development of the work readiness skills is important.

Also anticipated for 2004–05 is the development of a new ‘e-portfolio website’ which enables workers seeking employment to list their work readiness skills. This new website is currently being scoped for inclusion on <http://www.myfuture.edu.au> – the national information system.
Appendix 6: Career planning services

Australian Blueprint for Career Development

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development is an initiative commissioned by the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). It is an integrated national framework for career services and programmes which specifies the competencies that all Australians need to build their careers.

The Australian blueprint was created as a draft prototype modelled on the Canadian Blueprint for Life/Work Designs. The prototype was further developed through extensive consultation with the Australian careers and transitions community.

The blueprint aims to:

- identify and elaborate on the eleven career competencies that all Australians need to build their careers. These competencies are grouped across three key areas – personal management, learning and work exploration, and career building – and expanded through performance indicators
- provide a process for planning, implementing, developing/redesigning, and evaluating career programmes and resources that will help Australians acquire the above competencies in a variety of settings
- provide a common language for career development initiatives throughout the country, and across the lifespan of individuals. Ultimately, this aims to assist individuals to move seamlessly from one career development setting to another. It also aims to enable governments to monitor access to services more effectively, while at the same time allowing sufficient flexibility at the local level to ensure that career development services reflect local needs
- enable career resource producers to design products, programmes and services that address specific competencies. This is to allow purchasers of these products to identify which competencies are addressed in the products they are buying.

The blueprint’s broad scope means that it can be used by everyone from curriculum developers, teachers and adult educators, policy analysts and career resource producers, to work experience coordinators and career and employment counsellors.

MCEETYA ministers have been asked to consider testing the blueprint. Options for trialling the blueprint in a range of settings are currently being explored.

Career Planning Programme

The Career Planning Programme (CCP), which commenced in 1998, helps unemployed people establish or redefine their employment, education and training goals and develop career management, research and decision-making skills, against a background of self-knowledge and a realistic understanding of the world of work.
Centrelink and a range of programme providers, including Job Network, Transition to Work, and Work for the Dole coordinators can refer eligible clients to the programme.

Under the Australians Working Together (AWT) initiative, additional funding ($2.6 million over three years to 2004–05) has been provided from 1 July 2002 for career counselling of parents caring for children returning to work and older workers aged 50+ years old. The CCP will assist in developing/enhancing their skills to make career and other life choices and provide encouragement and help to develop participation plans.

The programme exceeded its target of AWT clients with 1885 participating in 2002–03 and again exceeded its target of AWT clients with 4825 participating in 2003–04. People over 50 years of age comprised 11.4% of referrals to the Career Planning Programme in 2003–04.

The provider has offered to run groups specifically for mature-aged clients subject to business-viable demand.

The national provider, CRS Australia, currently delivers career planning through more than 160 sites.

Career Counselling involves professional counsellors who are informed about labour market opportunities and who take a proactive approach to helping unemployed people set or redefine their employment, education and training goals. Counsellors achieve this through a range of activities designed to help unemployed people. These include:

- identifying and matching their goals, interests and abilities
- exploring the range of jobs available within their various areas of interest and possibly their physical locations
- directing clients to information on educational requirements and, if necessary, educational preparation programmes
- developing career research and decision-making skills
- developing a career development action plan.

**Centrelink Career Information Centres**

The Australian Government funds Centrelink to provide a network of 12 Career Information Centres (CICs) which provide information about jobs, careers, courses and the world of work and study to the general public. They are currently located in all state capital cities and in the regional centres of Wollongong, Newcastle, Mermaid Beach and Geelong.

A Centrelink National Survey of CIC activity was conducted in the six months between January and June 2001. The results of the survey for the six-month period showed the following:
- 100,000 individual customers visited a CIC (70% were adults aged 25 years and over)
- 40,000 customers phoned a CIC for information
- 3,200 customers mailed, emailed or faxed a CIC
- 1,200 groups visited CICs, comprising 20,000 people (40% were adults aged 25 years and over)
- CICs conducted outreach to 230 groups, comprising 20,000 people (20% were adults aged 25 years and over).
Appendix 7: Summary of strengths and gaps in key service provision

The following four tables provide a summary of the key findings from the *Furthering success* fieldwork. They present the views and observations of service providers and older workers expressed during interviews, focus groups and the two quantitative surveys.

**Adult and community education (ACE)**

| Definitions                                                                 | Definitions of ACE vary considerably depending on the state and place of learning. ACE is governed by specific legislation in Victoria and New South Wales and operates under general education and training legislation in other states. Decisions about the allocation of resources to and within ACE are determined by individual states and territories, although VET delivered by ACE is within ANTA’s area of responsibility. Providers of ACE also vary considerably. Providers who are most familiar to older workers are neighbourhood houses and community-based centres of learning; yet more formal learning environments exist, for example, large ACE colleges in New South Wales. Common to all ACE providers, however, are their outcomes. Clemans, Hartley and Macrae (2003) have grouped the outcomes of ACE into three categories:

- individual development outcomes – knowledge, skills, a healthy mature self-concept and supportive connections across private, public and work life;
- community development outcomes – the knowledge of and skills to develop community that is strong and identifiable and which values and embodies diversity, trust and reciprocity
- economic development outcomes – knowledge and skills to develop local economies which are innovative and sustainable and which prosper by making the most of their diversity

The majority of courses offered in the ACE sector are not directly vocationally focused (VET) and are non-accredited. However, there has been a recent upsurge in the provision of accredited VET courses. This is in part due to funding models within the sector, but more as a result of ACE’s capacity to respond to local needs and act as a ‘transition platform’ into formal training and higher education. |
**Adult and community education (ACE) continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service provision</th>
<th>• ACE &amp; VET courses, community capacity-building, volunteer activities, interest groups &amp; support services.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Positives of the service provision | • Positive individual, community and economic outcomes for regions.  
• Supportive structure and content for new or returning learners.  
• Low barriers to entry.  
• Flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of local communities.  
• Relaxed, fun and casual environment.  
• Strong leadership and integration in the community.  
• Length of courses often shorter than other sectors and delivered at suitable times for students.  
• Easygoing course delivery style and content.  
• Older workers in control of their learning. |
| Opportunities to strengthen the service provision | • Expand the ACE sector’s student profile. The sector has traditionally had a stronger affiliation with women.  
• Increase funding to support the management of ACE organisations. This will increase their capacity to implement and monitor programmes which seek to transition older workers into further training.  
• Recognise and support the formal role of ACE as a key stakeholder in older worker transitions.  
• Improve RPL mechanisms from ACE to VET.  
• Increase consistency in the quality of training delivered without jeopardising ACE’s flexibility. This will enable ACE to be fully legitimised by other sectors.  
• Gain an understanding of the implication that the increased focus on vocational education delivery will have on the ACE sector. This has yet to be evaluated and will influence responses to the needs of disadvantaged older workers. |
**Technical and further education (TAFE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>TAFE is the major public provider of VET in Australia. ANTA governs TAFE. The focus of TAFE is ‘to ensure the skills of the Australian labour force are sufficient to support internationally competitive commerce and industry and provide individuals with opportunities to optimise their potential’ (ANTA 1998). Its focus is on equipping Australians for the world of work; mobility; equity; investment in training and effective use of public resources. As a policy direction, Australian industry is seen to play a lead role in the VET sector. To date, reforms across VET have focused on the need to respond to technological and structural change and to improve the competitiveness of Australia business and industry in the global economy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service provision</td>
<td>• VET, access &amp; ACE courses; apprenticeships &amp; traineeships; support &amp; employment services; and other related services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positives of the service provision | • Access courses both into TAFE and on to further education.\(^3\)  
• Most campuses have a range of support services for students.  
• RCC and RPL used by some TAFEs.  
• Practical learning and work experience offered.  
• TAFE has the capacity to provide financial concessions to some disadvantaged older workers.  
• Accredited training which is meaningful for both individuals and industry creates links to employment.  
• Principles of adult learning are commonly used by staff to teach older students. |

\(^3\) Access courses aim to provide the opportunity for disadvantaged equity groups, including older workers, to gain the necessary experience and formal prerequisites to prepare them to achieve education and training qualifications in the student’s preferred course. These courses also introduce students to the variety of courses and subjects on offer and provide them with the opportunity to become conformable with the learning environment.
Technical and further education (TAFE) continued

| Opportunities to strengthen the service provision | • Generation of a priority focus on older workers.  
  • Make RCC and RPL practice more mainstream and accessible as it supports the integration of older workers and their retention in accredited training.  
  • Source options to develop TAFE training facilities that are non-threatening to disadvantaged older groups. They generally have low educational attainment and therefore are uncomfortable in traditional learning institute environments.  
  • Diversify product offerings by tailoring to the needs of older workers – there is great potential to expand the market and increase student numbers.  
  • Increase the flexibility of course duration and class schedules to provide greater opportunity to engage older workers facing competing pressures.  
  • Provide alternative ways to support this group. Flexibility which reduces face-to-face class time and ongoing access to staff i.e. distant and online learning do not meet the learning needs of this target group. Mobile tutoring, peer mentoring, sub-contracting of classes to local community providers such as an ACE provider are more effective.  
  • Enhance the learning experience of students by managing age conflict in the classroom. This typically involves teaching younger people to appreciate the life and learning experiences of older people and vice versa.  
  • Track older worker transitions in and out of TAFE to help manage their needs and broaden the understanding of their experience in TAFE. |
**Job Network (JN)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Job Network is a national network of private &amp; community organisations dedicated to finding jobs for unemployed people, particularly the long-term unemployed.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service provision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Employment services, Job Search; VET training, counselling, referrals e.g. Work for the Dole, NEIS, Disability Support Pension.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positives of the service provision</th>
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<tr>
<td>- The participation level in various types of training by clients of the Job Network significantly higher than that of the general population in the older age group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The strongest focus amongst all the sectors on disadvantaged older unemployed people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Responsibility for placing clients with one nominated provider.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Innovative use of technology, such as websites and text messaging supported by computer training.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities to strengthen the service provision</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Provide greater access to relevant and up-to-date information on local complementary services and general employment opportunities. This will help the Job Network provide adequate advice to their clients.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Simplify rules and requirements. In the long term this will lead to better outcomes as it will help to reduce the occurrence of misinformation and increase use of the services available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Job Network is rewarded for outcomes that occur in a short lead time. On some occasions the appropriate strategy for a sustainable outcome occurs over the longer term. These should be equally supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Conduct a review of the implementation of privacy law requirements to create a better flow of information and tracking of clients from Centrelink and other providers. This will minimise service duplication, particularly in the areas of career and job planning.</td>
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4 Disability Support Pension is a payment for people whose physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment prevents them from working, or for people who are permanently blind.
### Centrelink

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centrelink</th>
<th>• Centrelink is an Australian Government agency delivering a range of services to the Australian community.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service provision</td>
<td>• Payments, management of government programmes, referrals, administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positives of the service provision | • Centrelink is a service gateway.  
• Strong information base.  
• Mandatory participation that effectively monitors individual progression.  
• Personal support advisors are well regarded by the target group. |
| Opportunities to strengthen the service provision | • Increase resources for Personal Support Advisors to strengthen their capacity to support disadvantaged groups.  
• Better consistency in the degree of understanding and sensitivity Centrelink staff show towards disadvantaged older workers can increase mutual respect between the provider and client, leading to enhanced customer service delivery.  
• Create greater autonomy, flexibility and accountability amongst Centrelink staff. This will enable them to better assist their clients and address perceptions that older workers have to ‘jump through hoops’ to gain assistance. |
Appendix 8: Bibliography


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