Shedding Light
The role of private ‘for profit’ RTOs in training young early school leavers

Preliminary findings

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About the research

Purpose

- Provider level enquiry: learning from the private RTO experience

About the method (and us)

- Qualitative and semi-quantitative analysis
- Surveys of PRTOs; interviews of case study sites in SA, Qld, and Victoria; and of those in industry/govt
- Our key themes and interests
Context

- Contestable funding for VET
- Trends: Australia and beyond
- These ‘interesting times’
The provider landscape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All RTOs*</td>
<td>4,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/community owned</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately owned</td>
<td>3,770</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tafes (54)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools, Uni, ERT (384)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community based (312)</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘For profit’ (3206)</td>
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<td>‘Other’ (54)</td>
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</table>
## The young learners

### Youth in VET (15-19yo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Under 18</th>
<th>18-21</th>
<th>21-24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>453,369</td>
<td>306,616</td>
<td>86,364 (19.3%)</td>
<td>70,908 (15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>72,494</td>
<td>47,223</td>
<td>18,129 (25)</td>
<td>17,363 (23.9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>29,798</td>
<td>12,335</td>
<td>6,113 (20.5)</td>
<td>5,675 (19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>134,891</td>
<td>89,376</td>
<td>46,560 (35)</td>
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### ESLs in VET (no Y12)

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### ESLs in private VET

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### ESLs in entry-level programs in private VET

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The survey

- Design: the range of questions
  - PRTO profile locale, size, mode, scope
  - Student characteristics: background, skill level and readiness, barriers faced
  - Practice, teaching, supports, engagement
  - Pathways, completion and non-completion
  - Partnerships
Distribution and response

N=130 (183 sent)
Enrolment trends (prev 5 years)

- Increased significantly, 23%
- Increased slightly, 36%
- No change, 34%
- Decline, 7%
The challenges faced by ESLs

Per cent of respondents indicating a majority/all early leavers experience this factor

- Centrelink requirements to be learning or earning
- Resume writing and interview skills
- Unclear career goals
- Unclear learning pathways
- Transport issues
- Low socioeconomic and/or disadvantaged
- Getting a drivers licence
- Managing personal finances
- Unstable housing and accommodation, including...
- Anger management issues
- Hygiene and personal health issues
- Mental illness
- High levels of drug and alcohol use
- Caring responsibilities
Negative impacts on learning outcomes

- Low/limited literacy
- Low/limited numeracy
- Low/limited ICT skills
- Disengagement from learning
- Non-attendance

Strongly agree
Agree
Contributing to non-completion

“outside influences...drugs, alcohol, personal and health issues”

“multiple barriers to engagement e.g. family, social, financial behavioral issues”

“socio-economic barriers that have not been addressed in the job service contracts/system. Individuals not having opportunity to undertake career planning prior to commencing courses”
Contributing to non-completion

“boredom...distraction...difficulties extracting meaning from written learner materials”

“students ‘getting behind’ in their work”

“centerlink dependence” hence [they’re] compelled.
Contributing to non-completion

“long standing issues which we attempt to address in a 12-16 week program – not easy”
Overview
Contributing to non-completion

Factors – often interrelated – identified

**Socio-economic**
- Home life/family issues
- Limited resources/choice
- Housing
- Access (drivers license)
- Compulsion

**Wellbeing**
- Drug and alcohol use
- Anxiety and ‘mental health’ issues
- Irritation, anger

**Readiness**
- Poor LLN skills
- Poor time management
- Unrealistic expectations
- Uncertainty, indecision
- Low motivation
- Resentment
The skills trainers need

“they should possess empathy, guidance skills, ability to provide educational support to students and if required where to seek further assistance and counseling.”

“patience, sense of humour, flexibility, sound knowledge of issues facing younger learners, language and literacy skills.”

[rapport] “trainers over 45 are not respected”
The skills trainers need

“clear direct communication...Learner-centered teaching. Behavior management.”

“they need to be leaders in their field...young people respect that. They need to always be prepared; they need to share leadership within the class groups equally; even the shyest of young people can be a great leader if just given the chance; they need to encourage not discourage; they need to...lead by example and show consistency...”
Approaches to effective teaching

- Behaviour management: Very important - 90%, Important - 10%
- Duty of care awareness: Very important - 90%, Important - 10%
- Learner-centred teaching: Very important - 95%, Important - 5%
- Use of real world learning: Very important - 85%, Important - 15%
- Offering active learning opportunities: Very important - 90%, Important - 10%
- Scaffolding learning: Very important - 85%, Important - 15%
- Implementing flexible learning and assessment processes: Very important - 90%, Important - 10%
Programs/contexts’ impact on completion

- Higher in trades based programs
- Higher in programs with SWL
- Higher in programs with embedded LLN
- Higher in EBT
- Lower for those with below Year 11

Strongly agree | Agree
Support services provided

- External organisation brought in to the RTO to provide this service
- Through referral to an external organisation
- Available within the RTO, available to all students
The relationship to ESLs

- The size of our RTO suits our early school leavers
- Deliverying programs to our early school leavers is core business
- Engaging with parents is part of our approach to working with early school leavers
- The majority of our early school leavers are from the local community
- Many of our early leavers are referred to us by external stakeholders
# Fieldwork

## Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>VIC</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRTOs: Hospitality, retail, community services &amp; auto. Peak bodies</td>
<td>PRTOs: Hospitality &amp; security, auto</td>
<td>In process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching and learning</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance, immediacy, <em>in situ</em>, access, LLN needs, screening &amp; support, online vexed, patience, empathy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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| Engagement and wellbeing | Life skills, mentoring, growth, maturation, stage of life, empathy, funding problems, expectations, patience, empathy, accessibility, intimate, small |

| Pathways | Students’ expectations, readiness, advice, guidance |

| System | Funding policy and feeding frenzies, competitiveness, who’s responsibility? expectations |
Impressions thus far
Growing market share of private RTOs for youth cohort without school completion
Market share of private RTOs for ESLs (by type / state)