The role of VET in shaping the aspirations of Indigenous secondary school students

Dr Sally Patfield · Laureate Professor Jenny Gore · Dr Leanne Fray · A/Professor Maree Gruppetta

27th National VET Research Conference
Sydney | 15 – 17 August 2018
Broader Context
Indigenous Australians and VET

• ‘Ladder of opportunity’, or ‘corrugated iron ceiling’? (Helme, 2005)

• A launching pad, or a diversion from higher education? (Behrendt et al., 2012)
Indigenous VET participation

• Indigenous participation in VET remains strong

• Increasing enrolments in higher-level VET qualifications

• Completion rates and employment outcomes need attention
Indigenous VET participation – The future

A more targeted approach to VET provision for Indigenous learners, particularly young people who do not have previous employment, may also strengthen VET’s effectiveness in improving employment outcomes for Indigenous learners.

(Windley, 2017)
Methodology and sample

**QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT**
Students, parents and teachers in selected schools across 3 regions

- Students: NAPLAN, survey
- Teachers and parents: survey
  - Y3, Y5, Y7, Y9

2012

- Students: survey
- Teachers and parents: survey
  - Y4, Y6, Y8, Y10

2013

- Students: NAPLAN-HSC trial, survey
- Teachers and parents: survey
  - Y5, Y7, Y9, Y11

2014

- Students: survey
- Teachers and parents: survey
  - Y6, Y8, Y10, Y12

2015

**QUALITATIVE COMPONENT**
Students, parents and teachers in selected schools across 3 regions

- Qualitative purposive sample

School and Government policy review and ABS data

- Interviews and focus groups: students, teachers and parents
  - Maintain and panel sample as required

Follow up interviews and focus groups – attrition addressed by panelling the sample

- Develop principles for interventions
Australian Population

- 97.2% Non-Indigenous
- 2.8% Indigenous

Aspirations Survey Data

- 93.3% Non-Indigenous
- 6.7%, 432 students Indigenous

Source: ABS 2016
Additional data collection

**Quantitative Component**
- Students, parents and teachers in selected schools across 3 regions
- Students: NAPLAN, survey
- Teachers and parents: survey

**Qualitative Component**
- Students, parents and teachers in selected schools across 3 regions
- School and Government policy review and ABS data
- Interviews and focus groups: students, teachers and parents
- Qualitative purposive sample

**2016**
“Unlocking capacity and empowering choices”: Indigenous students’ aspirations for higher education

Extended interviews
- 32 Indigenous students
- 14 parents
- 17 teachers

Sub-sample of 8 schools
Educational aspirations

Indigenous Students

- University: 39%
- Don't know: 18%
- High School: 25%
- TAFE: 19%

Non-Indigenous Students

- University: 52%
- Don't know: 14%
- High School: 23%
- TAFE: 12%
Top 10 VET-related occupational aspirations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Indigenous students</th>
<th>Indigenous students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sportspersons</td>
<td>Sportspersons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Attendants and Trainers</td>
<td>Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Animal Attendants and Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Force Members</td>
<td>Defence Force Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Mechanics</td>
<td>Motor Mechanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressers</td>
<td>Hairdressers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chefs</td>
<td>Carpenters and Joiners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Therapists</td>
<td>Beauty Therapists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters and Joiners</td>
<td>Fitness Instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Instructors</td>
<td>Child Carers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Top 10 VET-related occupational aspirations - boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Indigenous students</th>
<th>Indigenous students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sportspersons</td>
<td>Sportspersons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Force Members</td>
<td>Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Defence Force Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Mechanics</td>
<td>Motor Mechanics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters and Joiners</td>
<td>Animal Attendants and Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Attendants and Trainers</td>
<td>Carpenters and Joiners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricians</td>
<td>Drillers, Miners and Shot Firers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chefs</td>
<td>Truck Drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drillers, Miners and Shot Firers</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Technical and Trade Workers</td>
<td>Fitness Instructors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Top 10 VET-related occupational aspirations - girls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Indigenous students</th>
<th>Indigenous students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Attendants and Trainers</td>
<td>Animal Attendants and Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdressers</td>
<td>Hairdressers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sportspersons</td>
<td>Sportspersons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty Therapists</td>
<td>Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Beauty Therapists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Carers</td>
<td>Child Carers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chefs</td>
<td>Fitness Instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Force Members</td>
<td>Defence Force Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness Instructors</td>
<td>Other Personal Service Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Nurses</td>
<td>Veterinary Nurses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interest in VET-related occupations – Indigenous students

Overall
Year 3 cohort
Year 5 cohort
Year 7 cohort
Year 9 cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 3 cohort</th>
<th>Year 5 cohort</th>
<th>Year 7 cohort</th>
<th>Year 9 cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 3 cohort: 44%
Year 5 cohort: 51%
Year 7 cohort: 49%
Year 9 cohort: 44%
Interest in VET-related occupations – Indigenous boys
Interest in VET-related occupations – Indigenous girls

Overall
Year 3 cohort
Year 5 cohort
Year 7 cohort
Year 9 cohort
Who is interested in VET-related occupations among Indigenous students?

- Male
- Lower SES background
- Less advantaged schools
- Lower NAPLAN quartile
- Lower cultural capital
- Average/well-below average self-perception of relative academic performance
Who is interested in VET-related occupations?

BUT similar trends for all students

- Male
- Lower SES background
- Less advantaged schools
- Lower NAPLAN quartile
- Lower cultural capital
- Average/well-below average self-perception of relative academic performance
What do you want to do when you finish school?

Get a traineeship or apprenticeship – a mechanic apprenticeship.
(Ganan, Year 11)

I’d like to get an electrical apprenticeship.
(Harlee, Year 11)
What do you want to do when you finish school?

Hopefully get into multi-media. [...] I’m not getting an ATAR, so I’ll have to go to TAFE because obviously I need the qualification.

(Dante, Year 11)

I don’t know what I want to do, but I know that I want to go to TAFE and do a beauty course. But, I don’t want to do that as a job, just as a hobby.

(Arika, Year 9)
Occupational/educational alignment

**Facilitator:** So do you have any idea about if you were to do childcare what you'd have to do?

**Mallana:** None whatsoever.

(Mallana, Year 11)
Unfamiliarity with VET

*I think back in Year 6 we, like, went into Newcastle and [saw] one. But other than that, no.*
(Mallana, Year 11)

*I think the only thing that I’ve ever actually done with TAFE is – nothing actually, I don’t think. They have markets there every year and I go there for that but I think that’s about it.*
(Mayra, Year 11)

*I drove past one.*
(Jeraki, Year 9)
Familiarity with VET – Familial access

*I have five cousins. Three of them are diesel mechanics, one's a mechanic. I have four uncles. One of them is a diesel mechanic, the other two are mechanics. All the boys up the end of my street are all, like, 20, 25, they're all mechanics’ apprentices and stuff.*

*(Ganan, Year 11)*

*[My mum] did a TAFE [course] and after a few weeks of watching her skills and everything that she had with the computers and all that type of stuff, they said “Do you want a job?” and she pretty much took it.*

*(Arianna, Year 10)*
Familiarity with VET - VETiS

**Facilitator:** Have you ever been to a TAFE campus?

**Jamila:** Yeah, the local one here.

**Facilitator:** How do you find it? Do you like it?

**Jamila:** I love it. It's not too big a campus, there's maps everywhere and you really can't get lost. Everybody you meet there is general – because we are such a small town you know just about everybody there. They are so accommodating.

(Jamila, Year 11)
Role of VETiS: Sparking aspirations

Well, recently, in Year 10 I set myself up with a school based traineeship in community and pharmacy services. So instead of being in a retail pharmacy I’m actually in the hospital, which has opened me up to a lot of stuff [...] once I saw the medical side I learnt more about midwifery and I started to lean towards that. Then last week I went into community health up in the hospital [...] and that just opened my eyes so much because I go out to the people’s houses, like the pregnant ladies’ houses and I ask them how was the birthing, how was all this and all that type of stuff, and I just went, oh I could do that. (Arianna, Year 10)
Role of VETiS: A passion for learning

When you go to TAFE it's a completely different atmosphere. You're not in maths sitting in the back playing on your phone, you're there doing what you want for as long as you want. So you're, like, 100 per cent clicked in and listening to every word the teacher's saying. Where here [at school] the teacher might be talking out the front and I'm playing on my phone not really concentrating. But at TAFE, you're there to learn what you want and it's kind of different. It's, like, "Oh, I actually care about this," and, like, click on and pay attention and absorb what he's trying to tell you. (Ganan, Year 11)
Role of VETiS: Attaining a foundation

I did work experience in Year 10. I did some painting and decorating and I really liked it and then I picked construction as one of my courses and that's all to do with carpentry stuff. I think because it's a VET course it goes towards something in TAFE - like you can get recognised prior learning stuff. Then we started doing practicals in it and I really like it and I thought, well I could do that before I join the police force, I'll always have that to fall back on. (Myall, Year 11)
Role of VETiS: Building qualifications

At the moment I’m actually doing animals studies at TAFE, which will give me my Certificate II and III and IV in companion animals. Nothing bigger yet and I will hopefully get to follow that up and move into bovine and into horses as well. (Jamila, Year 11)
Role of VETiS: Strengthening self-concept

I also have a casual job as well as the traineeship. When I was at my casual job I was just getting treated like some random off the street. But then when I was at the traineeship, because of how serious it is I was actually treated like a real person and I liked that feeling. So I think in that sense, because my [traineeship] is so serious that I will get recognised as someone, which I think that really motivates me to want to do it. Because all the other jobs and everything, like I know they’re jobs and they are for other people, but they’re not for me. They’re not what I want to be doing. (Arianna, Year 10)
Importance of targeted support in schools

He asked me what I wanted to do. We were talking about going into the army for a bit and then he was, like, he was giving me all these different options. I went home and I thought about it for ages and I said, "Yeah, I want to become a diesel mechanic, some of it's in my blood." Then I came the next day and he's, like, "I've enrolled you in TAFE. You're in this. You can do this then one day a week you'll get your hours up," and he did it all for me and it was great. (Ganan, Year 11)

The AEO [Aboriginal Education Officer] organised that and got all the Aboriginal kids that are looking to have their first job type sort of things, which was the traineeship. (Arianna, Year 10)
VET as a stepping stone to university

If I couldn’t get into Griffith [University] straight away I think I’d do a TAFE course that would hopefully help me get into there. (Dahlia, Year 11, criminal psychologist)

From there [TAFE] I could probably move into a Bachelor of, like, 3D modelling, texture designing and stuff. (Dante, Year 11)
**Key points**

- VET plays a pivotal role for Indigenous young people and particularly appeals to those students who may be overlooked in the push to increase participation rates in university.

- Interest is largely in traditional VET-related occupations and tends to be quite gendered for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students: need to consider employability and skill sets within the changing world of work.

- VETiS functions in a multitude of ways to support Indigenous students.

- Schools have a key role to play in facilitating VET pathways.
Thank you
Questions

Connect with us!

w: www.newcastle.edu.au/teachers-and-teaching
e: aspirations@newcastle.edu.au

@UON_TTRC

Funding for the ‘Aspirations Longitudinal Study’ was provided by the Australian Research Council and the NSW Department of Education. Funding for ‘Unlocking Capacity and Empowering Choices’ was provided by the Commonwealth Department of Education (HEPPP). The views expressed in this presentation may not be representative of those of the funding bodies.