

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Welcome, everybody. This is Nadine Zacharias representing the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education.

I'm your host for today's webinar. I'd also like to introduce Dr Andrew Harvey at La Trobe University and Kate Duyvestyn at Monash University:

**Andrew Harvey and Kate Duyvestyn:**

Hello.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

... who are the co-presenters for today's webinar.

First of all, I would like to do an acknowledgement of country, which is an interesting concept in a webinar situation, because we are meeting all over the country. There are 40 of you in the session, and counting.

I'm acknowledging the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, because the three presenters are in Melbourne. This is the country from which we are being broadcast to you.

This is the inaugural webinar in the *Building Legacy and Capacity* series, which is a new strategic initiative by the National Centre. I am going to introduce it quite briefly.

Before passing over to Kate and Andrew to talk to you about the discussions and the insights from the first workshop which was held in Canberra at the end of September, the topic of today's workshop is career development for students in low SES or regional/remote high schools. As you'll see, Andrew and Kate will share some insights from the workshop, but we very much want to continue the conversation, because we can't exactly say that all the questions got resolved on that day.

A little bit of housekeeping. You'll see that we have Michelle, who is live captioning for us, which is coming up on your screens.

There is a question pod at the bottom of your control panel, so learn to love your control panel, which is on either side of your screen. It's on my left hand side; it's potentially on your right hand side of the screen. Have a play with it. There's various ways of resizing screens and making some things bigger than others. There's also an opportunity for you to ask questions of us. There is a dropdown menu towards the bottom of the control panel, where you can leave your questions and they will come through to us during the session so we can deal with any questions that are coming through at the end.

There's also the opportunity, if the technology doesn't work for you at all, to get in touch with Jane, who is supporting us during this webinar. The email address is [admin@adcet.edu.au](mailto:admin@adcet.edu.au), in case you have any technical glitches.

We are planning to present for 30 to 40 minutes and then open up for either a discussion or a Q & A. We'll see, (a), how the time and the technology works for us. Okay.

I'm going to launch into it and start with a bit of an introduction of the *Building Legacy and Capacity* workshop series. The logic behind the concept was a conversation with the

NCSEHE board, which wanted a strategic project that enabled us to build legacy beyond the current period funded. Many of you may know the centre is funded until 2018, and discussions are very much live as to what will happen next,

The board certainly had an aspiration to leverage the really great research that NCSEHE had funded over the years. We also wanted to pick up on and deepen the conversation on the 10 conversations that were held during a national forum in late 2016 that raised some really interesting and important challenges, but we didn't necessarily have a readymade mechanism to progress them.

So, what we came up with was a format that enabled productive conversations about reasonably complex issues, and that brought people who approached issues from different perspectives together in a conversation.

The objective of the workshops are to define a collective knowledge base which is informed by both research and practice, to engage in strategic and action planning so that we can learn from this insight to guide institutional practice and future research, and we also want to inform policy making with the evidence that is generated from both research and practice. So, this is very much about closing the loop between equity research and practice, which is the mission of the National Centre.

The structure of these workshops is the same. There will be four in the series. We held the first one in Canberra, as I said, in late September. The next one we are holding in Perth next week, and then there will be two more early in the new year. These workshops are structured around six high-level questions, which frame the group discussion.

We are starting off with notions of success. What are we trying to achieve? What does in this case effective career advice to students look like?

We are delving into the nature of the problem, and to really unpack what we are observing and why we're observing it and what some of the drivers are. What do we know from current research and practice? What worked? What didn't work? And why? This is really where we draw on the work that the experts have done as either researchers or practitioners or policy makers. In the last workshop we had a career advisor who could talk from the coalface.

We talked about must-have elements. The questions talk about must-have elements of successful approaches. We have reframed that into good practice guidelines, as you will see.

We also talked about common challenges and potential pitfalls. We know that on paper some of the solutions don't look too difficult, but the implementation is where challenges usually occur.

We talked about the role of government at both federal and state levels and how policy can better support effective career development activities. The final part of the conversation was to identify any gaps in knowledge. If we knew about certain things would that make a difference to both policy and practice? That structure is fairly consistent across the series.

What we then do is we have expert workshops and then wide dissemination, multimodal dissemination. As I said, the workshop in this case had nine subject matter experts, researchers, practitioners and community partners. Unfortunately, we didn't have a policy maker there on the day, but we will for the next workshop.

The object was very much to advance a national conversation, as I said, at the intersection of equity research practice and policy that benefits the sector. It's a conversation of the few to benefit the many, was the idea.

The webinar today is the first bit of dissemination. We also sent you the pre-reading document, which we will further update following this conversation and conversations with the department in Canberra. We're working on a professional illustration to complement the text, just to make the insights more accessible again.

The focus of today's workshop, as I have said, is career development for school students.

These were the workshop participants. I'd like to thank them again, because they were a terrific group.

We set the bar reasonably high. I talked about the aspiration to make magic on the day. And it did happen.

Also, I would really like to thank Andrew and Kate, who put their hand up to do some extra work, extra leg work, and some extra presenting work with me today, and I'm handing over to Kate now to start us on the material.

### **Kate Duyvestyn:**

Can everyone hear me, I hope? As Nadine was saying, we're really looking at career development information for students, but we're really looking at the students from low SES and regional communities. These students were the focus because we know their participation rates at university are less than the greater population.

The other issue is not just access and participation, but their ongoing participation and their success, which are also equally important, rather than just accessing university.

For many students it's really hard when they first come to university. They don't necessarily know what to expect, and the more information they get before they come is really important so they're prepared for when they get in to university and so that they can succeed.

We're really looking at some of those issues that are facing students.

The information that they get often in regional areas is not as great. They don't necessarily understand what courses are available and also what careers that can lead them to, and they don't understand the different access schemes and entry pathways in to university. There is a lot of confusing information for students but also for careers teachers. Often for careers teachers they need to understand not just the different universities and the schemes they have but also the different tacks across different states, where there are differences again.

For a lot of careers teachers, especially if they've got students applying across state lines, there's a lot of information for them to retain and then to be able to give to their students.

I know the admissions transparency is happening at the moment to try to address some of these things, but at the moment it is still a really confusing issue for students.

The language that everyone uses is a really different thing for them. There are lots of different things that they must overcome.

Careers teachers are obviously a really important component in supporting the students and helping them to get and navigate that information. The relationships that universities have with the careers teachers, and then the relationships students have with their careers teachers and their other teachers is really important.

One of the hard things for a lot of the careers teachers in regional areas, if they're not necessarily working -- or subject teachers are not working to subjects that are their priority area or their subject area. They've got to be enthusiastic about subjects and information that they are not necessarily aware of.

For careers teachers, most of them in regional areas are not necessarily actually full time. You can see the difference for careers practitioners who are working full time and what they are able to achieve compared to teachers working part time is quite significant. As I said, a lot of the teachers in regional areas in particular are not full time careers teachers. They don't have the support and they don't have the resources.

A lot of the time they're doing this job out of the goodness of their heart and because they have a strong desire to support their students.

Careers teachers often say hearing the message is really important for students -- to hear it from different people. Getting industry people in, getting universities in, getting other people from other than the school teachers is important to complement what the school is doing and what activities they are implementing.

Everything we're working towards is helping the students get that 'aha!' moment where they really understand and they get, 'Okay. This is what this means to me and this is the difference it can have in my future.' As I said, getting different voices in can have an impact on when students will have that understanding.

I guess when we're looking at these issues some of them really do vary across states. I guess the information, the standards and how the schools work does vary from state to state, and there's different governance between federal and states as well as schools. These things all do have an impact that we have to realise plays out differently.

A lot of the things that we agreed on were the attitudes of students has an impact, as well as those school factors. It's a combination of both.

A lot of the students do have high aspirations and we need to make sure we are always talking about the fact that students do have aspirations, but we need to make sure that those aspirations are informed.

It's about making sure that students can visualise themselves and see themselves achieving success, so they are able to see themselves in those environments at university or a different career.

They don't necessarily have the role models, networks or people around them that are going to demonstrate that, yes, those careers or university, all those things, that they can look at and see, 'Yes, I can recognise this person in my community has achieved and has gone on to succeed.'

So, making sure that we're giving the students opportunities to be more informed about their decision making is really important, and helping them see opportunities is really important as well.

As I said, schools factors do have an implication. A lot of students in regional areas or in schools where there's less resources don't necessarily have teachers teaching to their

specific strengths or their subject areas. They might have less subjects available, less co-curricular activities. Not necessarily all the programs are in place as students in metropolitan areas or independent schools, where they're well-resourced and can put their efforts into.

These things all impact on students and their decision making.

I guess one of the things that we really thought about was that we wanted to make sure that students were getting informed decisions to actually be able to navigate their own destiny.

I'm jumping ahead. When we were at the workshop last week, we had different people from different practitioner areas, and I guess each of our programs sort of use a different approach to address these issues.

University of Canberra, they've got a blended approach. They have had issues using the technology of course in regional areas, but they've tried to use a blended approach to career development.

The University of Queensland has really embedded their programs of career development and post study and careers into their overall program. So has the University of Wollongong. It's also trying to implement that into programs across the board.

Each of these programs are using students in different ways, but at Monash we are using them slightly differently, where we have got the students doing one on one mentoring rather than programs to large groups of students.

That's why the students can really focus on their own individual questions, and they've got someone there to directly support them through that.

When we were looking at all the different ways that people are supporting the students, I guess having that peer support was really important. I think that all of the programs that we looked at and all the case studies -- peer support was an integral part of providing support to young people, low SES communities and regional communities.

We were talking about students having informed choices so they could navigate their own pathway. So, making sure they have a greater understanding of what the jobs and careers are. Really helping them to see themselves in those spaces and see what is available to them. And to see that they can succeed in those spaces. Helping them to visualise themselves in those areas.

One of the things we have talked about was employability skills and ensuring that students have the skills that will help them through all the different careers they might go through as they go through life. And making sure that we're setting them up for success for the long term to go through lots of different roles.

One of the other things was awareness of when that journey starts. We need to make sure that students are starting their thinking about these things a lot earlier, that they are making informed decisions.

We have to make sure that they start thinking about some of these things that will impact on what they're going to be able to do a lot earlier. Their subject choices start impacting at Year 9 and 10. It's too late once they get to Year 12. So, getting students to think about those things earlier is really important.

I guess also just awareness of where all the resources are that are available to them. This is one of the hard things. Because there's so many resources available and they are all in lots of different places. I guess there's been a lot of work done through HEPPEP and with the

funding. Everybody's been working on different programs and we've created lots of different resources, but these resources are not necessarily all in one spot that the students can find easily. And they don't necessarily know where to look for them.

I think one of the things we do need to consider is how we're putting our resources together and how that's being shared.

I think I was going to say one more thing. Is this me still?

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Sorry, I have to turn myself back on. You can go.

**Kate Duyvestyn:**

I forgot where we were at. Was I still talking or is Andrew talking?

**Nadine Zacharias:**

No. You talk. You finish yours.

**Kate Duyvestyn:**

I'm still talking. We've talked about making sure the students have the skills they need so they can make informed decisions. Employability skills but also self-confidence and really building that up so that they can go on to make those decisions. Now I think I'm handing over to Andrew; is that correct, Nadine?

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Yes, all good. Andrew?

**Andrew Harvey:**

Right then. Hello. Thank you to the 69 attendees so far. We are just going to talk for another ten minutes or so then leave plenty of time for questions. 70 attendees. That was a good opening sentence.

Good practice principles -- these are just suggestions that came out of the research and then the discussion.

I guess the first point there is almost just keep a lid on it. Universities are not the major influences in young people's post school decision making. Perhaps we sometimes forget that. There's a need for us to focus on what we're best at. There is a list of things there, demystification. With demystification, we are talking about both professions and higher education. I think we spend a lot of time demystifying higher education or trying to, but perhaps less time around the professions, and particularly specific professions. I think students often have a sense of what the obvious professions might be, such as law or

teaching, but probably a lot less knowledge around some of the health professions or the broader professions within STEM, for instance.

That's what we're best placed to do, which is not say we're necessarily doing it the best. Role models, particularly I think one of the subsequent points is talking about near-peer delivery. Trying to find students other students can relate to.

One of the major reasons why underrepresented groups don't go on to university is that they don't think university is for people like them, and that applies to regional students, boys, women in STEM, to some Indigenous groups, to a range of underrepresented students who for various different reasons perceive university is not for people like them. Trying to demystify that is also really important.

Curriculum enhancement. I guess there we don't do a lot of that from a university point of view, in terms of school curriculum.

One of the projects that we ran in previous years was working explicitly with schools around reforming their curriculum to develop theme based curriculum to try to raise students' awareness of issues by doing it thematically across the curriculum. But there are resource issues with that as well.

The extent to which universities can work with schools is limited partly by universities but also by schools and the resources that overworked teachers can or cannot find.

Information about pathways and access was there and now is there again. That is obviously critical in a time where admissions schemes are expanding almost exponentially. The government has adopted most of the recommendations of the Higher Education Standards Panel around transparency in admissions. We will now see more clarity around ATAR cut-offs, for instance, which had become quite opaque.

Students still lack information around particularly school recommendation schemes and other contextual pathways, and also around things like educational access schemes, which are called different things throughout the country but which run through the tertiary administration centres and enable students to apply for compensation for educational disadvantage. There's a real information lack around pathways and access to higher education.

Universities obviously need to be, in terms of this work with low SES and regional students, to be conscious of the ultimate goal, which is a societal goal around raising educational capacity and achievement, and not overly focused on their own institutions, although obviously that's a challenge with marketing and recruitment staff sometimes as well.

Child centred behaviour -- so really focusing on the students themselves in schools, and working with their influences, parents, guardians, families, communities, career counsellors, friends and teachers. Some of the research suggests that low SES and regional students are more likely to rely on external influences, whether they aspire or not to university, than students from medium and high SES backgrounds or from the cities.

We know that low SES and regional students rely on their discipline teachers, career teachers, families, often their communities, and their friends and peers. But we are limited so far in terms of our influence upon those groups, and that's a challenge not only for schools but for universities as well, to expand our concept of outreach and careers.

Place based and sustained approaches. That probably relates to the non-marketing philosophy as well about developing approaches that are often specific to a place rather than

institution, and again sustainability is challenging given things such as HEPPP funding at the moment, which is short time and fragile. But we need to keep working with schools to make sure that what we do is sustainable beyond the life of initial funding.

Near peer delivery I have covered. Practical use of schools probably goes without saying or should go without saying but perhaps does not. We know that there's a university-school divide and that often they're two different worlds.

I guess we need to be conscious of not adopting a hierarchical view with university at the top, but of working with schools as partners and understanding that schools have an enormous number of constraints particularly around time and need things to be practical for them. And addressing attitudes and skills. It is not simply, as Kate said, a matter of raising aspirations. We also need to address capacity and achievement. Aspirations are mediated by achievement all through school and beyond. So, not simply a case of people who are aiming low; it's usually a case of aspirations that then get lowered after subsequent low achievement. So, we need to work on both of those issues. And teacher professional development as part of that, which I think I've covered in the schools section.

Again, recommendations that are not firm recommendations but suggestions for further discussion. Role clarity -- what should universities be doing in the career development space? Might leave that as an open question.

We did have some suggestions below that around broadening stakeholder groups. Extending the focus on parents, guardians, families and communities.

There are a lot of groups that are very closely connected either into their communities or who rely on family advice.

But we tend to still have an individual culture in terms of thinking about aspiration and students. We need to, I think, broaden that conceptual approach to examine how diverse groups make their decisions. And understand their reality and indeed what they want to do. For a lot of people, going to university is not about individual success, it's about supporting their community or their family. We need to be cognisant of those relationships.

Establishing partnerships with employers is the next point. This is a really important one. It goes back to the earlier point I made around professions versus simply university aspiration. Very few people want just to go to university; university is a means to an end.

The research suggests we need to do more around professions, particularly as I mentioned some of those professions that are not so obvious but also the ones that are. A lot of students might think they have an idea of what a lawyer is from television shows and other sources but may lack detail around complexity between solicitor roles and barrister roles, for instance, and different types of law that are possible.

Embedding career thinking across the school in partnership with the school executive team. I think we could apply that to universities as well. It's a question of employability as an embedded quality or capability.

We need to think particularly in schools that careers is not about the careers teacher, it's about all of the staff in the schools. We know from the research that students rely on their discipline teachers for careers advice even though some discipline teachers don't consider themselves as career advisors and prefer to refer students to the specific careers adviser. Again, there are challenges in that, because just understanding the complexity of tertiary admissions is a nightmare for experts in that let alone people who are trying to do other work. So, challenging but important role to embed careers and employability across schools



and also across universities. Again, employability is often seen as the role of the careers office in universities, but it is of course a much broader responsibility.

One of the challenges at university and at school is for underrepresented students to make sure they're involved in these initiatives. If we're going to run extracurricular activities, how do we make sure that people who are financially disadvantaged or who don't have time or who have part time jobs are able to participate in those activities? If we're running activities for schools, are we making sure at all times that regional and low SES students can attend those activities, have the time and money to do that? And are aware of the importance of extracurricular activity as well.

Some of the other research suggests that low SES students in particular at university are more focused on academic achievement than extracurricular work, partly because they perceive academic achievement to be critical to employment, which is not always the case. A lot of employers now are talking about those extracurricular skills and those skills that are often annoyingly called soft skills, but communicative skills, empathic skills, and people skills that often come through co-curricular or extracurricular activity.

A recommendation around investing in partnerships between universities at state level and other appropriate constellations, which is an interesting planetary reference that made it into the draft. To strengthen practice, coverage and advocacy. We're talking about partnerships that again are driven towards a societal goal rather than necessarily an institutional one. I guess from a policy sense, the federal government funded explicitly collaborative partnerships through HEPPP in the early days. It has moved away from funding collaborative partnerships. But if we look at the UK, for instance, there's a specific fund around collaborative outreach, which is based on university participation gaps by region, with then applications for consortia to apply for funds to deal with that problem of the region rather than again having an institutional approach.

So, recommendations for policy, quickly. We've talked about creating a curriculum framework within school curriculum. There's a range of ways of doing this. One through ACARA, through the national curriculum framework and another at state level, perhaps by creating career development as some kind of a theme or competency in the frameworks. Obviously once things get mentioned in policy and become part of curriculum frameworks they are more likely to be adopted at school level. That's a critical area. We talked also about career development and teacher education programs, which train most of the teachers who go on to the schools. And about enabling consistent delivery of career activities at school level. We've talked about needs based funding as a base requirement. Support for Gonski and for disadvantaged schools to have the resources they need. We talked about tracking post school outcomes. At the moment, as most of you know, we have a Commonwealth Higher education student something number, and we have a lot of school numbers at state levels but we have no connections between them or between vocational education and other sectors either. One of the recommendations of the Higher Education Standards Panel was to link the VET and the higher ed student numbers, I think, but getting all of those student numbers linked up would be much better. It's clearly something we need to continue advocating. There are other ways of tracking post school outcomes, but identity numbers are the easiest.

Accessible resources -- it's key that they are accessible. That they're evidence informed and updated.

Tertiary admission centres was another element that came up in our discussions and in our research. The country currently runs, I think, a tertiary admissions centre for every state with the exception of Tasmania, which runs through the University of Tasmania, and the Northern Territory runs through SATAC in South Australia, But through those tertiary admission centres there's a lot of data collected, particularly around admission schemes, school recommendation schemes, for instance, and very little of that data is analysed at the moment. We could do more around working out which schemes lead to what level of success in higher education. We also need to rationalise those schemes so that, if there are early offer schemes or principal recommendation schemes, school recommendation schemes, that they all run through a tertiary admission centre, centralised practice, rather than students applying to eight different institutions, as happens in some states still.

We talked particularly about change of preference week. Change of preference week is currently not very well resourced. It's a difficult time. We know that low SES and regional students are less likely to change their preference during that time. There are a lot of reasons for that, but one is just a lack of resources. Could the tertiary admissions centres perhaps be better resourced during that week to deal with student inquiries, and how do we manage resources within the secondary schools as well, which the students have left at that point. There is a bit of a gap in the current admissions system, and that has equity implications, particularly during that week. We need to be sure that all the way through from the end of school through to the start of university semesters that we've got support and advice particularly for underrepresented students.

Just about done here. Next slide, please. Gaps in knowledge. This is the shortest list of all, strangely. We have a lot of gaps in knowledge, but this is a summary that just talks about comparative evaluation of different initiatives. Again, we need better longitudinal research and better evidence. We do need to analyse the TAC data more. We do need more tracking of students. I think we also need a bit more conceptual work around informed choice, effective navigators. Cultural capital, employability skills.

There's a range of conceptual issues as well, but there are also some very practical issues around information, access and knowledge. I think that's about it.

Is that right? I might hand back to you, unless there's another slide.

### **Nadine Zacharias:**

Thank you, Andrew. I will try to turn my web cam back on. There's too much going on, on this screen. We'll be a bit brave, because we definitely had the aspiration that this will be a continuing of the conversation and not just a delivery of insights from a particular event. We have thrown some questions up on this last slide that would be interested to get your views on.

The way to do this, in your control panel, which I hope you have got to know a bit during the session, there is a button with a raised hand. That is your mechanism to indicate that you would like to contribute to the conversation and would like to say something, and then I have to free up your microphone.

So, anyone who has a comment or a question or who would like to respond to those first two questions on the slide around role clarity, please put up your hand.

Alternatively, if you'd rather ask a question of Kate or Andrew, you can put them in your question pod.

Here is one, Briony.

Your microphone is free.

**Briony (webinar attendee):**

Hi, can you hear me?

**Nadine Zacharias:**

I can.

**Briony (webinar attendee):**

Excellent. I just have a question. It's great to see that you're all doing a lot of talking about the need for collaboration in a school environment with not just career practitioners but subject teachers as well. My question is that there doesn't seem to be any comment in this about the need for career practitioners to be qualified when they are delivering youth programs in schools and how the programs that are being delivered in some schools by unqualified practitioners, and the resulting lack of a quality career program. Was there any research done around that area?

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Not research in the direct sense. It came up during conversation and it's captured in that point that says there's a lack of consistency and enforceable standards at each level.

**Briony (webinar attendee):**

Obviously we've got our standards. The CICA professional standards do mandate that there is a level of qualification required to deliver career programs in schools. I definitely agree with that point. We need to be broadening our programs. We need to be making sure that subject based teachers are there. But I think that's also a point that needs to be further researched and developed into that -- we aren't having the qualified practitioners in some schools and what the difference is between the programs of qualified practitioners who are delivering quality programs versus those who aren't, and what the outcomes are on students.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

That's a terrific point.

**Andrew Harvey:**

Could I make a quick comment on that, Nadine. I think there's two related points there, and it's an excellent point.

One is, the field of education that careers teachers themselves have undertaken, and this came up in the discussion as well. Very few careers teachers come from a STEM background, for instance, and potentially that background of the career teachers may be influencing their own understanding of careers as well. That's again a professional development challenge and a challenge for that specific part of the teaching profession to diversify the careers teachers.

I think another point that's interesting is in regional schools we know that a lot of teachers are teaching out of field much more than in metropolitan schools. The same with low SES schools. We know, for instance, that maths teachers who are not maths specialists are more likely to be found in low SES and regional schools. There may be similar findings in terms of careers teachers in regional and low SES schools. The resourcing issue would be similar obviously, and the challenge to find teachers particularly in outer regional areas.

I think that's another relevant point. But I agree that it's professionalisation, I guess. We've touched on in terms of professional development, but it might just need more specificity around careers teachers themselves. There are though clearly a range of issues. Notwithstanding whatever we do with careers practitioners, the job is going to be far too much for those individuals and already is pretty overbearing in terms of working with early offer schemes, for instance. At the same time as we need to develop that profession we also need to embed careers a bit more broadly across schools. And at least explain to discipline teachers that their students consider them to be careers teachers even if they don't.

A range of challenges. And again all in the context of schools being overworked, which is back to that fundamental point about needs based funding and resourcing those schools.

**Briony (webinar attendee):**

Can I also follow up on something you said there.

The big issue also is that every state is delivering careers in a different format. Some states, like South Australia, are delivering careers through the PLP program whereas other states are delivering it through a My Education program like Tasmania. You have got a lot of schools where definitely they are delivering it through subject based teachers, but then you've got other states that aren't delivering it all through subject based teachers. I a hundred per cent agree with that point of teachers being overworked and stretched to capacity. When you put that into context of low SES and regional based schools, it's even in more dire need.

**Andrew Harvey:**

That's a really good point. We should bring you on as an advisor, I think.

**Briony (webinar attendee):**

I would be more than happy.

**Andrew Harvey:**

It is a bit of a gap in our current understanding. I think that is partly because we didn't have too many – we had one careers teacher at the seminar but we have not probably brought in

enough expertise around those really specific issues and the federal issues that you raise. That's been really helpful.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Thank you both.

It didn't help that we held the workshop during school holidays. That was a note to self for the next time we organise these.

Okay. I'll mute Briony and invite other people to ask a question or comment. Jane Findlay, your mic is open.

**Jane (webinar attendee):**

Thanks, Nadine. I just wanted to ask a question about the idea – there seems to me there are many layers to this, going back to that question about what are we best at as a university and with limited resources in both school and universities about what we can influence. I'm interested in how aspirations get lowered through academic achievement and then the connection with universities with access schemes that acknowledge that or have pathways, enabling programs and those sorts of things that can still get a student somewhere on that journey to their aspiration but with more support that's needed, if they've got gaps in their learning.

And also the challenge with more direct applications coming to universities because of the way they're bringing students in as undergraduates, it's not as static timing as the TACs offer as a school leaver. School leavers are allowed to apply -- they can go through the TAC, but they have the same opportunity to apply directly.

I wonder rather than fighting that, then going with the direct application, whether there was a way that the universities were forced to publish transparently their direct application programs so that from an equity perspective we were able to see who was applying, what were the terms, how were they scored and how were they selected into the program, usually on a Commonwealth supported place, and then what support was offered to those students so that we could start to see what are the influences for greater uptake and then success for those students between those enabling programs or different programs that invite universities in, which ultimately we have control over.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

I'll start to answer the first part of the question and then throw over to Andrew.

On your question on dropping aspirations -- there's a terrific research project that was conducted out of the University of Newcastle by Professor Jenny Gore, who had a large data set, panel survey where they followed three cohorts of young people across their school journey and measured aspirations at four different points in time. What she found is that young people had reasonably high aspirations for higher education and then they dropped off particularly in Years 9 and 10. And attainment is a major factor as well as lower expectations; that young people are exposed to and eventually internalise. Her research is starting to come out, but Andrew has also done work in that space and can comment on the question around direct entry. Andrew, over to you.

**Andrew Harvey:**

There's a lot in that, so just some quick comments. Enabling programs are great. We've looked at them. They work. They have problems in terms of being so diverse and not part of the Australian Qualifications Framework. They're under threat obviously in the budget proposals that are going back to parliament in October. But we know that enabling programs work. One of the things they do is bring back not just school leavers but mature age people. They fit into this nonlinear pathway reality.

You mentioned in a couple of your comments as well around direct entry and changing the point of offer or the timing of offers. We certainly all need to be more flexible throughout the student lifecycle and indeed the whole lifecycle around understanding the way students now want and probably always wanted to study.

So, they will always go in and out of study. 50 per cent of people who leave higher education come back to higher education within eight years, despite the fact we do nothing to bring them back.

We know there's a lot of changes, particularly from school leavers, from 17 to later in life. Enabling programs are really useful for that. Streaming, which we talked about at the seminar, was really problematic to me in terms of school. Again, that varies by state. But in states such as WA and Queensland there's a lot of streaming of students from a fairly early age into non-university pathways or non-university streams. I think that's really problematic at a national level, and most of the research suggests that streaming is not very helpful.

That's another thing that needs to be addressed. Then in terms of the early offers, yes, but they're very opaque and often the students don't know why they were accepted or not. The feedback loop is very poor. The efficiency of the program is very poor. A lot of the students who get in would have got in any way through ATAR and are just using it as a safety net, because they're smart enough to know – have enough, enough knowledge to know that the schemes exist. So, huge problems around early offer schemes. Rationalising them through the Tertiary Admissions Centres is a first step. But hopefully the transparency in admissions agenda that the higher ed standards panel is starting doesn't just stop at ATAR, and looks at this growing pathway. As we know, ATAR is less than half now of the university entries. It's a massive area but, yes, it's very opaque and needs to change.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Did you want to reply to that?

**Jane (webinar attendee):**

No, that's really helpful. I suppose I wasn't expecting to have 'the answer is'. But I think the connections to the Australian Qualifications Framework is an interesting one and I think – we just had a discussion today with our vice chancellor talking about the future of the bachelor. Some of the credentialing and breaking down of postgraduate learning options and flexibility around student lifecycle is being considered for postgraduates because of time and cost pressures. But these have always been the issues for low SES and regional students, as to why they didn't get in to the game to start with. That same level of breaking it down into bite

sized pieces that are managerial seems so relevant to these cohorts, to get them engaged and continue their path into higher education.

**Andrew Harvey:**

Just a quick footnote to that, we know with attrition that low SES students are more likely to leave because they felt they chose the wrong course. We also know that they are less likely to return having left. If they do return having left, they're more likely to enrol in a different course than the one they originally enrolled in. All of these career implications and lack of knowledge flow through right to re recruitment of students who have withdrawn from higher education 10 years later. It is a lifecycle issue.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

We probably have time for one last question.

Small regional schools often lack the staffing capacity to offer those higher level mathematics courses, physics, chemistry, et cetera, which are generally prerequisites for entry to elite degree programs such as medicine and engineering. Students are therefore compelled to undertake these demanding courses by distance ed. Can we consider a means by which universities can assist those schools to offer a breadth of curriculum and or support regional students who are undertaking academically rigorous HSC courses or like others in other states, by distance, thereby supporting academic attainment and subsequent transition into tertiary study? Who wants to take that?

**Andrew Harvey:**

That's a good idea. Advanced placement courses are really massive in the United States and growing here. By 'advanced places' I mean university courses basically for Year 11 and 12 students, and this is another growing area within equity that needs a lot of attention. The point about thematic curriculum and in particular the STEM subjects is spot on, and it isn't just the STEM subjects. It's coherent lots of subjects which are much more likely to lead to higher education. They are also the subjects that get weighted up in the ATARs. All of that is correct. Working with schools around combined delivery of those subjects is critical. We know universities are starting to run a lot more courses for school students in Years 11 and 12. It's just doing that in an equitable way and being conscious of the IT implications and can we get out to regional schools so we don't just exacerbate things again. But another really good question and a really massive challenge, I'm shutting up now.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Kate, did you want to add to that?

**Kate Duyvestyn:**

I was just going to agree with Andrew, yes, it is definitely a big issue and something that we know is a concern for schools and really hard for them to deal with. I guess it's something that's also being looked at in a school curriculum context as well as not just the universities

who are looking at how to support students getting access to those units, and to those subjects across different areas. I don't have the answers, but definitely agree that it's an issue.

**Nadine Zacharias:**

Terrific. Thank you, both. We are very close to time so I'll wrap it up here, but quickly tell you what the next steps are. There was a question in there around what more can government do to improve or protect the resourcing of careers staff in regional schools. The next step of this -- partly because we didn't have policy representatives at the workshop and because it's clear there is a policy conversation to be had for us to really close the loop, I'm working on holding a workshop at the department of education and training in Canberra in late November to really have an in-depth conversation with people right across the department. As you well know, this cuts across schooling, VET, higher education, different aspects of schooling. There will be a whole range of stakeholders there to continue the conversation.

In terms of sharing resources, we will make this PowerPoint presentation available to all. We will also add those of you who are not yet on our email lists on to those lists so that you can keep in contact with this conversation and before the year is up we are aiming to have an updated publication of what was the pre-reading document so that it becomes a package of information that can be easily shared across the sector and beyond. Because I think as the webinar today has shown, there's intersection with other practitioners outside of the higher education sector which are a crucial part of making this work and creating better outcomes for the students we're working with so that they can make informed choices and become effective navigators of their career and life paths.

In closing, I would like to thank you all, in particular Andrew and Kate, for putting their hand up and sharing with you the insights that we had from the workshop. Thanks a lot for making the time. I look forward to seeing you again for the next webinar, which will be on 14 November, and the topic then will be the effective support of students, university students, from regional and remote backgrounds. Thank you, all. Have a good day. Bye, bye.