

Chapter 7. Embedding skills training in economic development – Collective Education in Tasmania Case Study

This chapter provides information on a programme case study from Tasmania that targets Year 12 completion of education by bringing together local schools and employers to co-design and co-deliver skills development programmes that align with industry practice. The programme targets at-risk youth who typically do not finish Year 12 and are at-risk for being locked out of the labour market.

Background

Tasmania's recent economic and labour market performance

Tasmania has enjoyed positive economic success in recent years. Government and Industry sources indicate economic and employment growth to be stronger than previously experienced (Eslake, 2016^[83]; Parliament of Tasmania, 2017^[84]). The main industries, in terms of contribution to GSP (Gross State Product) growth in 2015-2016 were agriculture, health care and social assistance, construction, professional and technical services, and transport, postal and warehousing services. Household income growth has been driven by the income growth of Tasmania's small to medium enterprise (SME) sector (Eslake, 2016^[83]; Parliament of Tasmania, 2017^[84]). Tasmania has a lower GSP compared to the rest of Australia - three factors can explain the gap:

- **Employment gap:** fewer Tasmanians have a job compared to the national average – this accounted for 41% of the difference in per capita gross product in 2014-2015 (Eslake, 2016^[83]).
- **Working hours gap:** employed Tasmanians work fewer hours than the national average – this accounted for 41% of the difference in per capita gross product in 2014-2015. In August 2015, 12% of employed Tasmanians were working fewer hours than they wanted to (3 percentage points above the national average) (Eslake, 2016^[83]).
- **Productivity gap:** the value of Tasmanians' production per hour worked is lower than the national average – this accounted for 18% of the difference in per capita gross product in 2014-2015. For a majority of Tasmanian industries (apart from agriculture; electricity, gas and water supply; transport; and retailing) labour productivity is below the corresponding national industry average (Eslake, 2016^[83]).

Nevertheless, in 2014-2015, employment grew by an average of 3%, twice the national average, after having continuously decreased between 2011 and 2014. The unemployment rate has also declined, and was close to the national average in 2015 (around 6%). However, this is the product not only of employment growth, but also declining labour force participation. Youth unemployment was also higher than the national average (16% compared to 13% in the year to October 2015). Low historical averages of the Australian Dollar and improved business confidence indicate that growth is likely to be sustained in the near-term. Access to a suitably qualified workforce will be paramount for Tasmania to take full advantage of emerging economic growth prospects.

Challenges within the current education system

Student retention, education attainment and future work and education participation are all areas of critical interest for the Beacon Foundation's Collective Ed initiative. This initiative exists within the context of educational reform by the Tasmanian Government to improve students' retention and attainment. These reforms aim to frame the future of the Tasmanian education system. A selection of the reform areas is described below.

Student attainment

In 2013, 83% of the population aged 20-24 in Tasmania had attained at least Year 12 or equivalent or Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Certificate II or above, compared

to 87% for the whole of Australia; and 81% had attained at least Year 12 or AQF Certificate III or above, compared to 86% in Australia (ACARA, 2013_[85]). Data from the *Report on Government Services 2015* (Productivity Commission) shows that students engaged in full-time education in Tasmania complete Year 12 less often than students in other states/territories (except the Northern Territory) regardless of remoteness or socio-economic status (SES) (Eslake, 2016_[83]). Although it is true that students of lower SES generally have lower Year 12 completion rates (not only in Tasmania but throughout Australia), Tasmanian students of low SES perform worse than their counterparts in other parts of Australia, as do Tasmanian students from medium and high SES backgrounds compared to their respective counterparts (Eslake, 2016_[83]).

On average, Australian students living in remote areas perform as well as those living in provincial areas, but both perform worse than those living in metropolitan areas. In Tasmania students' performance worsens with the level of remoteness, and students living in any of these areas perform worse than their counterparts in the rest of Australia, apart from those in the Northern Territory (Eslake, 2016_[83]).

Student retention

ABS data shows Tasmania performed poorly in retention rates compared to the whole of Australia. According to the data, 72% of students in Tasmania progressed from Year 10 to Year 12, compared with 83% of all Australian students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016_[86]).

Participation in education and work

Tasmania has a higher proportion of youth at risk (people aged 15-24 not engaged in formal employment or training) compared to the whole of Australia. In 2015, 75% of Tasmanians aged 15-24 were fully engaged through formal study and/or employment, compared to 80% nationally (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016_[87]). Looking at the 20-24 year old age bracket, in 2013 only 64% of 20-24 year olds in Tasmania were fully engaged through education and/or employment, compared to 74% in Australia.

Recent direction and areas of education reform in Tasmania

Education Bill 2016

The Education Bill 2016 brings together three previously separate pieces of legislation and includes some significant reforms of the Tasmanian education system (Parliament of Tasmania, 2016_[88]). One of the central reforms proposed is changes to leaving requirements which will require students to complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or have turned 18 years old.

Extending government high schools

As part of the Tasmanian Government's plan to increase high school retention rates in the State, rural and regional high schools were encouraged to extend their delivery to Year 12. The first six of these schools commenced delivery of Years 11-12 in 2015, with an additional seven commencing in 2016. In the Tasmanian Government's Department of Education Annual Report for 2016/17 a total of 30 schools (55% of all high schools) were reported to be delivering Years 11 and 12 (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2017_[89]). A further eight schools will commence extension to their services during 2018.

Years 11 and 12 curriculum website

This website contains curriculum support materials and aims to inform teachers and school leaders of developments and opportunities in the Years 11 and 12 cohort including learning opportunities, support for moderation and assessment and professional readings (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2018_[90]).

My Education initiative

Central to *My Education* is an online portal providing students with access to a variety of resources, material and data they can access and use in developing a life and career plan (Tasmanian Government Department of Education, 2018_[91]). *My Education* is an approach to career education that guides Tasmanian students from Kindergarten to Year 12. It supports students to identify their personal interests, values, strengths and aspirations, and teaches them how to use this knowledge to make decisions about their future learning, work and life opportunities. It is a whole school approach, grounded in partnership between the student, parents and carers, the school and the community, and also aims to engage with business and industry in Tasmania by linking education with a student's future employment options.

Programme approach*Braving a 'systems change' approach*

Collective Ed is about building a new system of practise and being able to demonstrate and share its learnings, outcomes and achievements. The project is a *living lab* of community actors coming together with a commitment to try something innovation. Developed in community partnership, Collective Ed is a Beacon Foundation state-wide initiative built from best and emerging practise in human-centred, collaborative design and adaptive leadership. Its funding comes from Australia's largest philanthropic fund, the Paul Ramsay Foundation, and the Tasmanian State Government via its Departments of Education, and State Growth.

Collective Ed is a systematic approach to achieving collective understanding and commitment to common goals, by re-emphasising working alongside schools as they begin to undertake an outward-facing approach to their planning.

The Collective Ed vision

The vision for Collective Ed is a future where: "Tasmanian communities are innovative, connected and thriving; and The Tasmanian education system continues to adapt to meet the opportunities of the 21st century"; where: students are healthy, have a voice and are engaged in learning; teachers are innovative and connected; parents value and support education; community is networked and collaborative; and business and industry are active participants in education. The Foundation's leadership is clear that its goals are not to deliver and manage change but rather to enhance the capacity of community actors to define and achieve their own success.

Changing the game from deep foundations

The Collective Ed model is the product of the Foundation's many years of operating in Tasmania. For almost 30 years, Beacon has taken a co-construction approach to the development of what it describes as *real-world education* through partnerships between

schools and industry. Using the Beacon model, they enable Australian students' access to industry-relevant curriculum; work experience placements; work readiness training; and direct pathways into employment. The model advocates a place-based, human-centred, collaborative working and collective impact approach (Collaboration for Impact, 2017^[92]).

At the Foundation level, Beacon creates employment and education opportunities for young people via their schools and business communities through activities such as: Business Blackboards, Collaborative Classrooms, Site Tours, Speed Careering, Work Experience; and Mock Interviews This encompassed school-based preparation and hands-on experience with an employer which led to specific employment opportunities. Programmes that have emerged from the Beacon model also include:

- **Real Futures Generation:** This encompassed school-based preparation and hands-on experience with an employer which led to specific employment opportunities (Beacon Foundation, 2018^[93]).
- **MyRoad via eBeacon:** a digital online platform which extends the reach of its resources and the mentorship capacity of its industry partners and volunteers (Beacon Foundation, 2018^[94]).

Table 7.1. An overview of Beacon model components

High Impact Programs	Beacon offers a series of one-day Work Readiness Programmes, targeted to specific age groups spanning Years 7 -12. Each program is designed to prepare students for a successful transition from school, through the development of 21st century skills that employers are looking for. Industry representatives share their stories and career journeys and encourage students to recognise their own potential.
Business Partnership Groups	Key stakeholders from schools, businesses and community groups come together and create a community-owned shared vision for change, and implement their plans throughout the year through a series of activities.
Industry Site Tours	Employers have a massive impact on the lives of young people by offering inspiring work exposure programmes. Employer-driven workplace experiences are undertaken by students and teachers, leading to increased industry knowledge and 21st Century job skills of participants for potential jobs.
Business Blackboards	Co-designed experiential learning for students, created by business people and classroom teachers working together. Business people bring the curriculum to life when presenting the lesson, applying authentic industry practices, sharing their own experiences and promoting specific job opportunities and career paths within their industry.
Speed Careers	This fast-paced, interactive session provides students or teachers with relevant and up-to-date, first-hand information about future career options from business representatives in the local community in a 'speed dating' format. Includes Careers on Wheels and Teacher Speed Careering.
Student Ambassador Programme	Beacon Student Ambassadors, elected from within the student body, take a leadership role in implementing the Beacon approach in the school and community.
Charter Signing Events	Students participate in a signature community event, publicly signing a board to signify their pledge that by the following year, they will continue in education, employment or training.
Work Exploration and Careers Education	Activities and events which prepare the students for the world of work; includes Mock Interviews, Work Experience and Work Shadowing and can be uniquely tailored events to suit a school's needs.

Note: Each component is selected and/or adapted to meet the needs of the specific school community.

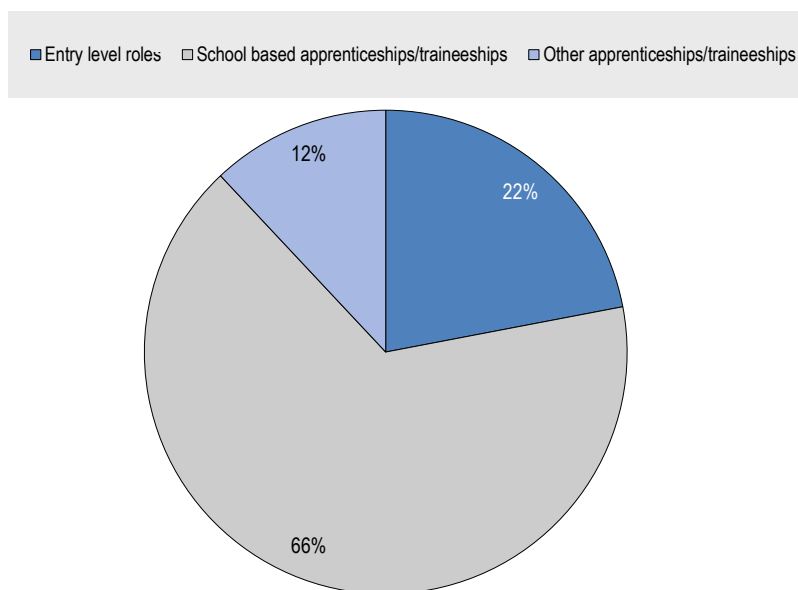
Source: Detailed in interviews with Beacon staff and materials provided to the author by Beacon Real Futures Generation (Tasmania, 2011-2015)

Real Futures Generation (RFG) – Tasmania, 2011-2015

During 2011-15, 94 students were reported to have been employed as a result of their participation in the RFG programme, with 26 businesses operating in Tasmania being involved in the development/ hiring of the students. It is important to recognise that the

young people participating in a Beacon programme are typically described as at-risk of disengagement from education and/or employment, with the vast majority living in communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

Figure 7.1. National-level breakdown (including Tasmania) of position types resulting from the RFG programme



Note: This data was prepared as part of Beacon’s report to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training in December 2014. The programme continued in Tasmania until later in 2015, when it was replaced by the Tasmanian Government funded Industry Pathway Program (IPP) project.

Source: Beacon Foundation (2014), Beacon Foundation Real Futures Generation Project. RFG value in focus: Collaborating with Tasmanian childcare sectors to connect young Tasmanians with meaningful futures.

RFG value in focus: Collaborating with Tasmanian childcare sectors to connect young Tasmanians with meaningful futures

In Tasmania, supply-side challenges surrounding Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) skills and workforce shortages inspired the engagement of Beacon’s Real Futures Generation (RFG) approach. The pilot, involving the collaboration of Tasmanian Department of Education, Early Childhood Australia, and several ECEC centres, took a co-ordinated industry approach based on its Work Preparation Funnel approach. The pilot targeted Year 10-12 students, promoted ECEC career opportunities, and provided several school-based traineeships which involved undertaking a Certificate III in ECEC, employment at an ECEC centre and completion of a secondary school education. The traineeships were aligned to the Australian School-based Apprenticeships (ASBAs) system.

Table 7.2. ECEC pilot components

ECEC Career Awareness Program (CAP)	2-day workshop marketed to all Government High Schools (65 schools) – 20 schools were invited to participate. CAP emphasised ECEC career information and employment opportunities including ASBAs, a literacy and numeracy assessment, and offered 1-day work experience at an ECEC centre.
Parent/student information ECEC career sessions	Critical to this whole of community approach, students and their parents are invited to participate so that an encouraging and informed environment can be created. This contributes to student capacity to engage more meaningfully in ECEC employment and/or traineeships.
Industry Site Tours	Built upon its High Impact Program (HIP) knowledge, work readiness skills are taught to enable active participation by students in future ECEC work experience placements/ traineeships and job application processes.
Business Blackboards	Students who register for the Prepare for Work session are invited to apply for a one-week ECEC work placement. This is undertaken at a participating ECEC centre and is completed during the school term.
ECEC ASBA applications	The co-developed RFG approach leads to a rise in quality and volume of ASBAs received by the ECEC sector.

Note: ECEC pilot details as described to the author in conversation with Beacon. One of the participating ECEC organisations also detail the initiative

Source: Beacon Foundation (2014), Beacon Foundation Real Futures Generation Project; Goodstart Early Learning (2017), *Creating pathways to success through school-based apprenticeships*, <https://www.goodstart.org.au/news-and-advice/April-2017/Creating-pathways-to-success-through-school-based> (accessed on 23 May 2018).

High Impact Programs (Tasmania, 2017)

During 2017, 953 students and 77 educators from Tasmanian secondary schools worked with participants from 254 businesses. Educators and businesses reported support for the value of the programme and its alignment with education and labour market needs, and relevance for students as they look to enter the world of work. Similarly, when students were asked "How valuable was today's programme for you?" 21% (195 students) elected to describe it as life-changing, and 77% (716) said it was valuable.

HIP value in focus: Public sector job creation for young Tasmanians

In 2016, 80 students across three Tasmanian secondary schools engaged in work readiness development sessions with the support of a Foundation partner, MyState. In a related development, the Head of the State Service in Tasmania approved 20 school-based apprenticeships or traineeships across its own departments and agencies. This commitment will be realised in partnership with Beacon and the Tasmanian Department of Education and provide employment and learning pathways within the Tasmanian State Service agencies via the Australian school-based apprenticeship (ASBA) system.

MyRoad - Tasmania, August – December 2017

During 2017, MyRoad engaged 326 students from Tasmanian secondary schools, and 95 mentors from across 39 businesses based in Tasmania. After their MyRoad sessions, participating students are asked for their feedback. When asked *How valuable was today's programme for you?* 79% (234 students) said it was *valuable*, with a further 7% (23 students) describing it as *life-changing*.

MyRoad via eBeacon value in focus: Using technology to expanding programme reach.

MyRoad is designed for young women in their senior years of secondary school. The programme is built upon the understanding that mentoring is a contributing factor for young people and their future engagement in education and employment, in particular, where young people are at risk of disengagement (Bruce and Bridgeland, 2014^[95]). Using video chat technology, Beacon facilitates and enables the engagement of industry mentors and their connection with young people. More than a mentor-matching service, structured learning models designed to develop key school transition skills are followed.

Lessons Learned

Lessons developed from Beacon's programme include: engagement with whole of family/community; pedagogical and educational expertise are critical; active creation of first-job opportunities is the role of the whole community; and planning for knowledge translation is central for programme sustainability and replication. With all of this in mind, The Beacon Foundation along with its Collective Ed partners is pursuing a model, which brings Tasmanian students and schools, their community and families, and businesses and employers more closely aligned in co-building their futures of work and education.

Beacon places great emphasis on the commitment and openness demonstrated by participating schools as they come on board with the initiative. This case study was developed shortly after its formal Collective Ed announcement in November 2017, which celebrated the participation of the following Tasmania public-sector schools: Port Dalrymple School; Deloraine High School; and Sorell High School. These schools joined the three pilot schools: Ulverstone High School, Jordan River Learning Federation and Bayview Secondary College.

Ways to enable systems change thinking and participation

Leverage credibility to secure financial sustainability

Longer-term commitment by funders, stakeholders, community, schools and/or businesses is always advantageous. This time allows space for approach consistency, and therefore truer tests of concept, design and implementation. To operate in this strategic manner is not easy, especially for not-for-profits and/or charity organisations where funding scarcity and operational commitments can divert critical resources and intelligence. Consolidation of existing knowledge, relationships and partnerships strengthens credibility and capacity to engage would-be funders and advocates. A clear sense of one's value, practise, and approach is paramount – know who you are and what you are about.

The right kind of funder matters – look beyond the monetary value

The Paul Ramsay Foundation, and the Tasmanian Government Departments of Education and Training and State Growth, fund the Collective Ed initiative. Both the value and duration of the funding commitment is remarkable with a total allocation of \$15 million being made available to the Beacon Foundation from 2017-2021. All partnership actors commit to participation across the initiatives various phases, and there is a real acceptance that *all* partners are involved in the reshaping of this complex, interwoven system. There is a critical openness and willingness to reimagine a collective future built upon collective wisdom and aspiration.

Nothing can be achieved when goals are framed in a vacuum

Improved Year 12 attainment is a principal outcome goal, but this is built within a logic that educational, socio-economic and employment outcomes are inextricably linked. Importantly all actors express a willingness to co-create knowledge to enable real system mobility and benefit felt by community and industry. To enhance the discipline of the initiative's learning approach, Beacon has also engaged expertise from Tasmania's tertiary sector and specialists in developmental evaluation and collaboration to create an embedded monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting approach. The initiative design represents great practise in re-imagining education and economic policy, and as Beacon's CEO, Scott Harris puts it "educating differently".

Change is political, it requires commitment to people.

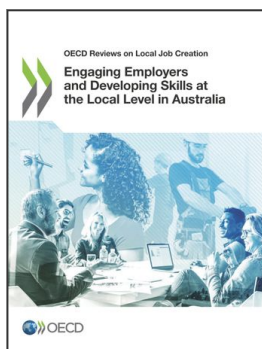
You could say the climate was 'just right'. Beacon had the credibility, The Paul Ramsay Foundation had the funding commitment, and the Tasmanian government had a vision for a real change through strong leadership at the political and departmental level. Collective Ed seeks to act as a facilitator of systems change, rather than adopt the role of system leader or manager. Data generated, lessons learned and relationships developed will all be central to giving this transformed system the licence to operate.

Leverage the collective commitment – and resist the seduction of quick wins

For a sustainable system to prevail, the indicators of success must continue to communicate to the hearts and minds as well as the balance sheets of participating partners. The momentum built by the system-change mind-set is central to sustaining the energy and commitment of its participants, especially when the process of change can present challenges and obstacles. The obvious temptation to achieve some 'quick wins' should be satisfied with the assurance of regular learning opportunities. It needs to be about 'holding onto the momentum, and holding onto the systems change commitment'. This is not easy – it requires sharp, collaborative thinking and adaptive leadership that is comfortable and effective in an environment that is full of ambiguity and demands agility of thought and action. Above all, it relies on trust.

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