



Department of
Education

Shaping the future

Pathways to Post-School Success

Environmental scan – final report

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Purpose

On 21 June 2023, the Cook Government launched the [Pathways to Post-School Success](#) (PPSS) review of senior secondary school pathways in a bid to ensure all Western Australian (WA) students can reach their full potential through their post-school study, training, or employment pursuits.

The Minister for Education, Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA, announced that the review would explore whether current pathway options effectively prepare students for the full range of further study, training, and work options available to them. It will also investigate whether current certification and university entry requirements assist students to make the best study choices, as well as identify the barriers to students being able to access equitable pathways.

The review concludes by the end of February 2024, at which point a final report, including the review's advice, recommendations and options, will be provided to the Minister.

To support this review, the PPSS Secretariat conducted an environmental scan between 1 May and 21 September 2023. The PPSS Secretariat is sincerely thankful for the generous contributions to the environmental scan. More than 1600 stakeholders participated in the environmental scan via online surveys and 95 consultation events. Feedback was received from a broad range of stakeholders, including school leaders, school teachers, students, parents, equity groups, organisations, higher education providers, employers, school partnering organisations, associations, unions, industry, and community members, representing all WA education regions, schooling systems and sectors. We are grateful for the passionate, constructive, and informative insights shared by all with a close connection to the WA education system.

This environmental scan report aims to capture what we have heard as the barriers, innovative strategies, and considerations to providing successful pathways to all students across our diverse state of WA.

Furthermore, the environmental scan will inform the Expert Panel and Advisory Committee in developing the PPSS final report and its recommendations. It is envisaged that by capturing the perspectives and feedback from stakeholders and representative groups, the panel and committee can better consider who to target for further consultation. The PPSS Secretariat acknowledges that some of the considerations outlined in this report are already underway in the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) refresh and supports its progression as a priority.

In conducting this environmental scan, strong consideration was given to exploring effective pathways for all students, and in particular, developing equitable pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from rural and remote areas, students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, students with disability, and other students at risk of not making a successful transition from school.

The environmental scan respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which West Australians live, work and study, and pays respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. Australia's First Nations peoples are the custodians of the world's oldest continuous cultures of learning and the passing down of knowledge.

Background

Unquestionably the WA senior secondary school system is a good system with flexibility, rigour, portability, and transparency. Like our most successful schools across all sectors, WA's school system is reflective and always striving to be better. Our system and sectors continually seek ways to improve and learn so that our students will leave school better prepared for a successful future in an ever-changing environment.

As WA's economy and society evolve rapidly, our senior secondary education system must be capable of adapting to deliver new knowledge and capability and help to address complex generational challenges. Few would argue that senior secondary students transitioning to work, higher education or training today, and in the future, will need a different range of attributes and skills compared to the generations that preceded them. The economic needs of the future will demand a workforce with the skills and ability to understand concepts, work effectively in teams, collaborate, communicate, problem solve, and think creatively and critically, alongside core foundation skills in literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

Senior secondary education plays a critical role in helping to develop and realise every student's unique aspirations and prepare them for the challenges of our modern world. We remain cognisant that our senior secondary students will form our state's future workforce and that among them are the future leaders of organisations, agencies and industries. To this end, the role of our state's education system, across all sectors, should strive to give every senior secondary student the best possible opportunities for future success and provide pathways that will enable them to fulfil their potential.

The function and purpose of senior secondary schooling are broad. The graduates of secondary school, and those who leave school before the end of Year 12, do not just need to be employable, they need to have the skills and knowledge to individually flourish and collectively contribute to a more functional economy and healthier society. Schools across WA, in all regions, continue to make a fundamental contribution to a young person's development and to the development of our state's society and economy. Furthermore, our schools are a major contributor to the state's prosperity and growth as a fair and inclusive society by promoting the wellbeing, engagement, inclusion, and participation of all young people.

Whilst the current education provision in WA provides great flexibility for students transitioning to higher education or employment, there remains a perception of seemingly less certainty, connectedness, and clarity about the knowledge and skills required to make those transitions with success.

This environmental scan endeavours to inform the broader PPSS review. The review strives to explore options that will embed a more sustainable connectivity between WA's schooling system and further education, work, and training needs. It aims to develop a cross-sectoral, interagency, shared, long-term commitment to improve the way schools, industries, organisations, and agencies work together to address major challenges and provide opportunities and pathways to success for all children. To support the review, online surveys and a series of consultation events were set up as part of the environmental scan to allow a broad range of stakeholders to have input into identifying the challenges, innovations, and potential solutions for better post-school transition outcomes for all young people. This report is the culmination of the feedback provided through the online surveys and various consultation events.

Methodology and focus

Between 1 May and 21 September 2023, an environmental scan was undertaken by the PPSS Secretariat with the aim to capture input and voices from diverse groups of stakeholders across all education regions in WA.

The feedback provided through the online surveys and comprehensive series of consultation events inform this paper and will provide the state government, Expert Panel, and Advisory Committee with advice on the barriers, innovative strategies, and considerations to providing successful pathways to all WA senior secondary students across the public, Catholic and independent sectors.

The focus of the environmental scan was to gather information that could assist the panel and committee in considering recommendations on reform options for pathways from senior secondary school that support all students to fulfil their learning potential and transition into further education, training and/or work.

In undertaking the environmental scan, consideration was given to:

- ensuring school leaders, school teachers, students, parents, equity groups, organisations, higher education providers, employers, school partnering organisations, associations, unions, industry, and community members were consulted and provided with a voice. Where possible, the consultation events were conducted face-to-face in the education regions and school communities
- investigating the barriers to students' ability to access equitable pathways, particularly for students from rural and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from CALD backgrounds, students with disability, and potential early school leavers
- inclusive and innovative practices catering for young people and the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from rural and remote areas, students from CALD backgrounds, students with disability, and other students at risk to support successful transition from school to further education, training and/or work
- emerging senior secondary practices in WA and in other states in Australia
- the needs of higher education, vocational education and training, employers and communities.

Summary of consultation

More than 1600 stakeholders were engaged via online surveys and 95 consultation events. The majority of these consultations were held face-to-face in locations across all 8 WA education regions.

Consultation events

95 consultation events were conducted, including:

- 2 advisory council meetings – Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) and the WA Higher Education Council (WAHEC)
- 3 education forums with school and system leaders
- 7 workshops with principals from a range of school contexts
- 8 workshops with union and association representatives
- 9 community workshops, with representation from Aboriginal community leaders, disability service providers, local government, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and training organisations, universities, youth support groups, and industry leaders
- 29 school community consultations, each involving meetings with representation from staff, students, parents, equity groups, and community members
- 37 meetings with a broad range of stakeholder groups, including unions and associations, universities, disability, and industry.

Online survey

The following stakeholders were invited to provide feedback via an online survey:

- Department of Education central and regional office staff
- the Executive Directors of Catholic Education WA (CEWA) and the Association of Independent Schools of WA (AISWA)
- unions and associations representing the 3 schooling system/sectors
- representatives from WA universities – Curtin University, University of Notre Dame Australia, University of Western Australia, Edith Cowan University, and Murdoch University.

40 online survey responses have been received.

Key feedback themes from representative groups

- The review is considered by all stakeholder representative groups as very necessary, highly important, timely, and having the potential to significantly support senior secondary students and their meaningful transition beyond school.
- Quality delivery, successful transition, and work experience opportunities are significantly influenced by isolation, remoteness, and the number of senior secondary students within the school.
- There are diverse and conflicting definitions of what constitutes a successful post-school transition pathway.
- Whilst the current system, curriculum, and WACE have significant strengths and flexibilities, there is still a request from key stakeholder groups for even greater flexibilities to address the different and changing needs of the state, young people, families, and community.
- There are concerns regarding the growing decline in Year 12 students attaining an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), and the impact this may have on the state, future workforce, and economy.
- There are many contributing factors that require further analysis and consideration in relation to the reduction in WA's ATAR student participation rates, including:
 - increased proportion of the population not progressing to Year 12
 - uptake of students undertaking in-school enabling programs
 - over acknowledgment of median ATAR performance as a school success measure
 - a competitive market for students to transition from school directly to trades/industry
 - a range of alternative post-school pathways, including alternative entry to university
 - lack of regional tertiary provision
 - costs of tertiary education
 - ATAR curriculum content
 - General courses selected and recommended to enable students to achieve a WACE
 - teacher capacity and high staff turnover affecting delivery
 - limitations of school resourcing
 - peer pressure, mental health, and anxiety around examinations
 - clarity, coordination, and timeliness of university career pathways information.
- There is a need for greater recognition of vulnerable students and for greater differentiated and flexible assessment and curriculum delivery to enhance engagement, improve opportunities, and raise attainment levels for these young people.
- There is a desire for SCSA to further explore and recognise a range of contemporary and emerging work capabilities (competencies, essential skills, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills, soft skills, marketable skills, and transferable skills) that are transparent, fair, equitable, and measurable.
- There is a need for a stronger alignment and integration between academic and vocational pathways undertaken during senior secondary years.
- To enable successful transition pathways, all stakeholder groups highlighted the importance of focusing on quality teaching and learning and foundation skills attainment of literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy in the early years and throughout Kindergarten to Year 12.
- There is a need to continue to collaboratively build partnerships and information sharing between organisations, higher education providers, agencies, schools, and industry to make transitions more purposeful, sustainable, seamless, successful, and meaningful.
- Career and higher education pathways need to be more informed by industry and higher education providers and linked to employability and state need.
- Many stakeholder groups request enhanced and centralised career pathway information, resourcing, and support. This includes information that is differentiated for regions, parents, students, teachers, and equity groups to inform choice, knowledge and skills requirements, and pathways options.

- To ensure equity in higher education in WA, the state needs to pursue mechanisms that will increase participation from non-traditional groups, especially in regional WA and from lower socio-economic groups.
- University in-school enabling programs (eg. UniReady, Uni Prep, FlexiTrack High) are considered by many schools, parents, and students as offering flexibilities, rigorous curriculum, and project-based quality learning opportunities. However, there are clear concerns about the impact these programs are having on ATAR participation, breadth of curriculum delivery, their exclusivity to a specific university, parity, and if they are sufficiently supporting equity groups.
- Whilst many parents and students report that they highly value early offers, there are arguments on the timing and conditions of the offer, the accuracy of the predictor, and if the offers should follow completion of the senior secondary certificate to ensure students acquire the full breadth and depth of learning outcomes.
- There needs to be more consistent nomenclature and clarity around early offers, how and when they are made, and how they can be utilised to better promote learning.
- Many consider a need for a greater regional presence, more flexible online delivery, and more hybridised service provision by WA universities. This is limiting academic extension, participation, and the viability of tertiary pathways in certain regions.
- Wellbeing has a significant impact on a student's academic outcome. Wellbeing is considered a desired outcome of schooling, a means of improving learning, and influential in a young person's subject selection and pathway choice.
- Any recommendation in the review needs to consider the interplay between building academic rigour and work readiness, ensuring fairness, equity, transparency, flexibility and differentiation, and the resulting impact on red-tape and workload.
- Enhancing digital access and quality digital resources, and providing more flexible digital and virtual classroom delivery is vital to supporting certain equity groups in making meaningful transitions to pathways beyond school.
- The School of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE) and Catholic Education WA's Virtual Schools Network (ViSN) are considered by many students and schools as viable and flexible delivery alternatives. However, there are clear barriers and limitations that these digital platforms need to overcome to ensure pathways to success for all students, so they allow greater and more equitable access to certificates and ATAR courses.
- Aspects of the current senior secondary curriculum are lacking practical application, flexibilities, real-world learning opportunities, differentiation, and relevance. These were stated as reasons why many young people are disengaged, absent or not selecting certain pathways.
- There is a need to explore greater flexibilities and opportunities for young people and equity groups to pursue university academic extension offerings and micro-credential courses whilst at school.
- Compulsory examinations for ATAR courses and their interplay on anxiety, wellbeing, and mental health are limiting student choice and course selection.
- Many stakeholders state there is too much pressure and focus on students to achieve a rank over deeper learning and understanding.
- Whilst ATAR is a transparent tool used to compare the academic results of students for the purpose of tertiary selection, there is clearly a desire from all consulted stakeholder groups for the Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) to consider an evolution in its role and how an ATAR rank in WA is calculated, and for SCSA to continue to undertake its refreshment of the WACE as a priority.

Equity for excellence

Preconditions for success

- A systemic approach to the development of inclusive learning, cultures, and environments in education facilities accessed by different equity groups to ensure the value and uniqueness of individual equity groups is maintained.
- An overarching position statement and strategy on diversity and inclusion.
- Testing mechanisms that are culturally appropriate, inclusive, and equitable, and do not unfairly limit pathway options for senior secondary students.
- A built capacity of teachers, school support staff, leaders, TAFE lecturers, and other agencies around inclusive education and trauma-informed practice.
- A funding mechanism that addresses the difficulty for certain equity cohorts, and cohorts in certain locations, to get assessments, with the potential to align to other mechanisms e.g. the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data.

Stakeholder considerations

Data collection, measurement, and reporting

- Develop more centralised, consistent, and equitable data collection for students with disability and students in education support settings.
- Develop more common metrics to measure the progress and improvement of students with disability.
- Develop and report transparent and reliable indicators to measure inclusive education practices.

Course offerings, capabilities, and certification

- Explore mechanisms for greater flexibility in WACE that:
 - provides students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and students from CALD backgrounds with modifications and opportunities to demonstrate the minimum literacy and numeracy standard
 - enables completion of a broader range of courses and vocational opportunities that are meaningful and respectful of students' cultural identity and uniqueness.
- Investigate mechanisms to recognise capabilities and competencies for students with disabilities and other equity groups.
- Explore how on-country, lore, leadership, ways of doing and being, and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural experiences and capabilities are formally endorsed and recognised.
- Investigate how other alternative education programs can be recognised and endorsed e.g Big Picture, International Baccalaureate.
- Explore the creation of life skills courses specifically designed for certain students with disability, with guidelines and support for school-based assessments.
- Greater communication and development of TAFE courses and certificates designed for vulnerable and at-risk students, including students with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students e.g Cert 1.
- Consider posting hardcopy WACE certificates to certain disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Pathway and transition support

- Explore how a whole of system, centrally managed, comprehensive career guidance digital platform could be developed and implemented for students from Kindergarten to Year 12 and designed for students, caregivers, and teachers, with an initial focus on equity group access.
- Review how all senior secondary students with certain disabilities are placed on a documented and individualised post-school transition plan.

- Review the TISC fee-for-entry (application fee) and the barriers this may create for certain equity groups and investigate how other jurisdictions' tertiary admissions centres charge for applications.

Professional capability

- Discuss with WA universities the potential for mandated inclusive education content to be incorporated into initial teacher education (ITE) programs.
- Explore opportunities for student teachers to have greater exposure to inclusive education settings during the ITE practicum.
- Enhance professional learning for TAFE and industry to better support students with disability to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to enable appropriate access.

Funding support

- Investigate more equitable needs-based resourcing for students with disability, considering the difficulty of accessing assessments in regional and remote locations.
- Develop resources to better support parents of students with disability to navigate and access National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) funding.
- Investigate the establishment of more Alternative Learning Settings in regional areas.

Building vocational skills and partnerships

Stakeholder considerations

Vocational education and training (VET) certification and course offerings

- Review the relevance, breadth, and quality of vocational education certificates and initiatives made available to senior secondary students.
- Investigate the suitability, readiness, and conditions necessary for senior secondary students to undertake Cert IV and consider if diplomas are suitable for senior secondary delivery.
- Investigate how the WA senior secondary certificate can be more integrated with VET to influence students to develop both academic and practical skills.
- Explore greater flexibilities and credentialing for at-risk students who are not meeting externally measured literacy and numeracy standards so they can still access vocational qualifications offered by TAFE and private registered training organisations (RTOs).
- Review the potential for SCSA to accredit partially completed vocational learning based on nominal hour completions, in recognition of student transience.
- Consider embedding the career education curriculum into each learning area as a general capability.

Equitable access

- Review VET funding mechanisms to support more equitable access to VET across all delivery options, with particular consideration for schools with low senior secondary numbers and priority equity groups.
- Explore more inclusive ways to support students with disability to gain access to RTOs, including potentially offering skills sets rather than full qualifications.
- Consider strengthening the opportunity and resourcing (fee-for-service) for vulnerable students, students with disability, and disadvantaged groups to gain access to qualification opportunities delivered outside of school (private RTOs/SIDE/TAFE) and gain Australian Qualifications Framework certification and WACE.
- Consider mechanisms to address the digital divide in certain schools and further enhance SIDE/ViSN, virtual, and remote e-learning delivery and support for VET secondary courses and RTO credentialing.
- Review the level of funding, support, and assistance provided by TAFE to support students to meet the literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy proficiency standards.

Facilities

- Explore the concepts of regional school-age training facilities and a vocational university specifically focused on state vocational needs.
- Review how trade training facilities are operating in schools and explore how they can be more effectively utilised to offer successful pathways.

Professional capability and capacity

- Consider greater flexibilities to support teachers and teachers with limited authority to teach to sustainably deliver vocational courses and recognise their prior qualifications and learning.
- Review the operational and administrative burden on school staff in delivering vocational courses.
- Develop professional learning for external trainers (TAFE and private) to support their training of school-aged students, including neurodiverse students with or without diagnosed disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from CALD backgrounds, and disengaged students.

Cross-agency partnerships and collaboration

- Explore how TAFEs and other VET providers can further develop flexibilities with schools so that students are less restricted by the Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (OLNA) achievement criteria.
- Consider establishing a broad cross-agency advisory group informed by universities, organisations, SCSA, TISC, agencies, industry and school sectors to provide ongoing advice to the Minister on senior secondary school pathways.
- Review mechanisms to ensure better coordination of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships linked to industry and the future needs of the state.
- Investigate mechanisms for greater alignment and strategic partnering between SCSA, TISC, industry, universities, TAFE, RTOs, and the 3 schooling sectors, to support employers and organisations to have a more influential role in designing and planning relevant educational and training courses.
- Explore how to establish clearer and more visible pathways between training and university to enable students to keep their options open and flexible as they transition between work and higher education.

Universities as learning partners

Stakeholder considerations

Regional and remote support

- Investigate how hybrid models of university delivery in regional areas could improve access, delivery, support, and success.
- Explore how to enhance delivery of more Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and micro-credentiallling courses in regional and remote areas.
- Partner with universities to develop more quality online products, particularly around areas of local need, with potential for wraparound support from regional university centres.
- Consideration of mechanisms to support universities to enable practical components of laboratory work to be developed into quality online learning platforms and/or block release delivery at regional residential colleges.
- Explore mechanisms to incentivise and encourage greater WA university regional presence, partnerships, and senior secondary student access, including:
 - development of specific programs to strengthen foundation skills of senior secondary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disability
 - greater partnering between universities, regional university centres, and schools to further explore how to improve course availability and access for regional study e.g. Bachelor of Education (Secondary Education) in STEM teaching areas, Allied Health, and models that assist WA regions to further develop their workforce.

Support for equity groups

- Review how universities can be supported to offer more scholarships and incentives for vulnerable groups to engage in tertiary pathways.
- Explore how micro-credentiallling and in-school university course partnerships can be further extended and offered to more students who are ready to engage and those students with equity group backgrounds.
- Consider mechanisms that enable students from equity groups to engage with universities and experience campus life.
- Discuss with universities the potential for mandated inclusive education courses and more inclusive practicum experiences to be incorporated into ITE.

Cross-agency partnerships and collaboration

- Establish stronger partnerships between universities and schools to ensure greater longitudinal analysis, transparency and data sharing to alleviate some of the ongoing anecdotal concerns about early offers and in-school enabling programs and improve pathway options and success.
- Explore implementation of a more universal approach by universities that provides greater parity and consistency between the universities and in-school enabling programs.
- Greater partnering, communication and collaboration between school systems, universities, TAFEs, SCSA, TISC, industry, and the state to understand and respond to the short- and long-term economic demands.
- Greater transparency and data sharing between universities, schools, TISC, and SCSA to further explore how different transition pathways into university lead to success and ongoing student performance.
- Explore learnings from the design and structure of university in-school enabling courses, including their project style of learning and assessment flexibility.
- Explore universities placing value (accreditation) on a student's high performance in ATAR Year 12 courses as equivalent to a first-year university course. This could increase academic rigour and ATAR participation.

- Seek reassurances from WA universities as to how in-school enabling programs might change over time as economic drivers for the universities change for domestic student placements.
- Investigate how WA universities can partner to ensure consistency and clarity around the conditions of early offers and use early offers to promote learning throughout Years 11 and 12.

Supporting our schools with small senior secondary numbers

Stakeholder considerations

- Review resourcing of schools with small senior secondary numbers to ensure students are provided access to a broad range of pathways and opportunities.
- Explore how regional education offices and authorities can develop and support partnerships with industry, TAFE, and local employers to enable senior secondary students to experience viable local career pathways.

Employable, adaptable, lifelong learners

Stakeholder considerations

- Explore how WA education system/sectors can better assess, capture, and communicate general capabilities, employability skills, soft skills, and work readiness capabilities.
- Conduct a review of assessment requirements across Years 7 to 12 to further support and develop a culture of motivation, achievement and resilience.
- Investigate mechanisms to provide greater clarity, consistency, and support to strengthen foundation skills development from Kindergarten to Year 12.
- Review the WA senior secondary curriculum and courses to ensure currency, relevance, and applicability.

A rank that measures more

Stakeholder considerations

- Review the nomenclature of ATAR courses to provide greater clarity and consistency with other Australian jurisdictions.
- Consider how the completion of ATAR courses can be better encouraged and rewarded through the WACE.
- Review how the ATAR rank is calculated to be more inclusive, flexible, and incorporates certificates and other skills, whilst still maintaining assessment transparency and fairness.
- Examine the difference between ATAR and general English subjects and evaluate whether ATAR English develops skills that are relevant to university study.
- Consider modifying the WACE to be more inclusive of diversity, and to provide greater flexibility and equity for all students, so that it provides a broader recognition of what a young person has achieved as a result of their education.
- Consider undertaking a comprehensive jurisdictional review into senior secondary certificate reforms.

Commonalities between innovative pathway initiatives

The school-based programs and initiatives observed in the environmental scan that were identified as effectively preparing students for further study, training, and work, shared the following commonalities:

- **Contextualised** to student and community needs
- Strived to **optimise attendance**
- **Engagement** as a foundation
- **Promoted learning** as core
- **Accountable, equitable and flexible**
- Strongly **partnered** with industry and/or other schools, organisations and agencies
- **Developed staff and teacher** capabilities and capacity
- Required **additional resourcing** (human, financial, time, and space)
- **Differentiated** outcomes specific to the student
- Created a sense of student **belonging, purpose, and agency**

Questions from the national stage

Clearly, schools across Australia are facing increasing challenges as they strive to better prepare their students and young people for the future. Concurrently, large numbers of Australian students are performing and participating below expectations throughout their senior secondary schooling years. Sadly, some equity groups are significantly over-represented as disengaged and under-performing across school sectors. These groups include students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students living in rural and remote areas, students with disability, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Getting the best out of our young people in WA leads to significant economic benefits for our state. Ensuring, however, that our education system in WA prepares all young people for the future, independent of postcode or background, goes beyond an economic imperative.

Questions are being asked by parents, students, school teachers, school leaders, institutions, industries, government, and agencies at the local level and nationally:

1. What is the **purpose** of senior secondary schooling?
2. What is a **successful outcome** of senior secondary schooling?
3. Are our senior secondary schools and schools with senior secondary students adequately preparing our young people for the **diverse pathways of the future**?
4. How much focus should be placed on academic performance, vocational skills attainment and other **capabilities and competencies** within senior secondary schools?
5. Are we teaching, assessing, capturing, and recording the essential knowledge, skills and values needed for successful transition to work, higher education, lifelong learning and **life beyond school for all students**?
6. What regard should be given, and how should we assess and report, other **skills and attributes** that are perceived by employers and others as important to success?
7. Are students and their families sufficiently empowered and **informed** to make wise pathway and study course decisions and to select **appropriate future learning pathways**?
8. Could the provision of **career development information** in schools be enhanced and commence earlier in the primary years?
9. Are students sufficiently **aware** of the **specific needs of career opportunities** across educational regions and how they may be **matched** to different pathways?
10. What considerations and flexibilities could be afforded to **vulnerable and disadvantaged groups** so we better serve those students and enhance their agency, engagement and attainment in senior secondary schooling and enable successful transition to work, higher education or training?
11. If attendance is a symptom of engagement, what role does **curriculum planning** and **flexible pathways** play in improving student engagement?
12. Does our schooling system need to provide more **hands-on learning and enhanced flexibilities** to improve attendance and engagement?
13. Could a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education be utilised to more effectively **communicate** and **broadly recognise skills** that are suited to work, employment and university access and success?
14. Could greater **flexibilities** be incorporated into how a **Senior Secondary Certificate of Education** is achieved or an **ATAR** measured?

Conclusion

This scan highlights the barriers and innovations across schools that are restricting, inhibiting, and supporting effective pathways from school to further education, training, and/or work.

Any recommendations in the Pathways to Post-School Success review will need to have at its core the purpose of senior secondary schooling and the promotion of deeper learning.

The purpose of senior secondary schooling varies from one country to another, but it generally serves the following 5 key priorities:

1. **Education:** Senior secondary schooling provides students with a more in-depth and specialised education covering a wide range of subjects and topics to prepare students for higher education or the workforce. To prepare young people for higher education, the senior secondary curriculum often includes advanced courses (ATAR) and standardised tests to help students qualify for higher education institutions.
2. **Skill development:** Senior secondary schooling focuses on developing essential knowledge and skills, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and research skills. These skills are valuable for both further education and future careers and employment in the workforce.
3. **Social development:** Senior secondary schooling needs to be a place where students continue to develop socially, form friendships, learn to work in groups, and participate in extracurricular activities. This is a very important stage for a young person's personal growth and development of agency.
4. **Career readiness:** For all students, including those pursuing higher education, senior secondary schooling needs to consider how it provides vocational training and practical skills to prepare them for the workforce or technical careers.
5. **Active citizenship, life skills, and exploration of interests:** Senior secondary schooling needs to expose young people to civics, ethics, and life skills to help them become responsible and informed citizens, as well as allowing them to explore their interests through a variety of elective courses and extracurricular activities, helping them discover their passions, potential career paths, and life beyond school.

Overall, any recommendation of the review needs to be mindful of senior secondary schooling's purpose to equip students with the essential knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to succeed in their future endeavours, whether that be in higher education or the workforce.

Ensuring that learning and growth is maximised throughout senior secondary schooling is central to any education system. However, it must also acknowledge that students will not only have different starting points, trajectories, and aspirations; but also have a range of skills and attributes that reflect their diversity and uniqueness.

Students' attendance and engagement in the senior secondary years is vital to ensuring any transition pathway. To this end, enhancing flexibility and relevance of learning is essential. Understanding the barriers and the innovations is important to understanding what is blocking success, not only for vulnerable groups but for all students. However, identifying approaches and solutions that can be successfully implemented in practice by all schools, remains the challenge. Any recommendations made need to also be mindful of the importance of system transparency and integrity, to ensure that WA's senior secondary schooling remains impactful and sustainable into the future.

Having a deep understanding of the strengths, blockers, barriers, and drivers of success of the current WA senior secondary education system is vital to the review. As is an

understanding that enabling a system that is equitable for all is an extremely complex process.

It is imperative that we collectively and collaboratively explore new approaches, innovative ideas, and initiatives to improve quality learning opportunities for all WA's young people, regardless of their background and/or location.

Clearly, good intentions have always been in existence in WA's educational bodies and institutions; however, evidence shows it is not enough to simply identify effective education initiatives and bespoke them to an existing system. It requires a deep understanding of the interplay between the parts and a combination of contextual knowledge, technical expertise, operational readiness, broader long term political strategy, interagency collaboration, adaptability and flexibility, and a shared understanding of when and how to scale implementation.

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Appendix A: Terms of Reference

Pathways to Post-School Success

A comprehensive review to provide the Western Australian State Government with advice, recommendations and options to strengthen pathways from secondary school so all students can fulfil their learning potential and transition into further education, training and/or work.

Terms of Reference

Objectives

The review will:

- explore the efficacy of pathways into and beyond secondary school in preparing young people for further education, training and/or work
- investigate whether current certification and university entry requirements assist students to make the study choices that are right for them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to access the most appropriate pathways into further education, training and/or work
- investigate barriers to students being able to access equitable pathways, particularly for students from rural and remote areas, Aboriginal students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability and potential early school leavers.

In undertaking the review and developing options and recommendations, consideration should be given to:

- applications of potential pathways across all schooling sectors in WA, including public, Catholic and independent schools
- the needs of higher education, vocational education and training, employers and communities
- emerging practices in WA (and elsewhere), including credentialing approaches
- inclusive practices and the particular needs of Aboriginal students, those from rural and remote areas, students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with a disability and other students at risk of not making a successful transition from school to further education, training and/or work
- promising, innovative and/or ambitious practices in other jurisdictions in Australia and beyond
- future proofing approaches given wider and national conversations about the future of ATAR
- practicalities and implementation approaches for any relevant reform.

At its conclusion, the review will provide a final list of recommended options and potential timelines for implementation.

Methodology

The review will undertake a two-stage consultation process:

- an open-ended public consultation process, which will seek to clarify and define the problem and identify potential reform options
- a more targeted consultation process with experts and key stakeholders on specific reform options, including determination of preferred approaches.

Structure

The review will be undertaken through, and comprised of, three core components:

- a small expert panel that will steer the review and endorse its findings and recommended options
- a larger advisory committee comprised of representatives of the key stakeholder groups, which will provide direction for the review and validate its findings and recommended options
- a secretariat that will manage the logistics of the review, including the consultation process, meetings and papers for the expert panel and the advisory committee, and delivery of the final report.

Timelines

The review will commence in April and conclude by the end of February 2024.

A final report including the review's advice, recommendations and options should be provided to the Minister for Education by 29 February 2024.

Appendix B: Comments by stakeholder representative groups

“We have a good system that caters for 80% but need greater flexibilities and to cater better for the other 20%. A system that is more flexible, relevant, engaging, equitable and considers mental health and wellbeing.”

Interagency and school representatives

“It is desirable for students to stay in Year 12 as long as they can.”

Interagency representatives

“Senior secondary schooling needs be set up for the 80% of students who are in them now; not for the 12% who were in them in the 1980s.”

School and interagency representatives

“Why can’t we have a system that credentials more of what a student does?”

School, student, parent, and industry representatives

“Why don’t we value on-country experience as a credentialled and endorsed skill?”

School and equity group representatives

“A ‘non-examinable’ subset within ATAR would allow for the students who just want to study a couple of ATAR courses to experience the appropriate level of challenge but without their performance in exams negatively impacting their peers.”

School representatives

“Is ATAR always the right path and what percentage of students should be on that path?”

“Social class should not be a metric, but it is!”

School and interagency representatives

“We need a system-plus approach. The system is working for the majority, but the plus needs to be resourced, partnered, flexible, interagency supported and framework.”

Interagency representatives

“Why are vocational pathways called alternative pathways? Why are they considered the poor cousin to ATAR?”

Student, parents, industry and equity group representatives

“What did we learn and implement from those national reports like Gonski and Shergold?”

School and interagency representatives

“Why are we so stuck in the industrial model of thinking and learning?”

School, parent, and industry representatives

“If STEM is truly valued why isn’t maths in some form compulsory in Year 11/12, like English?”

Parent, industry, and interagency representatives

“Secondary schooling needs to be less compartmentalised and more individualised.”

Student, parent, industry, and interagency representatives

“Engagement is a good and necessary start.” “Partnering is key to transitioning success.”
Student, school, parent, and industry representatives

“OLNA should not be a barrier to access different pathways.”
School, parent, and equity group representatives

“We need to improve academic outcomes not diminish them.”
“We need a differentiated approach to meaningful engagement.”
“Everything in successful transition starts with relationships; however, high staff turnover affects these relationships.”
Student, school, parent, and industry representatives

“We need to remove the barriers to access.”
“We need to extend career taster programs into younger years.”
School, student, parent, interagency, and industry representatives

“Policy changes are needed to simplify partnerships and engagement.”
School and industry representatives

“Good things happen in schools even when policies get in the way.”
Interagency and industry representatives

“We need meaningful access beyond SIDE delivery in our school.”
“Re-name ATAR. Only in WA is it a rank, a pathway and a course!”
“We need to focus on literacy, numeracy and foundation skills in early years. If the secondary students aren’t meeting the benchmark, where do we go?”
Parent, school, industry, and interagency representatives

“We need a more young-person-centred approach.”
Student, parent, school, industry, interagency, and equity group representatives

“Schools play a key role in developing our future workforce beyond the academic.”
Interagency and industry representatives

“Notice of Arrangements - what equity groups are represented in this group, we need to know more?”
School and interagency representatives

“Better and earlier taster programs by disadvantaged groups need to be provided and resourced.”
Schools, parents, equity groups, and interagency representatives

“We need to be mindful of broader National reviews, like the National Skills Agreement.”
Industry and interagency representatives

“This review has the potential to generate system level understanding, but it will require changes in: policy, resourcing, measurement, values, support, culture, customs and legislation.”
School, industry, parent, and interagency representatives

“We value retention over success.”

Parent and school representative

“Couldn’t the WACE be more flexible to recognise all students? One that measures mastery but also is differentiated and equitable.”

Student and parent representatives

“There seems to be a trust issue between what must be examined, what doesn’t need to be examined and what can be measured internally and validated.”

School, equity group, and parent representatives

“We need career pathway resources for parents.”

Equity group representatives

“There are many national tools like Inclusion Ed; myWAY Employability, Skillsroad, but they don’t seem to be known or used.”

Equity group representatives

“What is WACE certification beyond course grades?”

Interagency, equity group, school and parent representatives

“With the evolution of jobs being less linear, we need a greater understanding of options, choice, skills; greater exposure to skills and better measurement of diverse skills.”

Parents, school, and industry representative

“Staff turnover greatly affects our ability to offer pathways to success for all students.”

Students, parents, school, and industry representatives

“It needs to be simpler for the employer to engage with schools. We need to explain how, who does what, how does the employer benefit?”

School and industry representatives

“If you are going to build success for all, you need to focus on engagement, learning progression and wellbeing.”

Student, parent, school, equity group, interagency, and industry representatives

“We need earlier intervention around foundation skills imbedded in more alternative, hands on activities.”

Parent, school, and interagency representatives

“What is success and who measures it?”

Parents, school, equity groups, industry, tertiary, and interagency representatives

“We need to look how ATAR is structured in WA and how WACE can be achieved.”

School, parent, and industry representatives

“Improving ATAR in low socio-economic index (SEI) schools requires strong leadership culture and partnerships.”

Interagency representatives

“What is WACE intended to communicate?”

Student, parent, school, equity group, industry, and interagency representatives

“Our testing structures discriminate against disability, Aboriginality, low SEI families.”

Student, parent, equity group, school, and interagency representatives

“The UniReady course especially the English course is better than ATAR English and more relevant to university preparation.”

Student, parent, and school representatives

“The Enabling Program was my Uni pathway as there is no other real alternative to University here.”

Student, parent, and school representatives

“While WA universities are offering online options for courses such as Bachelors of Commerce, Primary and Early Childhood Teaching and Psychology, there are no science related courses. More WA university-generated online STEM offerings are needed in regional areas.”

Student, parent, and interagency representatives

“Why aren’t work capability and employability skills measured?”

School, parent and industry representatives

“The curriculum is crushing curiosity.”

Parent and school representatives

“We need a more meaningful and relevant curriculum.”

Parent, school, industry, and interagency representatives

“Measure, but also measure with equity.”

Parent and equity group representatives

“Partnering is key to success.”

School, parent, and industry representatives

“Why did we place so much importance on median ATAR?”

School and interagency representatives

“We need better metrics for low Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) schools and support for all schools to deliver ATAR.”

School and interagency representatives

“Access and delivery is an issue that needs to be resolved in certain areas.”

School, parent, and interagency representatives

“We can learn from other ways of doing.”

Industry and interagency representatives

“Enabling courses have impacted ATAR participation.”

School and interagency representatives

“So much more could be offered and achieved by students in regional WA, if there was a wider range of fully accessible courses provided by WA universities.”

Student, parent, school, and interagency representatives

“We need a more current and centralised career pathways resource that is focused on emerging needs and contextualised to communities.”

Parent and student representatives

“We seem to measure well if you are content ready; but not skills ready.”

Industry representatives

“We need a more inclusive, resourced education approach.”

Equity group representatives

“We seem to measure success on transition in, however, how successful do they transition out?”

School and interagency representatives

“We need initiatives and programs that cater for low attendance, disengagement, develop foundation skills, enhance parent involvement, provides meaningful practical and hands-on experiences and are valued by WACE.”

School, student, and parent representatives

“It seems when it comes to inclusion it is more ad-hoc and less systemic.”

Parent and equity group representatives

“Why do we silo learning in senior secondary school?”

Parent and industry representatives

“Any review should strive to shed light not heat.”

Interagency representatives

“We need greater understanding of reasons for disengagement and significant student drop off from Years 7-12.”

Interagency and school representatives

“More individualised, flexible and broader capabilities need to be recognised.”

School, student, parent, and equity group representatives

“The earlier the career exploration in-school and out of school the better.”

Student, parent, school, and equity group representatives

“We should credential skills that measure cognitive knowledge but also aptitude and work skills readiness.”

Industry representatives

“Why is VET an alternative pathway and not just a pathway? We need to try and remove the false dichotomy between VET and ATAR.”

School and industry representative

“Let’s start first with safe and available to learn.”

Equity group representatives

“What has the impact of universities enabling programs been on senior secondary education delivery, rigor, flexibility and how long will they exist for?”

School and interagency representatives

“Why is so there much emphasis on senior secondary education doing a job for TISC.”

School and parent representatives

“It depends on your view: are we supporting the system or supporting the customer – Concierge approach.”

Interagency and school representatives

“Why do students with disability have to meet the literacy/numeracy requirements to get a WACE. Couldn’t it be assessed in other flexible/equitable ways?”

Equity group and school representatives

“How can TISC be more relevant and purposeful, given alternative pathways?”

School representatives

“Why can’t VET be used for a combined score for ATAR?”

Student, parent, and school representatives

“Are there other ways to evidence literacy and numeracy attainment other than OLNA for equity groups?”

Equity group representative

“With the evolution of jobs being less linear we need a greater understanding of options, choice, skills; greater exposure to skills and better measurement of diverse skills.”

Industry and school representatives

“Why can’t on-country and cultural activities be recognised as endorsed programs.”

School and equity group representatives

“We need more and earlier ATAR career course counselling and more resources so teachers can deliver it and stay.”

Student and parent representatives

“It needs to be simpler for the employer to engage. Explain how, who does what and how does the employer benefit.”

School and industry representatives

“OLNA is a barrier for Aboriginal students and students with disabilities.”

Equity group representatives

“We need better and more consistent data collection for students with disabilities to measure progress and performance to assist pathway transition and choice.”

School, parent, and equity group representatives

“If you are going to build success for all you need to focus on engagement, learning progression and wellbeing.”

Student, parent, school, equity group, interagency, and industry representatives

“Parents need to be given induction earlier into ATAR as a viable pathway.”

School and parent representatives

“We need broader recognition by SCSA and more endorsed programs for WACE points.”

School and parent representatives

“We need more alternative learning settings in regional areas.”

School and parent representatives

“There are flexibilities in WACE but capacity for schools to recognise these are sometimes limited.”

School and interagency representatives

“We need to assist schools to focus on the meaningful learning for the students and less on gaming the system.”

School and interagency representatives

“How does a young person demonstrate achievement if ‘normal’ secondary attainment/assessment measures don’t suit them?”

Student, parent, interagency, and equity group representatives

“We need to open doors, not narrow pathways... The dominance of a ranking score, the ATAR, privileges academic capability over the value of vocational education and training... The general characteristics of students need to be given greater weight in the final years at school.”

Interagency representative

“Work experience is an important pathway to employment. However, knowing what funding is available to support work experience while participants are at school is difficult to find and confusing.”

Interagency and equity group representatives

“Post-school education and training was seen as a way to build skills and work towards getting a job. But there is a lack of options available for people with an intellectual disability or autism.”

Equity group and interagency representatives

“We need to redefine equity so we recognise the diversity of the individual, and celebrate what is unique.”

Interagency representatives

“There is too much pressure on students to achieve a rank.”

Parent and school representatives

“Schools need to be focussed more on deeper learning rather than ranking.”

Parent representatives

“Australia is the only country in the world that ranks our students at the end of their schooling. In other countries, students are given a score, but they are not placed in rank order.”

Interagency and school representatives

“Today, the most significant predictors of a young person’s ATAR are their socio-economic status, postcode and the school they attend.”

Interagency and school representatives

Appendix C: Glossary of acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AISWA	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CEWA	Catholic Education Western Australia
ITE	Initial teacher education
OLNA	Online Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
PPSS	Pathways to Post-School Success
RREAC	Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council
RTO	Registered training organisations
SCSA	School Curriculum and Standards Authority
SEI	Socio-economic index
SIDE	School of Isolated Distance Education
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TISC	Tertiary Institutions Service Centre
VET	Vocational education and training
ViSN	Virtual Schools Network
WA	Western Australia/n
WACE	Western Australian Certificate of Education
WAHEC	Western Australian Higher Education Council