

Industry restructuring and job loss: helping older workers get back into employment

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About the research

Industry restructuring and job loss: helping older workers get back into employment

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Globalisation and increased competition bring with them many benefits for business, consumers and the economy. But they can also result in the restructuring of industries not able to compete with changing economic markets. In the past, Australia has witnessed restructuring in many high-profile businesses, especially those in its manufacturing sector, for example, BHP Steel and Mitsubishi Motors and, more recently, General Motors Holden, Ford and Toyota. The human cost of this restructuring is a displaced worker group, currently a growing segment of the Australian workforce.

But what might help displaced workers to find new jobs following restructuring? In this research Victor Callan and Kaye Bowman reviewed past research and undertook four case studies to identify evidence-based practices that lead to successful skills transfer, reskilling, training and the attainment of new jobs for older workers displaced from often lower-skilled jobs in Australian manufacturing industries.

The case studies were undertaken in areas of Australia where there has been a significant impact on the local community with a large employer undergoing major restructuring, resulting in a large number of displaced workers. The regions of interest were the Hunter region of New South Wales, the Geelong region in Victoria, the outer metropolitan area of Adelaide in South Australia and various locations in Tasmania. The case studies show that, while displacement impacts on all affected workers, there are significant challenges for older workers facing unemployment from industries where larger proportions of the workforce have lower skills, few formal qualifications and poorer literacy and numeracy skills. Gaining employment after restructuring is difficult for many displaced workers, particularly if they are older and lower-skilled. This research highlights that early engagement of workers with support and training services, before displacement occurs, is crucial.

Key messages

- While training is important, it is just one component in any package or program designed to reduce the impacts of industry restructuring on individuals.
- A coordinated approach to the provision of training and support is critical. Training is more likely to be effective when training providers and support agencies partner to ensure displaced workers access upfront career counselling, training for in-demand skills and follow-up assistance with job search and attainment.
- Access to training resources for small numbers of displaced employees in small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SME) companies is more challenging than for displaced older workers from large firms, who are more likely to be recognised and supported by government interventions. How this impacts on employment outcomes for displaced older workers from SME firms in the longer-term needs further investigation.

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Executive summary

In the past Australia has witnessed restructuring in many high-profile international businesses, especially those in its manufacturing sector (for example, BHP Steel, Mitsubishi Motors), and again more recently (for example, Qantas, General Motors Holden [Holden], Ford, and Toyota). This restructuring has resulted in many workers being displaced from their jobs, including many older workers (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2014). In addition, these closures have impacted unevenly and notably upon regional Australia, including the Hunter region, the Geelong region and various locations in Tasmania and in pockets of outer metropolitan Adelaide in South Australia (see support document 2 to this research report, available at <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2839.html>).

The focus of this report is on initiatives that assist displaced workers to find a new job, particularly older workers (generally acknowledged as those 45 years and older) displaced from lower-skilled jobs due to industry restructuring in Australia's manufacturing sector. This sector has high numbers of mature-age workers, predominantly males, many of whom have low language, numeracy and digital literacy skills, do not hold post-school qualifications, and who have been in their jobs for a long time, with strong ties to their local communities (Manufacturing Skills Australia 2014b). These older workers have been shown to have a much lower probability of being re-employed than other retrenched workers (Murtough & Waite 2000). They run the risk of becoming unemployed or retiring by default, when they fail to find new employment (Spoehr, Barnett & Parnis 2009).

The report identifies several practices whose aim was to promote more effective skills transfer, reskilling and training for job outcomes for these displaced older workers. It was assumed that skills transfer, reskilling and training initiatives would be central. The authors found that while they are, they need to be embedded in a wider package of strategies to ensure the best new job outcomes for displaced older workers.

The practices emerge from the two accompanying support documents:

- support document 1: a review of the literature on interventions locally and internationally that assist displaced older workers to find future employment after industry closure
- support document 2: 52 interviews across four states to develop four in-depth Australian case studies in those sites with experience, both past and current, of substantial restructuring in their manufacturing industries. The sites of the case studies were: the Hunter region of New South Wales; the Greater Adelaide region of South Australia; the Greater Geelong region of Victoria and the state of Tasmania.

The initial review of national and international studies revealed that older workers displaced through industry restructuring are best assisted through the following broad practices:

- *Engage in early intervention*: intervention needs to occur well before the workers reach their retrenchment dates, with ongoing monitoring after they are retrenched.

The report identifies practices aimed at promoting effective skills transfer, reskilling and training for displaced older workers.

- *Provide holistic programs*: these interventions cover the full range of displaced workers' needs and are tailored to their backgrounds and requirements.
- *Seek regional responses*: many retrenched older workers want to stay in their region to maintain local ties and family commitments. There is a need for regional job-creation initiatives to assist them to find new jobs locally, together with initiatives focused on displaced workers to assist them to secure these jobs.
- *Recognise and manage age-related stereotyping*: older workers require supportive workplace environments associated with access to training and jobs and policies and practices that value the continuous training of older employees.
- *Offer upfront screening*: a key factor in the success of displaced workers' retraining programs is the use of screening or assessment processes prior to the commencement of any training to ensure that the program is appropriate for the individual.
- *Design age-inclusive training*: training needs to be highly experiential and practical and fill gaps in existing knowledge and skills, identified through recognition processes upfront.
- *Provide foundation skills training*: the focus must be on a combination of core skills (learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy), employability skills and digital literacy skills to help older second-chance workers who are reskilling after job loss.
- *Provide accelerated training*: displaced older workers face financial pressures to complete their training as rapidly as possible.
- *Provide job search and self-promotion services after training*: these are cost-effective programs for displaced workers when tailored to the worker and well targeted to the local job market.
- *Seek effective partnering throughout*: the most successful training programs are realised when institutions partner to ensure displaced workers receive upfront career counselling, training for in-demand skills and follow-up assistance with job search and attainment.

The four case studies reinforced all of the above messages, as well as identifying three forms of interventions. The first category of interventions is targeted to employees affected by the restructuring or closure of large firms and their supplier businesses. These well-funded and often high-profile programs are generally jointly funded by state and federal governments and the firms themselves. The programs commonly include pre-training, training and post-training steps and processes and are coordinated by specially hired worker transition officers. Typically, the programs assist the workers through the stages of: deciding where they will transition to; undertaking skills development and the activities that will get them there; and securing a new job for them. While there is some empirical evidence that supports the effectiveness of these various steps and processes, there is a surprising lack of well-organised formal and longer-term evaluations of these major steps and processes. An evaluation such as this requires assembling the data on these individuals from across the multiple service providers with which they engage.

The second category of interventions is open access programs. These have assisted workers in larger industries, but also any retrenched or soon-to-be-retrenched workers in

small to medium-sized enterprises. These programs, which also include pre-training, training and post-training steps and processes, are often undertaken by inter-agency rapid response teams or 'one stop' workforce development centres. The programs generally include specialised websites containing local workforce information, which workers can access whenever necessary. The case study regions were also undertaking complementary job-creation projects to increase the jobs available locally to displaced workers; for example, the introduction of local services procurement requirements into contracts issued to outside agencies for work in the region as a means of supporting local businesses and their local suppliers.

A third category of interventions includes customised initiatives, that is, those specifically focusing on the individual. In some cases these specialise in supporting the older displaced worker. These customised practices are open to workers from small and medium to large businesses and include: industry taster programs to showcase occupations where there are job opportunities and which are new to the worker; local workshops to showcase local employers with job opportunities; job information exchange clubs; men's sheds; and the use of volunteering as a step to winning a job. These customised initiatives augment the initiatives identified under the large firm and general access approaches. The workers involved in these programs found them useful in facilitating decision-making on their future life pathways and for taking appropriate steps to get there.

The three forms of interventions complement each other. All are required if a region is to mount an effective response to major levels of job loss due to industry restructuring, which impacts especially on mature-aged lower-skilled workers.

In conclusion, and with the aim of informing the design of future interventions, we propose a preliminary framework that encompasses a number of the good practice approaches to assisting displaced workers to find re-employment. The framework adopts the three key stages identified in the research: pre-training, training and post-training. Within this framework, skills transfer, reskilling and training are embedded in a broad range of actions to ensure the best job outcomes for this group of workers. Each of the discrete initiatives within the framework focuses on a specific aspect of assistance. However, it is not anticipated that any one worker would access every specific intervention.

Although the framework is a comprehensive list of initiatives that can be used to design future interventions, the top-priority actions, where funds are tight, are:

- early engagement before retrenchment to connect older workers to support services
- one-on-one planning sessions to ensure the workers' needs drive the assistance provided
- age-appropriate, customised and time-effective training
- job resumé and job interview preparation assistance
- activities that facilitate direct contact with potential new employers.

Introduction

This report identifies practices associated with skills transfer, reskilling and training that assist older workers (generally acknowledged as those 45 years and older) to find a new job after being displaced as a result of industry restructuring. These practices have been identified from two sources: a literature review of past studies and reports highlighting strategies used to assist displaced workers; and new case studies investigating the type and impact of approaches used to assist displaced older workers in regions where industry restructuring has occurred: the Hunter region in New South Wales, Geelong in Victoria and Adelaide in South Australia, and Tasmania.

Our aim was to report upon the approaches taken to skills transfer, reskilling and training in assisting older displaced workers, but as Evans-Klock et al. (1998) remind us, active labour market programs for displaced workers provide a combination of training and retraining and other activities. These other activities include career guidance, job search assistance, work experience, wage subsidies, public employment/public works programs and access to a range of support services. In recognition of this, the report conceptualises skills transfer, reskilling and training as aspects of a larger range of actions being used to ensure that the best new job outcomes for displaced older workers are achieved.

Context

There were several reasons for undertaking this research. The displaced worker group is an enduring and currently growing segment of the Australian workforce – as it is in many other countries – in response to globalisation and increased competition (International Labour Organization 2009). In the past, notable examples of industry restructuring in Australia were the closures of Mitsubishi Motors in Adelaide and the end of steel production in the Hunter region of New South Wales. In the year to February 2013, approximately 381 000 Australian workers had been displaced, from a total workforce of 11.5 million (ABS 2014). Announcements of further industry restructuring have recently been made by several high-profile businesses (for example, Qantas, BP, GMH, Ford and Toyota). The announcements made by GMH, Toyota and Ford, for example, will result in the direct loss of up to 27 500 jobs nationally by 2017 (Department of Industry 2014). In the longer term, the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research estimates that closures in the motor vehicle manufacturing industry up to 2017 may create a fall in our national employment of around 200 000 (Barbaro, Spoehr & National Institute of Economic and Industry Research 2014; Spoehr 2014).

A further reason for conducting this research is that finding a new job is not easy for many displaced workers. Only 50% of those retrenched in the year to February 2013 had found a job. Of those who were re-employed, at least one aspect of their work had changed by comparison with their previous employment: 27% had changed industry; 19% had changed occupation; 33% had changed their hours of work; and 17% had a change of employment type (ABS 2014). Furthermore, as Spoehr, Barnett and Parnis (2009) observe in their review of mature-age employment in Australia, ‘many older workers who become unemployed do not intentionally retire but find that this happens by default when they fail to find employment’ (p.5).

Indeed, the probability of being re-employed is much lower for older lower-skilled displaced workers than for other retrenched workers (Murtough & Waite 2000). More skilled and highly qualified workers typically have skills that are transferable to other sectors and they gain new jobs relatively easily. However, substantial challenges are faced by employees in industries where large proportions of the workforce are older, with lower skills, no formal qualifications and associated lower literacy and numeracy skills.

In response to such observations, we focused this project on displaced older workers from lesser-skilled blue collar occupations and the role played by public and private providers in the vocational education and training (VET) sector to assist them to find a new job. As emphasised by Skills Australia (2011), the VET sector must play a major role in meeting the nation's demand for the types of skills required to address these continued economic and demographic changes. More than any other education sector, VET is pivotal, as it connects learning with the labour market, the workplace and community development, as well as with individual learner and employer requirements.

In addition, the sector has special strengths, through its regional and community focus, in responding and providing training and retraining to assist industries and individuals in the most economically vulnerable regions. As Circelli and Stanwick (2014) remark, VET and its initiatives in particular aim to ensure that people in vulnerable communities obtain skills to gain employment locally, or to obtain skills that allow them to move to other regions when local opportunities are not available. However, these initiatives do need to be of the right scale and, as Spoehr (2014) emphasises, 'the scale and focus of interventions to manage and minimise the negative impacts of significant change and shocks must be acutely tuned to the economic and labour market conditions that prevail at the time' (p.2).

Research questions

The project addressed two research questions:

- When faced with industry restructuring, what is the range of personal, organisational, community and governmental factors (that is, both enablers and barriers) that are linked to successful skills transfer, reskilling and training for older workers?
- What good practices, including new strategies to address skills transfer, reskilling and the role of training, need to be adopted so that older Australian employees, their organisations and communities will experience the most positive outcomes from industry restructuring in the future?

Research methods

The project was undertaken in three stages. In Stage 1 the national and international literature on the topics of job loss and the retraining and reskilling of older workers was reviewed (see support document 1 available at <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2839.html>). As noted earlier, Australia is not alone in needing to address the displacement of workers due to industry restructuring. For instance, the United States, Canada and many European countries face major

challenges in relation to the displacement of older and often less skilled workers as a consequence of major industry restructuring. Therefore, we canvassed research undertaken across numerous countries on strategies for assisting displaced older workers, our aim being to:

- promote a better understanding of the critical enablers and barriers to the skills transfer, reskilling and training of displaced older workers
- identify examples and good practice approaches to skills transfer and retraining
- develop a working model for the effective design and delivery of skills transfer and reskilling initiatives based on a broad review of the key factors at work, irrespective of industry type.

In Stage 2 four case studies with a focus on the displaced older and lesser-skilled workers in Australia's manufacturing industry were undertaken (see support document 2 available at <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2839.html>>). The manufacturing industry was selected due to the disproportionate share of retrenchments that have occurred in Australian manufacturing industries (Murtough & Waite 2000). Moreover, further retrenchments are predicted in this industry (Manufacturing Skills Australia 2014a, 2014 b). Manufacturing also has a high number of mature-age workers: 42% of the manufacturing workforce (Manufacturing Skills Australia 2014b). About a third of these mature-age manufacturing workers possess no post-school qualifications and many have low language, literacy and numeracy skills (Manufacturing Skills Australia 2014b). Furthermore, as manufacturing is a significant sector in the Australian economy, there is a lot at stake if the skills transfer, reskilling and training strategies are ineffective.

The sites for the four case studies were: the Hunter region of New South Wales; the outer metropolitan region of Adelaide, South Australia; the Greater Geelong region of Victoria; and Tasmania. These four sites have experienced substantial restructuring in their manufacturing industries. They also include a mix of metropolitan and regional areas in different parts of Australia. Finally, the four sites provided access to individuals and organisations who are highly experienced with interventions that assist displaced older workers.

Extensive desktop research was undertaken to identify the key agencies in each case site. The engagement and willing participation of these organisations, and their key staff, was crucial in this study. These staff also assisted us in connecting with older workers who had been through the retrenchment process.

For each case study the individuals interviewed included: representatives of providers of VET skills recognition and new skills development programs in both public and private institutions; representatives of other agencies that play an active role in helping displaced older workers to overcome job loss, such as career counsellors and employment services agencies; and older workers who had been retrenched, most of whom, it was learnt, had achieved some form of new job. Each case study involved a minimum of ten interviews. In total, 52 interviews were completed to develop the four cases, including 18 interviews with the displaced older workers.

Informed consent was gained from all participants prior to the interview being conducted. The interview questions were sent in advance and tailored for each of the

three types of respondents (see appendix). The interview questions were developed on the basis of the findings in the literature review. The data from the interviews were supplemented with reports, records and other materials about industry restructuring in each region. This report is the final stage of this project.

Report structure

The next chapter summarises the key messages from the literature review and is followed by a summary of the key themes from the case studies. The final chapter provides a framework of the practices we believe will produce the most positive outcomes from industry restructuring for individual workers, their families and their local communities.



Practices identified from previous studies

This chapter does not repeat the findings from the literature review (see support document 1). Rather it takes a more general approach by identifying several strategies to emerge from prior studies. The four case studies subsequently undertaken provided an opportunity to observe these practices in operation, as well as other approaches not identified in the literature review.

Seek regional responses

In their study conducted in the United Kingdom, Dobbins, Plows and Lloyd-Williams (2014) tracked workers' experiences of redundancy after the closure of a large employer. Many workers stayed in their area to maintain local ties and family commitments, taking whatever jobs the local labour market provided. In many instances, displaced workers took up less-skilled and less well-paid jobs in order to stay local. This study and a number of similar studies emphasise the need for the promotion of regional job-creation work as a complementary strategy in efforts to build the skills and capacities of displaced workers searching for new jobs locally.

Job search assistance and targeted job matching may also be required and, if so, this should be provided as early as possible. Ideally, this needs to occur before the displaced workers are laid off to prevent individuals from slipping into unemployment and losing an attachment to the world of work (Evans-Klock et al. 1998). In addition, these services need to be tailored to local circumstances, linked to the local job market and be easily accessible to those in need (Bednarzik & Szalanski 2012).

Also highlighting the value of more regional responses, the International Labour Organization (2013) recommended that Australia should develop an education and skills forum to focus specifically on the needs of displaced workers, and that this focus should be linked to identified skills needs and shortages in regions. Moreover, the Australian Productivity Commission (2014) has suggested that governments should ensure the appropriate resourcing of the delivery of available welfare, training and employment services for all clients in those regions placed under pressure by industry closures. The Commission, however, warned that providing assistance to retrenched automotive employees at a level that exceeds the assistance generally available to other job seekers would raise both efficiency and equity issues.

Engage in early intervention and ongoing monitoring

The Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (2014) emphasises that early intervention is critical to assisting displaced workers. Programs need to be holistic, long-term, tailored to the characteristics and needs of the displaced worker and recognise upfront the workers' strengths and transferable skills. A key aspect of these programs is access to a range of counselling, employment and vocational services to resolve both skills barriers and the issues associated with self-confidence and motivation, as many older workers can drop out of the labour force and become invisible to the range of services that might assist them.

Also, as Bednarzik and Szalanski (2012) emphasise, there is a need for continued monitoring and evaluation. A key indicator for any ongoing evaluation should be job-placement rates, with a training program's continued funding dependent in a large part upon its success in finding jobs. It is also important to monitor the number of training programs displaced workers have undertaken, as participation in multiple programs may impact negatively upon displaced workers' responsiveness to an intervention. Displaced workers can become reluctant to keep participating in programs if they continue to have a lack of success (Hatala 2007).

Offer upfront screening, assessment and early career exploration

A pivotal factor in the success of displaced workers' retraining programs is the use of a screening or assessment process prior to the commencement of any training (Leigh 1994; Bednarzik & Szalanski 2012). This ensures that the program is right for the individual and that the individual is capable of handling and grasping the content of the training. In the US, examples are the One Stop Shop (Bednarzik & Szalanski 2012) and the American Job Centres programs. These initiatives typically involve a mandatory initial evaluation of an individual's capabilities, which assists the assignment of workers to training modules. Training modules include Job Search and Job Placement, Learning to Learn for those needing to upgrade their skills, and Entrepreneurial Skills.

The use of online and self-service tools upfront is emerging as an effective way to equip some displaced older workers with information that will help to guide their initial choices. For example, Van Noy, Heidkamp and Manz (2013) report on the use by Portland Community College of an online 'Road Map'. Each map outlines how an educational program is linked to the local labour market: older job seekers can source the occupations to which each program leads, while the occupations are also linked to job postings on a website.

Reflecting this approach, van Loo (2011) argues that many older workers require an employment services approach rather than an individualistic counselling approach. In an employment services model, there is a more active linking of the individual to the changing characteristics of the job environment. One example of an Australian approach to training for older job seekers was the METEOR project (Matching Employees and Training to Employers for Ongoing Recruitment and Retention; Brooke et al. 2013). Adopting the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health concept of 'workability', this project promoted a balance between the individual's health, skills and experience on the one hand, with the demands of the business on the other. In these approaches, counselling and guidance services for older workers seeking employment also recognised their needs in relation to health, work–life balance and ongoing access to social and family support.

Recognise and manage age-related stereotyping

Australia's Age Discrimination Commissioner, Susan Ryan, has repeatedly warned that the bias against workers over 50 years old is widespread and more needs to be done to eliminate it (for example, Ryan 2014). Older individuals face challenges of real and perceived job discrimination (Rutledge 2014; Van Rooij 2012). As Lundberg and

Stereotypes continue about older workers not wanting to learn and that any investment in their training provides poor returns.

Marshallsay (2007) found, even if the level of actual discrimination on the grounds of age in recruitment, retention and training practices in Australian workplaces is diminishing, a perception of age discrimination persists in relation to many older workers. Stereotypes continue about older workers not wanting to learn and not coping with learning and using new technologies, and, furthermore, that any investment in their training provides poor returns (for example, Gray & Finnie 2009; Van Rooij 2012).

In response to such stereotypes is substantial evidence that these beliefs are based on outdated views about the motivations, skills and temperaments of older workers; for example:

- Findings from overseas studies such as the 'Older and Bolder Program' in the UK (Withnall, McGivney & Soulsby 2004) reveal that age is not necessarily a barrier to learning. Older people have a wealth of experience to bring to any new learning experience.
- Findings from Australian research entitled *Understanding the over 50s* (APIA 2007) concluded that the over-50s intend to remain active in the workforce, in education and in their communities.
- An ABS (2013) survey found that over 600 000 Australians never intend to retire from the labour force. As evidence, there is a significant group of over-45s (191 000) who have retired but later returned to the workforce, with 'financial need' cited (42%) as the most common reason.

These Australian and international reports reveal that many older people want to continue to work; however, they need access to continued learning to stay relevant to the job market. In particular, older workers require supportive environments for accessing training and development, as well as policies and practices that value their continued acquisition of new knowledge and skills (Armstrong-Stassen & Cattaneo 2010).

Design age-inclusive training

Older workers seek training that is highly experiential and practical, and not formal in delivery or approach. Mature-aged workers will participate when training acknowledges their life and work experiences. Retraining programs have an impact when they build on the existing knowledge and skills of older workers and provide them with new or updated skills in order for them to be more competitive in a changing workplace (Meyers, Billett & Kelly 2010; Rogers & O'Rourke 2004; Wolf et al. 1995).

Older workers prefer training that fills gaps in their existing knowledge and skills and is designed around skill sets rather than full qualifications (Schueler 1999). When studying in the formal VET system, older students show a preference for shorter vocational education and training such as 'subject only' or mixed field programs and less formal instructional styles (Anlezark 2002). In a study of retrenched textile workers in Victoria, Keating (2010, 2011) found that TAFE-level courses with strong experiential components helped workers to regain confidence as a learner. There was a realisation that their previous qualifications, skills and experience were useful in entering and maintaining a new job in the industry. As Van Noy, Heidkamp and Manz (2013) conclude, VET institutions need to develop a better understanding of the needs, interests and preferences of their older students, and modify their delivery to reflect those needs.

As numerous studies reveal (Billett 2010; Meyers, Billett & Kelly 2010; Van Rooij 2012), trainers and training organisations need to design and deliver training for displaced older workers that reflects the differences in the types of jobs undertaken, the levels of their education and skills, and the levels of support available in and outside displaced workers' workplaces, as well as their occupational capacities, personal traits and interests. For instance, the Beer et al. (2006) evaluation of the Mitsubishi plant closures in Adelaide showed that the training options provided were more appropriate for less-skilled workers. As a result, the higher-skilled workers were less satisfied with the training initiatives made available to them. The most effective programs closely match the type and intensity of training to the needs and circumstances of the workers (Greenstone & Looney 2011).

Ensure foundation training is included

Many older workers doubt their capacity to engage with formalised training. Some are not accustomed to thinking of themselves as learners and doubt their ability to learn new skills due to negative past experiences with formal education (for example, Selby Smith, Smith & Smith 2007). Linked to this lack of confidence is the fact that, while displaced older workers can have sufficient reading, writing and mathematics skills to get by in their old jobs, these skills are often insufficient when looking for a new job (Innovation and Business Skills Australia 2011; International Labour Organization 2009). Foundation skills training needs to be designed with a focus on a combination of core skills (learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy), employability skills and digital literacy – and provided early.

Numerous international programs have recognised the need for basic skills remediation in mathematics for older workers, but offered in such a way to save displaced workers' time and money (Van Noy, Heidkamp & Manz 2013). Australia has the overarching ten-year National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, 2012–2022 (COAG Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment 2012). This strategy particularly supports those with lower skill levels and with the greatest need for assistance to improve their employment opportunities.

Offer accelerated training

Displaced older workers can face financial pressures to complete their training as rapidly as possible. As many displaced older workers are often trying to upgrade their skills in order to return to the job market quickly, training institutions need to be responsive to this need by offering accelerated courses for training or retraining (Van Noy, Heidkamp & Manz 2013).

A novel approach to accelerated course delivery from the US is the provision of 'stackable credentials'. In this model, dislocated workers complete certain amounts of course work to obtain a credential that enables them to enter a career right away. They can then continue to obtain additional credentials that can be 'stacked' together to form a higher-level qualification. These programs have a range of exit and entry points, enabling students to gain skills and work and to return for additional training and qualifications to progress their careers (Van Noy, Heidkamp & Manz 2013).

A recent study conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER; Hargreaves & Blomberg 2015) looked at the uptake of recognition of prior learning (RPL) for adult trade apprentices more generally. They found that the full implementation of competency-based rather than time-based progression for adult apprentices was occurring slowly. Key barriers are the inconsistent treatment of RPL, a lack of understanding about the role and purpose of skill sets, and cultural barriers to alternative pathways for completion. In an earlier study, Hargreaves (2006) also found that the formal assessment of older workers' knowledge and skills through an RPL process can be threatening for them.

Provide job search services with training

Leigh's (1990) landmark study on displaced workers synthesised findings from an examination of labour market policies in Sweden, Germany, Japan, Great Britain and Australia. He concluded that job search assistance was the most cost-effective program for displaced workers. In the successful Pittsburgh One Stop Shop Retraining Program, for example, displaced workers with the desire and capability to immediately re-enter the labour force were assigned to complete a Job Search, Job Placement training module.

To be effective, employment services must also shift the onus onto the displaced worker and make them responsible and accountable for building their own professional network of contacts. As Hatala's (2007) study points out, participants who became re-employed demonstrated stronger networks than those who did not find employment. Consequently, traditional job search programs need to go beyond training in networking skills and techniques and introduce mature-aged job seekers to ways to monitor their number of contacts, the value of each contact and whether these new contacts can provide job-related information.

Seek effective partnering throughout

The most successful training programs are those provided by institutions that partner with employers and industry. Such partnering ensures that participants receive training in skills in demand and that they undertake courses relevant to the jobs available in the market (Greenstone & Looney 2011). Without this type of collaboration between training providers, employers and industry, newly trained or retrained workers can find themselves without the skills needed by industry or the skills required for long-lasting labour market success. In their review of the Mitsubishi closures in Australia, Beer and his colleagues (2006) concluded that much better liaison should have occurred between TAFE (technical and further education) institutions, the universities and other relevant providers in order to develop more appropriate skills and training packages for those retrenched workers.

In several successful US programs (for example, the Sectoral Employment Impact Study, Career Academies, Year Up) employers directed the focus of training. A common element of the programs was a focus on VET skills that were translatable in the short term into higher wages and opportunities in the marketplace. Evaluations show that these programs with a strong focus on partnering and VET skills have paid off for workers in their subsequent years of employment (Greenstone & Looney 2011).

Another successful partnership approach is one that uses rapid response teams to reach out directly to displaced workers. Rapid response activities can include contact with the employer and with representatives of the impacted workers, communication with the local community to determine the scope of any layoffs, and the provision of information to workers and the broader community on the services available to assist displaced workers. Usually before any layoffs, rapid response teams assist workers to become quickly connected to government workforce assistance benefits and services such as unemployment insurance, career counselling and job search (Heidkamp & Kauder 2008).

Good practice emphasises the value of adopting a regional focus using local services in partnerships to identify suitable jobs.

Summary

Most displaced older workers are motivated and focused on finding a new job as soon as possible. However, many can lack knowledge of the wider job market, the training system and the services available to assist them. The identified good practices outlined above emphasise the value of adopting a regional focus and in using local services in partnerships to identify suitable jobs through career counselling. In addition, to be suitable, training needs to be age-appropriate, reflective of in-demand jobs, and linked to job search services.



Practices emerging from Australian case studies

The case studies examined responses to industry restructuring in the regions of the Hunter, outer metropolitan Adelaide, greater Geelong and Tasmania. Here, we present a summary of the key findings. The full case studies can be found in support document 2. Firstly, the types of programs being provided in each case site are briefly described. There is a distinction between the programs offered to employees in large enterprises that have experienced restructuring and downsizing and those services (rather than programs) that can and are being accessed by mature-aged workers who have lost their jobs in small to medium-sized enterprises. Secondly, the specific practices being employed are outlined under three stages: pre-training, training and post-training.

Types of programs

Across the four sites, three types of programs were being used to support displaced older workers:

- large firm and associated supplier worker transition programs
- general open access transition programs for any displaced worker
- customised initiatives for older (typically male) displaced workers.

Table 1 presents specific examples of the three types of programs found in each case study region. The cases highlight that workers displaced from large firms and their suppliers have been the recipients of special interventions, with funds provided by the firms themselves and federal and state governments. As to be expected, these large firm and associated supplier worker transition programs have focused on major industry restructuring in the region. They range from the historical BHP Pathways Program in the Hunter region in the late 1990s, to the more recent programs to assist displaced workers in the automotive industries in Adelaide and Geelong. Other high-profile programs have assisted workers affected by the closure of parts of the forestry industry in Tasmania and the mining downturn in Tasmania. These programs all include pre-training, training and post-training steps and processes.

A range of open access programs are available for any displaced worker (see table 1). These programs are particularly important for workers employed in small to medium-sized enterprises that have restructured, downsized or closed but typically not in direct association with a large firm closure. All of these programs aid any displaced worker through pre-training, training and post-training job attainment processes. The open access programs include on-call rapid response teams in the Hunter region and Tasmania and one-stop workforce development centres, such as those available in Geelong. They also include the Job Services Network, which is available in all regions of Australia, and, in some instances, regional initiatives to help with local job identification. In addition, the open access programs include complementary regional job-creation programs, which extend the available job opportunities in the region.

The third category of programs, described as customised initiatives (see table 1), are initiatives developed specifically for older displaced, and often lower-skilled male, workers to augment the more general initiatives described above. These tailored programs include pre-training taster programs in the Hunter and Geelong regions; training initiatives such as Life Skills in the Hunter and LINC and Words @ Work in Tasmania; and post-training initiatives such as volunteering and jobs clubs in Geelong. There is also the organisation Don't Overlook Mature-Aged Employees (DOME) in South Australia, which has approval from the Equal Opportunities Commission to help only those aged over 40 years.

Table 1 Displaced worker transition programs by type and case region

Region	Large firm and supplier programs	Open access programs for any displaced worker	Customised initiatives for older displaced workers
Hunter NSW	BHP Steelworks early intervention Pathways Program The Mine Hunter program	Pathways Employment Services Rapid Response Teams Jobs in the Hunter website Jobs Network Regional strategic procurement	New industry taster programs Life skills courses
Adelaide	Mitsubishi, Bridgestone and Clipsal General Motors Holden and Suppliers' Automotive Workers in Transition Program	The Jobs Network Our Jobs Plan	DOME: Don't Overlook Mature-Aged Employees
Geelong	Ford and suppliers Worker Transition Program	Geelong Workforce Development Centre Geelong Careers website Regional databases Jobs Network Job-creation projects	Growth industries Specific industry taster courses Jobs clubs Volunteering
Tasmania	ForestWorks Workers Assistance Service ACL Bearings	Rapid response skills initiatives Rural Alive and Well (RAW) The Jobs Network West Coast East Working Group for new jobs creation	Words @ Work Ready set go

Note: For more detail see case studies in support document 2.

Large firm and associated supplier worker transition programs

Stages

The larger and higher-profile programs have responded to major forms of industry restructuring in a region typically through the delivery of a range of practices to assist workers over three or four stages. The BHP Pathways Program is a good example of the 'value of early intervention and intensive case assistance in maximising the chances of high-risk employees finding work after termination' (Boston Consulting Group 2000, p.46). This program ran from 1997, when the closure of the plant was announced, until 15 months after the closure in 1999, a total duration of about four years. The early notice of intended closure gave BHP time to work with unions, the community and state and federal governments to devise initiatives that would give employees and the regional economy the strongest grounding for a positive transition. The closure of BHP saw the retrenchment of around 1800 employees and another 1000 contractors. Their average age was 44 years and their average length of service was 21 years (Payne 2013). The

BHP's Pathways Program was a personalised and flexible retraining program and one that supported employees to train in almost any area of their choice, if it was considered likely to help them to find employment.

Those interviewed in this case study who were involved in providing BHP Pathways Program services described the program as an innovative and effective response to BHP Steelwork's closure. Essentially, over its four stages, the Pathways Program provided integrated career consultation, vocational guidance, training, coaching, resumé development, active job searching and administrative support to ensure that participants achieved an appropriate outcome. Figure 1 provides a summary of the model. When the Pathways Program was wound up 15 months after the closure of the Steelworks, around 7000 separate training events had taken place, with around 90% of participants becoming employed or attaining educational qualifications (Payne 2004, 2013).

Figure 1 The BHP Pathways Program



Source: Supplied by Paul Cartledge, Business Manager, Pathways Employment Services on 24 November 2014.

The current Skills and Training Initiative is another example of a staged approach. The initiative is part of the Commonwealth \$155 million Growth Fund and is designed to help affected workers from Holden and Toyota move to new employment. This initiative and related state government programs for supply chain component workers is a collaboration between the governments of South Australia and Victoria, the Commonwealth Government, Holden and Toyota¹ and incorporates lessons learned from South Australia's previous experience in helping displaced workers at Mitsubishi, Bridgestone and Clipsal between 2004 and 2009. All the organisations involved have agreed to a redeployment strategy including:

- information sessions, including financial education
- skills analysis and career advice
- skills recognition, training and job search

¹ Ford already had its own Ford Transition Program before the Skills and Training Initiative was implemented.

- employment services through the Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Programme.

These elements will be the framework for the respective programs of the organisations involved. Although the elements may be applied somewhat differently, the assigned responsibilities are:

- Holden is to provide assistance to Holden workers and with Holden-donated funds to the Skills and Training Initiative
- Toyota is to provide assistance to Toyota workers and workers in its tier 1 companies (tier 1 companies are direct suppliers to Toyota) with Toyota-donated funds
- South Australian Government through the Department of State Development is to provide assistance to workers in Holden’s tier 1, 2 and tier 3 companies (see figure 2: tier 2 companies being the key suppliers to tier 1 suppliers; tier 3 companies are suppliers to tier 2 firms)
- Victorian Government through the Department of Education and Training is responsible for providing assistance to the tier 1 and 2 supply chains of Ford, Holden and Toyota. Tier 3 companies can also be eligible for assistance. Ford workers are also assisted with increased eligibility for training subsidies.

Under the Commonwealth Government’s Automotive Industry Structural Adjustment Programme retrenched workers from eligible manufacturing companies in the automotive industry (including component suppliers) will have immediate access to intensive employment support with a *jobactive* (formerly a Job Network Service) provider to help them find a new job.

Figure 2 Elements of the South Australian Automotive Workers in Transition Program



Source: Adapted from Nussio (2014).

For the displaced workers from Holden support firms, these five steps will be followed in strict order by the South Australian Automotive Taskforce, which is overseeing the program. As a planner of the program explained:

We knew from past experiences that just offering training is not the panacea. There were many instances in which the retrenched workers got part way through a training program and decided this was not for them and withdrew. This was wasteful of their time and the training dollars spent. The aim of the early elements of the Automotive Workers in Transition Program is to help avoid this from occurring this time around.

In addition, in the current Holden case, training will be a more significant focus than it was in the Mitsubishi case, the aim being to improve the overall job outcomes. A study of displaced Mitsubishi workers found that two years after closure there were, at best, mixed outcomes: approximately a third of workers had moved into full-time paid employment; a third had transitioned into casual or contract employment; and a final third of the workers had left the workforce (Beer et al. 2006; Beer & Thomas 2007).

Similarly, the current Ford Transition Program in Geelong involved an upfront information session aligned to the announcement that the company was closing. This first step provided the workers with access to the full range of the support services they may need, followed by a mandatory stage of one-on-one career planning with a specialist workers' assistance coordinator before the workers engaged with any training and/or employment assistance services. The Geelong workers' assistance coordinator reinforced the importance of each worker having developed a transition plan before they engage with any training. To quote one coordinator interviewed: 'this is done in order that the training providers deliver what the workers require and not what the providers want to deliver'. The Ford Transition Program also includes funds for training and an outplacement service for those workers who are fully work-ready.

The ForestWorks Workers' Assistance Service in Tasmania, which ran between 2012 and June 2014, also included a staged approach and was facilitated by specialist workers' assistance coordinators. The service and its coordinators provided displaced workers with information sessions about the job market, skills audits, skills recognition and relevant training and job attainment assistance. In total, 686 participants were assisted by the Workers' Assistance Service. At the end of the service period, 85% (n = 585) of all participants had obtained employment and 4% (n = 28) remained unemployed (either they had never started a new job or they had started and were retrenched again). Ten per cent (n = 70) were either not looking for employment or were not in the labour market for a range of reasons. Thus, extending the employment figures to the participants who remained active in the job market, the employment rate achieved by the service was 95%. Of the 585 participants who found work, 393 participants obtained full-time work, 94 were casual employees, and 42 were self-employed (Daian 2012).

Practices within each stage

The worker transition programs for large industry restructuring or closures consisted of a number of key practices at each stage. For ease of reporting, and as noted earlier, these practices are examined under three stages: pre-training; training; and post-training.

Stage 1: Pre-training

Across the large firm and associated supplier transition programs, this stage frequently involved information sessions and career advice and counselling. This stage also involved the recognition of existing skills transferable to other jobs and/or which provided credit towards additional training opportunities. As one interviewee commented, in designing this stage it is very important to note the nature and characteristics of many of the older displaced workers:

The workers at BHP had been there for 30 to 40 years and were reluctant to change and angry that technology had overtaken a lot of their jobs. They were reluctant to

retrain in things with technology. The ones that embraced it, however, and put in effort, were able to raise themselves back up again.

Information sessions

The information sessions were a common starting point, connecting the soon-to-be-displaced workers and their families to the full set of support services that may be required. Such services include: financial services (for example, general financial education, superannuation and transition to retirement advice and Centrelink), career counselling services, education and training services, job preparation services (for example, resumé writing and job search assistance) and personal counselling services.

The information sessions were usually organised in the workplace to enable all workers to attend and were conducted soon after the announcement that the business was to close or downsize. The sessions provided the workers with the opportunity to register early for assistance and to arrange for follow-up individual meetings with providers of the services of interest to them. In the case of the Automotive Workers in Transition Program in South Australia, an online information service is also providing a channel through which the soon-to-be-displaced workers and their families can access support.²

Our service provider interviewees believed that connecting workers early to support services – soon after they learn they are to be displaced – was critical, giving often confused workers somewhere to turn immediately for support and information. Being made redundant is a highly emotional experience. All of the displaced workers interviewed spoke of their shock and despair at being retrenched (for examples, see the Geelong and Adelaide region case studies in support document 2). Those experts interviewed who had assisted workers emphasised the importance of connecting with the displaced worker early in order to bolster their view of the future and to reinforce to them that people cared about them. As one support officer expert said:

Early intervention is critical. It helps to stop these workers from becoming the long-term unemployed with a chip on both shoulders and feeling that no one is really interested in them. We do not want their motivation to drop to the point that they give up on job seeking.

Information sessions were a common starting point, connecting the soon-to-be-displaced workers to the full set of available support services.

² The online service, Beyond Auto referral service, <<http://redundancyinfolink.com/beyond-auto-sa/>>. includes:

- a redundancy section with a checklist for use from the time the worker is informed of their redundancy
- a preparation section, which provides information to consider prior to redundancy. This should include meeting with a financial advisor to receive independent advice on their financial health
- a 'moving on' section, which allows workers to work their way through their ideas on the new occupation and to use the Job Outlook website to verify or correct this information
- a training section, which provides information on courses and training providers. It also provides questions to ask of the RTOs to help the worker decide if the training will benefit them in the long-term
- a 'dealing with change' section, which offers workers strategies to cope with the changes they are experiencing. It also provides details around assistance if the worker is not coping.

Career counselling

Career counselling was seen as a 'must do' early step and not a 'nice to have' optional extra across all of the large firm worker transition programs. Further, it was agreed that the early career advice sessions should be undertaken by qualified career practitioners. As a Tasmanian interviewee commented:

A lot of the money that we did spend [on training] was wasted because people didn't have the correct career advice to start with and behaved in a way disadvantageous to them. Now, we strongly encourage people to use career advisers. People didn't want to because they felt that it was intangible. That's why we have the \$500 worth of funding for it now.

Career practitioners assisted workers one-on-one to make more informed decisions about their life after retrenchment. They assessed the workers' interests and current skills and how these matched with alternative jobs; these practitioners also aided the workers to set initial goals in new career plans. Indeed, one career practitioner interviewee in Geelong nominated the adoption of a one-on-one or case management approach as the key to their success: 'as each worker's life circumstances are unique and therefore so too will be their transition plans'. The interviewee went on to explain that, for many older workers who have been in their jobs for decades, being displaced is like 'falling off a cliff' into the unknown wider world of work. In their first meeting, many displaced workers have no idea of where they wish to go after their current job. They need assistance to identify alternative job possibilities and to think 'outside the box'. It can take some time before the workers establish a clear view about their potential next steps.

In the Ford case in Geelong, the Worker Transition Program Coordinator has encouraged workers to develop an alternative transition plan in case their primary plan is not realised. In addition, the workers can arrange as many meetings with the coordinator as they wish in order to update their transition plans should circumstances change. The coordinator also links workers with providers of skills recognition, reskilling and training, where needed. The primary aim is to ensure that workers have the appropriate skills to find new employment once they leave their current employer (Auto Skills Australia 2015).

Similarly, in the current Automotive Workers in Transition Program in Adelaide, it is expected that, following the career advice session, each transitioning worker will have developed a broad future career plan. The aim is for the workers to identify up to five potential future careers and avoid a reactive approach to finding a job, whereby the worker takes up the first career that comes to mind or is showcased to them. Furthermore, the workers in Holden's tier 1, 2 and tier 3 companies in the Adelaide region are to attend their career advice sessions at specified Career Advice Service operators. The decision to have designated Career Advice and Transition Services providers was made to avoid a chaotic approach. As one interviewee commented:

In the past many providers were falling over themselves to access displaced workers due to industry restructuring and that led to confusion for the workers. Naturally, the workers can choose to go to any Career Advice Service for assistance, but if in the Automotive Workers in Transition Program it would be for a second opinion only.

These same practices emerge in other programs for large industry closures. In the former BHP Pathways Program, each employee was initially interviewed about his or her aspirations in a post-steelworks world and was helped to develop a personal action plan. The ForestWorks Workers' Assistance Service included early information sessions about the job market, personal evaluations and a skills audit organised by specialist workers' assistance coordinators.

David (not his real name) is an example of a worker who researched several possible personal futures before settling on one. He worked as a sheet metal worker at Ford for 31 years – his entire working life, until he was retrenched in June 2014. David signed up with a local Job Services Australia (JSA) provider. Given that he was retrenched, he was deemed eligible for Stream 3 level assistance,³ but in the end he searched for a new job on his own. He thought: 'I already have a resumé and am as capable as the JSA [Job Services Australia] to search and apply for jobs via the internet'. David did this for three months, after which he realised 'networking was the better way to go'. He has had two jobs through his own networks. One of the jobs was with a friend who had a mowing franchise, but he quickly realised that this was not a job for him. His next job was obtained through another friend and he worked in this job until the end of 2014. David did attend an industry taster course in community services and thought it was good but that it did not pay well enough. In recent times he has decided to follow his dream of making a living out of athletics coaching. He has been involved in Little Athletics for many years and has certificate III level athletics coach qualifications. He has managed to secure a part-time job as an athletics coach at a local school and he and the school were considering whether this could be combined with some school maintenance work, for which he has the skills, in order to provide him with more full-time work.

Skills recognition

Another common practice in the large industry programs reviewed in the case studies was the provision of an opportunity for the displaced workers to undergo a skills recognition step. As one interviewee of the BHP Steelworks closure reflected:

These guys had worked there for 20 plus years and they had enormous skills and knowledge that they did not recognise. It would have been a tragedy if these skills sets and knowledge were lost, including ways that we could get some knowledge transfer to younger generations, the future TAFE teachers and those working in our high schools in the region.

Skills recognition generally involves identifying the worker's experience, skills and knowledge gained throughout their life, recognising the transferable skills and validating these against recognised education frameworks. This is where the work of a career counsellor and a VET practitioner cross over. Career practitioners assist the worker to develop a starting-point skills profile. However, they may not be able to translate these skills into 'education speak' for formal skills recognition purposes, or undertake the assessment process involved. The formal recognition assessment process must be administered by a VET practitioner in a registered training organisation (RTO).

³ There are four employment support services streams. Stream 1 provides the least services and stream 4 the highest. The level of support provided to any one job seeker (stream 1–4) is determined on the basis of his or her likelihood of remaining unemployed without assistance by the JSA provider.

RPL was best undertaken while workers were still in their current workplaces.

As a recognition expert in Adelaide explained, a key to an efficient and effective RPL process for displaced workers is to undertake the assessment of the workers' skills while they are still in their current workplaces. As a result, they are able to produce the evidence required to show that they possess the skills and knowledge, and obtain third party validation of these skills (from a supervisor or co-worker who has observed them do their tasks). Other important points made by this expert were that: the assessor must take responsibility for the assessment process; they should not leave it to the candidate, for whom RPL can be a very difficult journey when this does occur; a group of RPL assessors may be required who collectively cover all the industry areas in which the workers have been working; and these same assessors must have an excellent working knowledge of the training packages (that is, of vocational qualifications and performance standards and how units of competences can be grouped together to make up qualifications).

The recognition expert in Adelaide had been involved in skills recognition for workers affected by the closure of Mitsubishi Motors from 2004 to 2009. In that case there was special funding available for RPL trials. The RPL process was undertaken onsite over several months, until the date of the plant closure, and made available at all hours to ensure shift workers were able to attend. In the Mitsubishi RPL project, 120 workers participated. Skills recognition occurred in frontline management, electrotechnology, automotive manufacturing, production engineering and metrology. Ninety-nine workers gained full qualifications against the Australian Qualifications Framework (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009). Most of the people in the program were able to have their automotive qualifications mapped over to engineering. Many workers also had team leader experience and were therefore eligible for qualifications in frontline management and project management. Consequently, most workers who had a Certificate III in Automotive were recognised with skills at least to a Certificate III in Engineering, a Certificate IV in Frontline Management and a Certificate IV or higher in Project Management. This opened up significant employment opportunities for them, including the opportunities available at the time with the Collins-class submarine project.

Sam (not his real name) worked at Mitsubishi Motors for 16 years and was 45 years of age when he was retrenched in 2008. He obtained additional qualifications through RPL. He had worked in Mitsubishi's engineering department as a spray painter, had become a leading hand and a training supervisor. Over time he had responsibility for maintaining the machines and was a shop steward with the union. Sam said having the opportunity to gather workplace evidence for skills recognition was fantastic. He attained a Certificate IV in Frontline Management and a Diploma in Engineering. Sam then went about finding another job on his own. He has had several jobs since 2008 and all were acquired through his own network of family and friends. Sam became a house painter for two-and-a-half years, and then worked in a timber mill on the lathes until the mill shut down two years later. He now drives trucks as well as working in a recycling yard. He considers himself lucky because it was not overly important to him that he find a well-paying job.

ACL Bearings in Tasmania, which ceased operating at the end of June 2014, also assisted the transition of its employees to new careers by providing them with the opportunity to have their existing skills formally recognised through the RPL process. Initial expressions of interest to employees of ACL yielded 83 employees interested in the opportunity. The

Work Lab, in conjunction with one Tasmanian and two interstate registered training organisations, jointly provided the RPL service. The skills transfer and RPL process was informed using Work Lab's specialist software, SkillsBook. This provided an end-to-end assessment, frequently requiring six hours per candidate to complete the registered training organisation's validation process. During this process, each employee built their personal skills profile and explored new career pathways using the skills gained both at ACL and externally.

Fifty employees continued with the process after the personal skills profile step and applied for RPL, with 42 employees achieving either a full qualification or a statement of attainment for units of competency in their chosen qualifications. In total, 27 full qualifications and 18 statements of attainment were achieved. These ranged from Certificate I in Engineering and Certificate II in Logistics, through to diplomas of Advanced Management, Laboratory Technology and Engineering (Advanced Trade). Employees were able to use the RPL process to transition into other industries, many obtaining qualifications or statements of attainment in areas such as aged care, hospitality, community services, and horticulture (Morgan 2014).

With respect to the development of an initial skills profile, the South Australian Government is also requiring that Holden and its supply chain automotive workers use the Work Lab's specialist software, SkillsBook. South Australia has used SkillsBook in the past and has modified it specifically for use in the Automotive Workers in Transition Program. Following completion of the SkillsBook process, the career practitioner informs the worker of the registered training organisation that will assist them to obtain official skills recognition. The South Australian Government has selected 15 local training organisations that collectively cover the scope of work of all the displaced automotive workers.

As part of the ForestWorks Workers' Assistance Service in Tasmania, displaced workers were provided with a free skills audit. As one of the workers' assistance coordinators explained:

Our role is identifying what they used to do, through RPL skills audits. We try to specialise in how their current skills set can link in with other industries. Quite often it is the person's mindset saying 'I only work in a saw mill'. A lot of those skills are generic skills and are transferrable. For instance, a lot are transferrable to heavy Occupational Health and Safety compliance. We ask the participant to bring in any copies of work and certificates. Often, but not always, we also have contact with supervisors and managers who can provide third party evidence that those people were competent using those tasks. In addition, we get the RTO to access any training records they may have.

It was reported that by receiving formal recognition, displaced workers gained self-esteem, felt they had valuable transferrable skills, and were more able to demonstrate their full potential to new employers (ForestWorks 2013).

Another interviewed worker and her two colleagues in Adelaide had been offered skills recognition and/or training in a Certificate II in Business by their employer. However, they thought 'this is laughable as we had higher level skills than that'. They tried to have the offer upgraded to a certificate III level and in business administration rather than in business but failed and so 'went it alone'. The worker and her colleagues

Formal recognition gave displaced workers improved self-esteem and the confidence to demonstrate their full potential to new employers.

discussed their options daily, kept each other positive and motivated and contacted skills transfer and training providers directly. They ended up doing a course online, Certificate IV in Education Support, to broaden their job opportunities. The interviewed worker also undertook a skills recognition process, guided by TAFESA, and achieved a Certificate III in Business Administration.

Stage 2: Training

Many of the experts interviewed stressed that training must be driven by the needs of the displaced older worker rather than by the available training programs or by pre-conceived ideas of what jobs will suit them. Also frequently mentioned was that older workers who have been in their jobs for some time may not be familiar with the current training system and the full range of qualifications and skill sets (for example, licences) available. They were seen to need considerable help to investigate training possibilities.

While all of the large firm worker transition programs examined across the four case study sites included training funds as part of the package, there were differences in the size of the funds available and the nature of the training programs supported.

In the 1990s as part of the BHP Pathways Program and during the 12 months prior to the closure of BHP Steelworks, the displaced workers were given funding from the New South Wales Government in the form of retrenchment training packages. It was mandated that, in order to obtain some of their retrenchment money, the displaced workers had to undertake some form of training. While this training was only for 12 months, displaced workers could undertake as many courses as they wished with the Hunter Institute of TAFE. Many courses were aimed at reskilling the displaced workers to enable them to obtain a job in the coal mines or the power plants in the Hunter region. Others trained in computer programming and software – in 1999 this was viewed as a burgeoning industry. Many also trained in the hospitality industry, as there was a push by the Newcastle Council to promote the area as a tourism region. Many displaced workers also decided to train and start their own small business (for example, lawn mowing, landscape gardening, vehicle maintenance, car cleaning and house painting; Payne 2013).

It is important to note that, in relation to the BHP Steelworks retrenchments, many of these displaced workers had been with BHP for 30 to 40 years. When it came to retraining, many of the older displaced workers were reluctant to change and retrain. Furthermore, some were angry that technology meant that their jobs had become redundant and, as a result, they were reluctant to retrain in courses involving technology. Among those who did seek training, it is interesting to note that many enjoyed the training, not for the training component, but rather for the peer support that it provided. One interviewee likened the training to the men's shed program, in that it allowed the displaced workers to talk about their emotions and problems with others who understood their situation.

Another source of jobs for some of these displaced workers was the Minehunter project. In 1994, the Department of Defence awarded ADI Ltd (now known as Thales Australia) a contract to build six Italian-designed Minehunter vessels for the Royal Australian Navy. ADI built the Minehunter fleet at its Newcastle shipbuilding facility and continued maintenance on the vessels from 1994 to 2004. As a condition of the New South Wales Government's funding, ADI was required to engage with the Hunter Institute of TAFE to purchase training for unemployed workers, many of whom were displaced workers from

the closure of the BHP Steelworks in 1999. The Hunter TAFE undertook a skills audit to determine all of the skills required to construct the Minehunter vessels and identified skills shortages. Hunter TAFE then commenced a pre-training program for 300 unemployed people, including many of the displaced BHP Steelworks workers. These individuals were trained in traditional shipbuilding courses, such as Certificate III in Fibreglassed Reinforced Plastics, and also in the other trades necessary for building and maintaining the vessels. Following the completion of the pre-training, these 300 individuals were employed by ADI and were also provided with on-the-job training while working on the Minehunters.

The training program was conducted like an apprenticeship, with Hunter TAFE trainers working alongside the trainees to help them to develop their skills. Once construction of the Minehunters had been completed, in 2002, there were 300 newly trained people who were job-ready. As part of ADI's contract, the company was to develop these employees into another area once the contract had finished. However, there is limited evidence that this occurred. Many workers found themselves displaced and unemployed once again, with new skills but no job. Some obtained new jobs in the burgeoning fibreglass pleasure craft industry, due to the low Australian dollar making it more desirable for European and American investors to have their super yachts built in Australia. For others, the skills developed for the boat-building industry prompted them to start businesses in related fields such as building submersible vessels and hyperbaric chambers, constructing these locally and exporting them globally, with much success.

Shifting to current times, we find the funds available for training to be more limited. In the Ford Transition Program, the allocation is \$1000 for each worker for any training, subject to the coordinator endorsing payment on invoice from the selected registered training organisation. Below is the experience of one worker.

Ron (not his real name) is an ex-Ford worker who took advantage of further training. He had completed his apprenticeship at Ford and worked there for 35 years as an electrician and a refrigeration mechanic (via extra training) until he was retrenched in June 2014. Ron attended Gordon TAFE. He did some short courses in working at heights, traffic control management, hazardous area wiring and electrical spotting to broaden the range of potential jobs for which he was skilled. Ron applied for 85 jobs in total; he was interviewed for four. He was unemployed for five-and-a-half months until he secured a fly-in fly-out job in Queensland. He comments that the job is 'filling up the bank book but I am not sure how long the job will last. It is still on my mind what to do next. I now know that nothing happens fast'. Ron suggests that further useful assistance for him would be the names of employers who are seeking workers in the Geelong area. He wants to return to working in the Geelong region to be with his family and friends.

The displaced workers must seek approval before enrolling in training in order for Holden and its supply chain workers enrolled in the Automotive Workers Transition Program to have their training paid by the Automotive Transformation Taskforce. Furthermore, unlike many other displaced worker training programs, the taskforce does not fund work licences (for example, forklift, truck training and White Card) or the purchase of tools, equipment, travel or accommodation associated with the VET courses eligible for funding.

Major keys to the success of programs are their holistic nature, the wide range of services being delivered and the use of workers' assistance coordinators.

Finally, for those considering starting up their own small business post-retrenchment, most of the large-firm workers' transition programs provide referrals to relevant existing agencies for assistance. These include the Macquarie Business Growth Centre in the Hunter region and the SA Chamber of Commerce or the Polaris Centre for Innovation and Business in Adelaide. The need for this step was identified by an Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) Labour Adjustment Officer in relation to Mitsubishi workers:

Although I have no direct evidence of people being targeted for 'get rich schemes', I did receive quite a few enquiries from people looking to access the people who had left Mitsubishi to talk about franchises and other ways to use their redundancies. We need to be mindful of people out there working on ways to take advantage of people who may be vulnerable.

Stage 3: Post-training

The case studies revealed a range of practices that assist in the stage of post-training and in obtaining a new job. The post-training assistance practices for displaced workers after the closure of large firms included resumé writing to ensure that relevant transferable skills specific to a job were identified; job search assistance via the internet; networking advice; and help with job interviews and self-marketing to potential employers. This assistance was seen to be critically important, as many of the older workers had been with their current company long-term and had never engaged in active job search.

The large firm and associated supplier firm worker transition programs ensured that workers were engaged with open access programs in their region after the closure of the firm and once the worker transition programs had ceased. For example, BHP Steelworks in its final wind-down phase opened an onsite Centrelink office, which provided a one-stop shop for BHP employees. In the Ford Transition Program, career transition or outplacement services firms have assisted workers assessed to be more work-ready in job search activities and linked them with suitable employers with immediate job opportunities.

Keys to success

A number of lessons emerged from the large firm and associated supplier worker transition programs. Significantly, many of the practices outlined earlier in the review of the literature operated in these large and well-organised initiatives.

A major key to their success is their holistic nature, with a wide range of services being delivered. The types of assistance required by displaced older workers from lower-skilled jobs in their search for new jobs include career guidance, skills transfer, reskilling and training activities, job resumé and new job interview assistance, access to work experience, job search assistance, wage subsidies, provision of access to a range of personal support services, and access to public employment/public works programs and new private sector job-creation programs.

Another key to success is the use of coordinators (under various titles), who were highly experienced and who could relate well to the mature-aged workers. For example, specialist workers' assistance coordinators were the linchpin of the ForestWorks program. All were forestry industry workers who had experienced retrenchment

themselves and many knew the displaced workers they were assisting personally. They provided one-on-one, flexible and ongoing support to the displaced workers. The Ford workers' assistance coordinator was also from the same industry and of a similar age to the displaced workers and could talk their language. In all cases, the focus was on hands-on and one-on-one assistance rather than an emphasis on merely churning them through the services.

As one workers' assistance coordinator interviewee in the ForestWorks program in Tasmania noted:

Displaced workers are people not statistics. The most important thing you can do for them is to get them back into employment because working has been the backbone of their life. Not to get them into work can have dire consequences for the person. What you need to help them is on-the-ground, face-to-face help, flexible arrangements (such as meeting where the displaced worker wants to meet), getting them happy and giving options.

As another coordinator summarised:

The one-on-one contact is so important. Not just churning them through, really listening to them. They have a great amount of skill. Formal RPL helps them build their self-esteem and shows to employers the value of the older people. Employers actually liked the older people because they get the job done, are loyal and stay. The WELL project funded by the Federal Government got guys who were over 50, never used a computer before, working with a Tasmania TAFE teacher who had worked in sawmills. This teacher taught them how to be comfortable using IT, using the internet (for example, SEEK) and word processing to write a resume. Also of great help is having a coordinator who can chat with them prior to interviews – really informal – doing mock interviews if that is what they wanted.

Another key to the success of many of these large programs was the use of partnerships. For example, the coordinator of the Ford Transition Program emphasised the strong relationships between the Ford HR team, general management, the unions and various outside agencies as a key to success:

All parties have the shared objective of helping the workers. The HR team has been supplying workers with their individual job and training profiles. General management has put in its own resources and supported in any way we have asked. The unions have been brilliant at leading the way. The shop stewards have been the first in line for a one-on-one meeting and have encouraged others to make appointments. Many outside agencies have been involved. The Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network has been most helpful in developing customised assistance. The new Workforce Development Centre at the Gordon TAFE has provided a further place where retrenched workers can access a range of services. And all the local training agencies are assisting with skills recognition and training programs, and employment and recruitment agencies with job search.

Similarly, the brief for the current South Australian Automotive Transformation Taskforce is that the taskforce engages with all stakeholders involved in services' provision to displaced automotive workers and during the process of facilitating coordinated access. The taskforce meets regularly to ensure this is occurring.

The good practices learned from one program were explicitly incorporated into the design of new programs.

Although we identified the critical success factors above, a note of caution should be sounded, since many of these large industry programs have not been fully evaluated. However, there was clear evidence that the good practices learned from one program had been explicitly incorporated into the design of new programs in response to the next phase of large industry restructuring in regions. In particular, there were references made by the services providers interviewed to the lessons learned from previous major industry closures (for example, the closure of BHP Steelworks in the Hunter region of New South Wales, Mitsubishi Motors in South Australia). In some cases there are more formal reports and studies. For example, there is the Tasman Economics (2002) report on the Minehunter project; the Australian Productivity Commission (2014) report on Australia's automotive manufacturing industry; the Boston Consulting Group (2000) report on the BHP closure and related events; the Beer et al. (2006) and Beer and Thomas (2007) reports on the Mitsubishi Motors' closure; and Payne (2004) on the BHP Newcastle closure. We have included the available evidence from these studies where relevant.

Overall, given the level of federal and state government funding allocated to high-profile industry closures, there is a surprising lack of formal, empirical and longer-term evaluations of how well these significant government investments support major industry restructuring. However, the current South Australian Automotive Workers in Transition Program has recognised this shortcoming. It incorporates an upfront registration process, one that allows for real-time monitoring of the transitioning of workers' movements through the program. It will be used to conduct a comprehensive longitudinal study of the experiences and destinations of transitioning workers. In retrospect, the Geelong region has also identified this lack; consequently, the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (GRLEN), a workforce development system, is seeking cooperation with local organisations to develop a regional retrenched workers database to enable monitoring of, and ongoing assistance for, all displaced workers.

Perhaps the most revealing finding is that by a union official who had become a full-time Labour Adjustment Officer (LAO) with the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union after the closure of Mitsubishi was announced. This officer maintained contact with ex-Mitsubishi workers through two surveys, with approximately 1200 calls being made for each survey. According to the survey results, the majority of eligible people have engaged with the services on offer and have been grateful for those services. The reactions to the services offered by the federal and state governments were predominantly still very positive, with complaints coming mainly from those with very high expectations about their redundancy package. Others had concerns about the cost of their intended training. However, of note is the comment that:

The majority of people who were made redundant would still be there if they had the option. They soon realised the importance of job security and also realised they would not be likely to find other employment with similar wages or conditions. Sadly, a lot of these people have moved into casual or part-time work with little or no security. The insecurities that result from that type of employment have been noticeable in many of the conversations we have had with them.

Open access programs for all displaced workers

The four case studies revealed a set of general programs (see table 1). These programs are not focused upon one industry (for example, forestry, automotive, steel), but rather their role was to assist displaced workers from a wide range of business types and industries. While these open access programs can be utilised by displaced workers from the large industry closures, they also attract workers displaced from small to medium-sized enterprises, enterprises without the large numbers of workers – and the consequent impact – being retrenched, which attracts special funding from state and federal governments. These programs also included pre-training, training and post-training steps and processes managed by inter-agency groups.

One-stop worker assistance programs

Rapid response initiatives were available to any firm restructuring in two of our case study sites: the Hunter region and Tasmania. The aim of these initiatives is to provide swift assistance at the time of job loss announcements to place the workers to be displaced on an immediate pathway to new employment. In the Hunter region, the Rapid Response Team works collaboratively in the event of any business closures or downsizing, regardless of an organisation's size. The model involves gathering intelligence on pending company closures or downsizing, seeking information from the business about their plans for the retraining or redeployment of employees, meeting with the company to identify job losses, and capturing upfront the skill set of any potentially redundant workers. Actions that might follow for the displaced workers include information sessions, identifying employee skill sets and training needs, and providing access to a training coordinator, whose role will be to design case management services for the displaced workers. Those interviewed reported that this initiative is emerging as a good example of the impact of a coordinated inter-agency approach in assisting displaced workers to retrain and/or obtain new employment. Also in the Hunter, there is the Pathways Employment Services company, which grew from the BHP Pathways Program. Many organisations in the Hunter have used Pathways Employment Services to provide a broad range of services for their retrenched workers. This company has the capacity to provide coaching and mentoring, active marketing of displaced workers, job search, training and workshops, and outplacement services.

In Tasmania, the Rapid Response Skills Initiative, administered by Skills Tasmania, is a skills and training initiative that provides financial support for training for people made redundant (Skills Tasmania 2014, 2015). The program provides funding support for nationally accredited courses in the VET and higher education sectors and funding support for occupational tickets and licences. Preference is given to accredited courses and registered training organisations endorsed by Skills Tasmania, where appropriate and available.

The Tasmanian Government has also established the West Coast Economic Working Group in response to Copper Mines of Tasmania entering a care and maintenance arrangement in 2014 for up to eight months. This initiative was designed to retain the mining workforce within the region for the reopening of the mine. This rapid response group supports affected mining workers through information sessions, skills training, job seeking and social services, while also seeking job-creating investment and the fast-tracking of infrastructure projects. The working group was able to leverage an additional

\$110 000 of funding from the federal government to add to the \$250 000 for the West Coast training and skills initiatives provided by the Tasmanian Government. This funding will be used to implement a social network of support, additional on-the-ground services and financial aid.

The role of the working group is also to identify, review and recommend new jobs ideas and opportunities for the region. The local community embraced this opportunity and through a dedicated email address and an 1800 number they provided their suggestions for new jobs ideas and opportunities for the region (Tasmanian Department of State Growth 2014). The working group summarised their findings and detailed the key projects and community suggestions in their *Interim report*, released in October 2014, that should be supported by the Tasmanian Government (Tasmanian Department of State Growth 2014). They identified opportunities where displaced workers could be fast-tracked into other core industry employment sectors in the region, including in tourism, hospitality and aquaculture. The group also identified several infrastructure projects, which have now been brought forward and which will create many job opportunities for displaced workers.

In Geelong, the Workforce Development Centre, located at Gordon TAFE, commenced operations in late 2014 and is funded to 2018. The centre provides a central point at which any retrenched worker can access a range of services. Operating as an 'honest broker', not promoting any organisation over another to its clients, it is a one-stop shop, where retrenched workers, job seekers and their families can access a range of services. The services include individual career guidance, assistance in developing career action plans, information about training courses, information about the local job market, and access to online career development resources and tools. For one ex-Ford worker interviewed, the best assistance he received was from the Geelong Workforce Development Centre; it was in the form of resumé development and interview preparation for a particular job. He commented that:

The woman I met there appeared to have all the time in the world for me. She 'crow-barred' out of me my work story and wrote it up into a resume that I was most happy with and could not have written myself. I also did a rehearsal interview with her around generic questions likely to be asked. I did okay in the interview but did not get the job due to a lack of appropriate hands-on experience.

Another similar 'education-to-employment hub' was opened in mid-2014 as a pop-up store in the Corio Shopping Centre in northern Geelong. It is run by Acquire Learning, a conduit organisation that links clients to appropriate education and training providers. Over a number of steps and via career consultants, the hub provides job seekers with assistance to determine their ideal work role; matches them to the right courses and qualifications; and offers coaching and mentoring support to get them job-ready (Acquire Learning 2014).

The Job Services Network

The open access national Job Services Network was also assisting displaced older workers across the case study regions. However, many of the displaced workers interviewed had found the agencies of the network to be less personable and not fully appreciative of the issues facing the mature-aged worker. For example, one Adelaide-based displaced worker interviewed who went to a Job Services Australia provider said:

A young girl rattled off all of this information that was useless or did not apply to me, and then she pointed me to the computers and said to go and find jobs through that means while we complete the process to get you registered and onto job support. I thought, I can do work searches at home and this process is only going to chew up my valuable time.

Indeed, the key message from several of the displaced workers interviewed who had engaged with Centrelink/Job Services Australia providers was 'provide more personalised, responsive and tailored support for the older worker impacted by closures of local businesses'.

Specialised labour workforce websites to aid job search

Regional labour market databases and websites assist workers from all types of industries and sectors. There were many examples of such services highlighted in the case studies. For example, the Geelong Careers website is a virtual web-based entry point into local jobs information and advice. The website often has over 800 local regional jobs, which appear daily on the site, and includes a suite of free resources that provide local career data (Geelong Careers 2015). The Geelong Careers website is owned by the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network. The network aims to ensure that the website is an up-to-date, reliable and comprehensive guide to careers in Geelong and the surrounding areas. There are plans to extend this website to include a regional workforce projections database, which will contain robust localised labour market data and forecasts. Importantly, it will provide data on the numbers of people in training in the various labour markets (Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network 2014). The 'Skills in the Hunter' and 'Jobs in the Hunter' websites also promote local skills and job opportunities (Smeeth 2014).⁴

Parallel regional jobs growth initiatives

The initiatives described thus far might broadly be called capacity-building work and are aimed at helping displaced workers to plan a future that involves successful re-engagement with work. However, also found in all four case studies is job-creation work, which is being undertaken in parallel in order to assist displaced workers to find new jobs locally. This job-creation work is being done in acknowledgment that many displaced workers want to stay in their local areas due to family and social ties – a finding that accords with our earlier literature review (see support document 1).

These job-creation initiatives include the Hunter Strategic Procurement Initiative, which helps local businesses to identify opportunities and increase capability to secure contracts with government and non-government organisations in the region (NSW Trade and Investment et al. 2014). Geelong has the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund (GRIIF), which was established in 2013 when Ford announced it was going to close. GRIIF has received contributions from the Australian Government (\$15m), the Victorian Government (\$4.5m), Ford (\$5m) and Alcoa (\$5m) (Department of Industry and Science 2015).

⁴ <<http://www.skillsinthehunter.com.au/>; <http://jobsonthecoast.com.au/hunter>>.

The GRIIF projects include many in agricultural products manufacture; for example, animal feed mill, animal-processing facilities, animal product development facilities, agricultural chemicals production and paper products development. One project will expand a clothing company's head office facilities in the Geelong region. There are also two projects in car manufacturing; for example, carbon fibre wheels manufacture (Department of Industry and Science 2015). However, as one interviewee remarked: 'How well these projects suit the skills of the current displaced older male workers is another matter'. There is a proposal to establish a Geelong Future Manufacturing Centre, whose role will be to expand and diversify the existing Geelong manufacturers, as well as to encourage a new generation of start-up manufacturers and attract other manufacturers to the Geelong region. The overall aim is for the Geelong region to maintain a manufacturing focus. Jobs are created that use the current skills base of its workers, while high-end new skills are also developed (Geelong Manufacturing Council 2014).

In addition, Geelong has the 'Skilling the Bay' initiative, an initiative designed to skill the local workforce as the region's local economy transitions over the coming years (Gordon Institute of TAFE 2014). The Skilling the Bay initiative is funded by the Victorian Government, which has provided \$11 million to date, including for ten initiatives that have been developed through community consultation. These initiatives include: future skills development in science, technology, engineering design, mathematics and advanced manufacturing; innovative and entrepreneurialism in small and medium enterprises in Geelong; the development of learning pathways (for example, in health and community services and into tertiary education for Year 9 students); the areas of high risk associated with long-term unemployment; and a pilot of an advanced manufacturing plant for the production of short nano-fibres.

For the Adelaide region, and indeed for South Australia as whole, there is the 'Our Jobs Plan', which has six key action areas, including a 'support for displaced workers' action area, and a 'support for affected communities and accelerating advanced manufacturing' action area. In Tasmania, the Tasmanian Jobs Program, which commenced in 2014, is a trial program that provides a one-off payment of \$3250 to employers who hire an eligible job seeker in an ongoing full-time job (Department of Employment 2013).

This section highlights that VET providers need to assist in the creation of new jobs through the provision of relevant training in new areas and this training may be of most relevance to some displaced workers.

Keys to success

The success of these open access initiatives can be attributed to their holistic nature and their easy access for displaced workers. Essentially, any worker can be supported through the open access programs, and in particular workers from small-to-medium-sized firms. On the whole these workers have no access to the range of options offered to workers involved in major industry closures. Furthermore, the interconnectedness between the displaced worker initiatives and job-creation activities is a positive factor and another key determinant in workers getting jobs after restructuring. As noted earlier, the scale and focus of interventions in response to industry restructuring need to

be attentive to the economic and labour market conditions prevailing at that time in a region (Spoehr 2014).

On the negative side, however, organisations delivering these types of programs reported that older workers are often unaware of the advances that have been made in the Australian qualifications system, in particular the many levels and types of qualifications available to them. Furthermore, program coordinators and older workers reported in our interviews that many mature workers often cannot afford to pay for training, often being deemed ineligible by various state governments and VET systems for subsidised training.

Many older workers were unaware of advances in the Australian qualification system and the many levels and types of qualifications available to them.

Customised initiatives for older male displaced workers

As discussed earlier, older displaced workers have common barriers to securing new jobs. These include a lack of knowledge of the broader labour market, the current training system and the employment services available to them. Across the four case studies it was found that there was a wide range of customised initiatives for overcoming these barriers for older displaced workers, particularly for males, who make up the majority of the workforce in manufacturing industries.

As table 1 indicates, the customised initiatives address three distinct phases:

- the pre-training stage, such as industry taster programs
- the training stage, such as foundation and life skills training
- the post-training stage, such as local workshops showcasing job opportunities, job clubs and the use of volunteering as a step to winning a job.

These customised initiatives are discussed below, beginning with a brief profile on one key agency that specifically focused on the needs of mature-aged workers seeking employment: DOME. In doing so, the agency exemplified the application of most of the initiatives that the literature review identified as good practices (see support document 1).

Dedicated one-stop service for mature-aged workers seeking employment

DOME in South Australia provides free career advice and employment services, accredited training services and tailored assistance to mature-aged employees. It uses volunteers to supplement its resources, enabling the organisation to provide more one-on-one assistance to mature-aged workers than Job Services Australia is able (DOME 2015). The volunteers help job seekers to identify their skills and grade them as good, better or best, and identify occupations in which they might be interested. Building self-esteem and self-confidence underpin these sessions. DOME also assists mature-aged workers with resumé and cover letter preparation, as well as coaching on interview techniques. Furthermore, as a registered training organisation, DOME delivers VET programs in basic foundation skills and business, office studies, hospitality and retail. For the job-ready, DOME has a database of over 2000 employers who are specifically looking for more mature-aged workers (DOME 2015). For other training, DOME refers their clients to other training organisations. Below are two stories from older retrenched workers about DOME.

Randall (not his real name) was a chartered accountant who was retrenched in April 2014 from an IT company in Adelaide. Randall found out about DOME through his wife. He thinks highly of DOME and sees it as an organisation that discriminates positively for older workers. Randall has won some work indirectly as a result of connecting up with DOME. He thinks more money should be spent on marketing older workers to employers and that a person's age and experience should count for more.

Martha (not her real name) was retrenched at 67 years of age from the retail industry. She believes that DOME 'is the better bet than the local Job Services Network' to help her to find a new job. She knows that DOME has only employers who are looking for mature-aged workers on their books. Martha, like a few of the other displaced workers interviewed, believes she is being discriminated against by potential new employers because of her age.

Pre-training stage initiatives – industry taster programs

In the early 2000s in the Hunter region, Hunter TAFE created a range of 12-week taster training courses for the displaced workers from BHP Steelworks. These taster training courses were in various trades and in industries with skills shortage. In addition, in order to cater specifically for these displaced workers, all courses included a section on resumé writing, occupational health and safety, first aid, and a half-day to three-quarter day session facilitated by a counsellor on workplace change. Following completion of these 12-week courses, the displaced worker could choose to enrol in another 12-week course in a different discipline or undertake additional study in the same area (self-funded) and receive credit for the modules already completed in the short course. Some displaced workers moved into 'journeyman' courses, studying one night per week for 12 to 24 months to obtain a statement of attainment. These new courses resulted in an additional 5000 enrolments and required Hunter TAFE to employ many more part-time teachers.

In Victoria, mature-aged male retrenched workers are a major focus in the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network. Their Jobs 4 Geelong Front Foot series assists displaced or soon-to-be displaced mature-aged males to learn about the industry sectors in the Geelong region that are likely to be jobs-growth areas in the coming years. The industry sectors showcased to date include transport and logistics, community services, construction, security and corrections, and advanced manufacturing. GRLEN reports that attendance numbers at the Jobs 4 Geelong Front Foot series are growing, while the sessions have been a very good way to interact with the men and to determine their needs (Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network 2014).

Another industry taster program conducted by this network during 2014 gave displaced male workers from Qantas, Forstaff and other organisations the opportunity to undertake site visits that covered jobs in disability, aged care and youth services. Following the site visits, participants were given career counselling sessions and information about training for this industry. GRLEN reports that about half of the men who undertook this taster program intended to undertake training to gain a job in the community services sector. These men report that, without this type of program, they would not have considered pursuing a career in this sector (Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network 2014). Indeed, we interviewed a few workers who had taken the opportunity to learn about aged care, and who had since completed the relevant training and taken up a job

in aged care. However, in one instance the worker had reportedly encountered discrimination in the workplace as a male in a predominately female workforce. He had eventually quit.

Tasmania has The Words @ Work course run by TasTAFE in partnership with the Burnie LINC Literacy Program (LINC Tasmania 2014a). This course aims to assist clients needing to build the skills necessary to apply for entry into accredited courses, to succeed in their courses, and to work particular industry areas covered by the courses. The ten-week part-time course was designed to give learners an introduction to three current growth sectors in Northern Tasmania – community services, warehousing and transport, and retail – providing a first step in possible pathways to formal industry training. Participants gained insights into these industries and an understanding of the personal and training requirements of each work area. Although not all three industries were of interest to all participants, they still completed all of the learning activities, commenting that generic employability skills apply in all industries – workplace health and safety, communication and team work skills. At the conclusion of the course, our interviewees reported that many participants had grown in confidence and had improved their literacy, language and numeracy skills (LINC Tasmania 2014a).

Job clubs, through regular meetings, allowed older retrenched workers to share information and build social contacts.

Training stage initiatives – life skills courses

When the BHP Steel workers were retrenched, many were in their late 40s and 50s. The Pathways Program encouraged these workers to access a range of life skills courses through Hunter TAFE, and some of these programs were designed specifically for these retrenched workers. The premise of a number of these life skills courses was that a proportion of the older displaced workers would not be looking for a new job. However, by undertaking these courses they would be able to manage small jobs themselves – which means not having to pay others to do them. These courses included small DIY, home renovation, how to service a vehicle, basic welding, basic plumbing and eating to a budget. Interestingly, some of the displaced workers developed their own cottage industries, working for themselves.

In Tasmania, the Ready Set Go Program provides a combination of short courses covering technology skills, self-promotion, first aid, volunteering skills and more. The main focus is on building self-esteem and working with others (LINC Tasmania 2014b). As one recently retrenched participant commented:

Anyone who is feeling down and unloved should do this program. I'd say that I'm living proof of what it can do for you. I learnt a lot about how to communicate, and I have also learnt to write my own resume and cover letter, and a bit of computing as well.

Post-training stage initiatives

In Geelong, the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network has implemented job clubs, which involve regular meetings of older retrenched workers sharing information and building social connections. They report that these clubs help mature-aged retrenched workers to maintain focus and motivation with job search and to stay positive. Linked to these activities are opportunities for volunteering as a step towards winning a job. Focused volunteering is seen by its advocates as providing opportunities to get a taste of a potential work role for those unsure of whether the type

of work in which they're volunteering is right for them or for those who are struggling to get a permanent role, as they lack relevant experience. In the Geelong region, workers were accessing community organisations such as Volunteering Geelong.

Ron (not his real name), a retrenched Ford worker, had done some volunteer work, providing one-on-one assistance to a person with a disability. He found this work 'interesting and rewarding and it certainly helped to put my own life into perspective'. Grant (not his real name), an ex-ALCOA worker, completed a short course in responsible serving of alcohol so he could help out in the bar at his son's football club.

Finally, but importantly, we need to highlight that the loss of a job impacts not only on the individuals themselves, but also on their families and communities. Often linked to job loss is poorer mental health, marriage and family breakdowns, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide. The four case sites confirmed that males were accessing neighbourhood houses and men's sheds for a range of support services. Men's sheds, like neighbourhood houses, act as a central hub for information exchange and are places where men can be involved in skills usage and development activities.

In Tasmania, Rural Alive and Well (RAW) operates to provide counselling and outreach assistance 24/7 (RAW 2015). RAW's outreach managers work with displaced workers individually to identify their skills, help them to write their resumés, fill out paperwork (particularly if their literacy skills are low), arrange for job interviews and provide them with transport if required. In this way, RAW provides a holistic suite of services to help displaced workers, in particular linking services such as Centrelink, Job Services Australia, the Salvation Army, ForestWorks and the men's sheds. As one interviewee noted:

When guys lose their jobs, when their sense of self-worth is taken from them, there is an element of guilt and shame. Consequently, they often lose confidence and suffer from a mental health issue. These men need to be supported and valued, and the only way to do this is to have physical contact with them. Someone to talk to them and say this is not your fault.

We also found that some retrenched older male workers were using their union offices as a place to meet or to arrange regular meetings with men in similar situations to themselves. In these support groups, mature-aged retrenched workers exchange ideas and information about training and jobs, and helpful advice that had been given to them.

The Tasmanian ForestWorks Workers' Assistance Service included an intensive personal and ongoing support service. This is in keeping with the findings of a follow-up case study of Mitsubishi workers' perceptions of the family impacts of their job loss, which were predominantly negative (Jolley et al. 2011). The outcomes included financial strain, loss of relationship stability and general stress and worry. Jolley and her colleagues (2011) concluded there is a need for policy-makers to pay greater attention to these potential impacts by engaging human service professionals in post-retrenchment support and community development processes.

The overall impression from interviews with our displaced older workers was the critical necessity for interventions that built the workers' resilience and hope in the face of the shock and despair of being retrenched. They were actively seeking advice and assistance from numerous service providers about ways to negotiate the pre-training, training and

post-training stages. Unfortunately, when interviewed, most of these displaced workers, while employed, were not yet in their desired jobs.

Keys to success

The strength of the more customised initiatives highlighted in the case studies is their ability to augment the initiatives identified under the large firm and general access approaches. At their best, the customised approaches provide supportive structures that can be tailored to the specific needs of lower-skilled displaced workers, in particular older males. They provide activities that serve to maintain or build self-esteem and self-confidence, providing a buffer to the frustrations and stress of failed job applications.

Of the initiatives under the umbrella of these more customised programs, industry taster programs are providing tangible outcomes – displaced workers finding new jobs. Taster programs were also a successful feature of the initial BHP Pathways Program, while DOME reports that taster programs are being considered as a potential next step in assisting South Australian automotive workers who have been, or who are about to be, displaced.

Displaced workers' advice to their peers

During the interviews older displaced workers were asked what advice they would offer to other older workers facing job loss due to industry restructuring. The following were their key messages:

- Start considering options early.
- Recognise that it will take time to decide what to do, and then to do it also takes time.
- Use, but don't rely only on, provided services.
- Develop and use personal networks to get ideas and information and connect with prospective new employers.
- Qualifications do matter.
- Undertake additional training if needed.
- Talk with peers in similar circumstances to share information and maintain morale.
- Employers need to be made more aware of discrimination, especially age discrimination.
- Job Network Service providers must be more personable when they engage with workers and help them more quickly to move towards a new job.

Summary

Overall, we found that skills transfer, reskilling and training initiatives are major proactive strategies that can be used in response to the ongoing industry restructuring occurring in Australia. However, these initiatives need to be tailored to specific groups of displaced workers and aligned with other actions in order to achieve the best outcomes for older displaced workers and their communities.

In the absence of appropriate programs many older displaced workers will join the long-term unemployed or enter retirement by default.



Towards good practice to assist older displaced workers

The focus of this project was to identify evidence-based practices that lead to successful skills transfer, reskilling, training and the attainment of new jobs for older workers displaced from often lower-skilled jobs in many manufacturing industries. Overall, based on a review of the past research and the four Australian case studies, a number of practices emerge, which in combination can assist the older worker to gain new employment. More skilled and highly qualified older workers are more likely to have skills that are transferable to other industries, which enables these workers to win new jobs more easily. However, as the case studies highlighted, there are major challenges, and even experiences of direct and indirect discrimination, for those unemployed older workers in industries where larger proportions of the workforce have lower skills, few formal qualifications and poorer literacy and numeracy skills.

Importantly, as highlighted by Skills Australia (2011), the VET sector has a major role in providing training and retraining to assist individuals and industries to respond to change, especially those individuals and industries in our more economically vulnerable regions (see also Circelli & Stanwick 2014). The challenge is evidenced from Australian and international studies that demonstrate that, in the absence of appropriate programs and practices, many older and lower-skilled displaced workers join the long-term unemployed or enter retirement by default (for example, Spoehr, Barnett & Parnis 2009).

Barriers and enablers

In common with many previous researchers (for example, Selby Smith, Smith & Smith 2007), this research acknowledges that older workers are not a homogenous group. They have varied backgrounds, opportunities and work experiences. Nevertheless, there seems to be a range of common enablers and barriers that are linked to successful skills transfer, reskilling and training for older displaced workers. These shared barriers include: age-related stereotyping and discrimination, which affects the opportunities available to them; a lack of knowledge of the broader labour market, the current training system and employment services; a lack of access to age-appropriate training in their businesses and externally; and, for the more unskilled worker, a lack of basic levels of literacy, numeracy and technology skills.

In terms of overcoming these challenges, the common enablers identified through the literature review and found in practice in the four case studies include: displaced workers' businesses offering access to possible opportunities for training prior to business closure; engaging the displaced workers early in planning their future and after they receive the news they are to be retrenched; offering upfront quality screening, assessment and career exploration services to aid in the identification of new job options; designing and delivering age-appropriate training that recognises their previous work experiences; providing a range of job search services after training; and assisting and monitoring the displaced workers until they have achieved a new job.

A complementary strategy to the displaced older worker capacity-building practices is the development of regional job-creation programs, especially during times of major economic downturns in the region. Such approaches aim to enable displaced workers to find new jobs locally and to have their considerable skills and experiences, resulting from perhaps 20 to 30 years of employment, absorbed into other areas of the local economy rather than being lost. It was not apparent from our case studies the extent to which job-creation programs had aided displaced workers.

A best practice approach requires three stages: pre-training, training, and post-training follow-up.

A good practices working model for an effective regional response

An output of this project was the development of a framework that combined the good practices identified from past research and those found in the four case studies. In particular, we have built on the frameworks developed for the skilling and training of older workers offered in earlier reports (for example, Hansen's 2009 International Labour Organization project; Department of Industry 2014; Van Rooij 2012). Our preliminary framework locates the identified practices according to the three stages outlined earlier: pre-training; training; and post-training follow-up. Figure 3 summarises and also identifies the working principles on which the model is built and provides some possible mechanisms for executing the key practices.

Working principles

The working principles in figure 3 have been discussed earlier in this report and are also highlighted in the literature review (see support document 1) and the four case studies (see support document 2). The working principles are the key characteristics of displaced older workers that need to be taken into account when designing transition programs for them.

Key practices

The key practices include the tasks identified from the literature review and the four case studies and constitute a coherent package of initiatives for mature-aged retrenched workers. Each of the discrete tasks in the framework focuses on a specific aspect of assistance that may be required. It is not expected that any one displaced worker would access every specific intervention. Rather, the framework of initiatives would be tailored to meet the background, needs and preferences of individual displaced workers.

The framework provides a holistic response to worker displacement associated with industry restructuring. These initiatives are not offered as the final solutions, but rather as mechanisms to assist mature-aged retrenched workers, which through a 'proof of concept' approach will lead to an evaluation of their impact, their continuous improvement or their replacement over time with more effective interventions.

Figure 3 Working model to assist displaced older workers affected by industry restructuring

<p>Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early intervention – as it takes displaced older workers time to make future plans and to execute them ▪ Age- and experience-appropriate advisors who can connect with/respect older workers ▪ Awareness of low levels of basic and/or computer literacy among lower-skilled older workers ▪ Awareness of health risks due to the unstable life circumstances linked to job displacement ▪ Effective partnering by key agencies to provide a holistic response
<p>Stage 1 Pre-training: Advice, career planning, screening for training</p> <p><i>Key practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide information early on the full range of support services the workers may require and how and when they can access the services. ▪ Give information about local labour market opportunities. ▪ Showcase local growth-industry sectors. ▪ Offer specific new industry taster programs. ▪ Provide access to career advisors and exploration and assessment tools. ▪ Assess their existing skills, where possible, while they are still employed through an expert-facilitated approach and include skills obtained through other life activities. ▪ Help workers to identify transferable skills and complete recognition of prior learning assessments. ▪ Advise on training courses that help to prepare for new jobs. ▪ Help workers to prepare a personal transition plan based on the above. <p><i>Mechanisms for executing the practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Worker transition coordinators/specialist career advisors/skills recognition experts ▪ Rapid response teams ▪ One-stop worker transition and development centres ▪ Industry groups for showcasing ▪ Taster programs linked to site visits and information about careers in those industries.
<p>Stage 2 Training: Design and delivery of age-inclusive training</p> <p><i>Key practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Screen again prior to training to ensure that the program is right for the worker and the worker is capable of handling the content of the training. ▪ Modify training to acknowledge workers' life and work experiences. ▪ Provide ample time to learn, with good levels of support and feedback. ▪ Allow own-age group learning at their own pace with flexible instruction. ▪ Use training in groups to promote learning together and support. ▪ Use highly experiential approaches, meaning hands-on practical training in workplace-like environments. ▪ Provide extra assistance to those with low literacy and numeracy skills through life skills courses. ▪ Include practical skills on job search, resumé writing, networking and interviewing as part of the training. <p><i>Mechanisms for executing the practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Registered training organisations involve the workers in training design and development to ensure appropriate customisation in relation to content and delivery.
<p>Stage 3 Post-training: Employment assistance and ongoing monitoring and evaluation</p> <p><i>Key practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide job search assistance via the internet, the workers' own networks and through their cold-calling of other prospective employers. ▪ Help workers with resumé writing and specific job cover letter preparation that highlights relevant transferable skills. ▪ Coach workers in job interview techniques and active self-marketing. ▪ Encourage use of volunteering as a step to winning a job. ▪ Support workers and their families to relocate to other areas, if necessary, where job opportunities exist. ▪ Undertake job-creation initiatives to expand local job opportunities. ▪ Continue providing career advice and training to minimise the likelihood of long-term unemployment. ▪ Encourage workers to engage with each other and human service professionals to build their resilience. ▪ Introduce ways to monitor displaced workers' progress (for example, the number of contacts workers make, the value of each contact, and whether these contacts are in a position to provide job-related information). ▪ Measure success in terms of how many get a new job and what displaced workers regard as a good job. ▪ Promote stories that illustrate successful outcomes to motivate others to continue on to similar results. <p><i>Mechanisms for executing the practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local workshops/career days/site visits to firms/regional databases to showcase current job opportunities ▪ Job clubs and other social events to keep workers engaged and motivated ▪ Regional retrenched worker databases for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Mechanisms for executing the key practices

The mechanisms listed in figure 3 for executing the key practices were found in use across the four case sites. One key practice is to have a worker transition coordinator or agency to case-manage the entire process. The worker transition coordinator or agency needs to effectively partner between the several types of organisations that offer the various services and to identify mechanisms to achieve the following:

- a common agenda: with a shared vision and understanding of the key challenges and agreed actions
- shared measurement systems: with transparent key performance indicators and accessible data to track progress
- mutually reinforcing activities: including space for different activities coordinated through a shared action plan
- continuous communication: which aspires to being consistent, open communication and builds trust between organisations and with the displaced workers
- governance structures: to include an independent entity with staff possessing the appropriate skills to coordinate the participating organisations and to support implementation of actions to assist displaced workers.

Possible roles for VET providers

As noted earlier, VET providers need to play a central role in the training of displaced workers. VET providers are critical agents in promoting and encouraging sustainable regional development and growth (for example, see Kearns, Bowman & Garlick 2008). VET's major focus would be on initiatives during the training stage of the working model and in the skills recognition step of the pre-training stage.

It is also conceivable that VET providers play a role in upfront career counselling and the development of workers' skills profiles. However, in doing so they must operate as an 'honest broker'; that is, not promoting their skills programs to the detriment of the skills needs of workers. Their involvement in the post-training stage could occur through their links with employers, with an emphasis on job outcomes rather than on the development of the training to provide new skills and knowledge. In addition, they have a crucial role to play in creating new jobs through the provision of relevant training in new areas. VET providers could be key partnership facilitators.

Areas for further research

Finally, this project identifies an urgent need to investigate the actual levels of training resources available to displaced older workers from small and medium firms. This group of workers appears to be less resourced compared with those from larger firms, who are more likely to be supported by government interventions when their firms close.

In addition, it is not fully understood how the training needs of displaced workers vary across large, medium and small firms. While the cases noted differences between these types of enterprises, it was beyond the scope of this report to gather more detailed data on issues relating to the skills and training needs of these various groups of workers. Furthermore, as reported earlier, the Australian Productivity Commission (2014) has

concerns over equity issues in the training and assistance available to various displaced worker groups compared with other job seekers. This issue needs further investigation, with this report providing a starting point for the analysis of the current programs in place to assist the older worker.



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Appendix: Interview questions

A. Interview schedule: Displaced workers

Professor Victor Callan and Dr Kaye Bowman were recently awarded funding from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to undertake the above project. The aim of this research is to explore the enablers and barriers (such as personal, organisational, community or government factors) to successful skills transfer, reskilling and training for low-skilled older workers who experience industry restructuring in an attempt to identify good practice. Funding and support for this project was provided by the Australian Government Department of Industry through the National VET Research program – a competitive grants program – managed by NCVER. The interview questions are based on a draft working model we have developed through a literature review.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

- 1 From what job were you retrenched, and when?
- 2 What other jobs had you done before the job from which you were retrenched?
- 3 Did you do any training in your previous jobs? What sort of training did you do?
- 4 When you heard you were to be retrenched what were your immediate thoughts?
- 5 What are you doing now and your future work plans?
- 6 What factors influenced you to do what you are doing now, job-wise?
- 7 How did you get from your retrenched job to where you are now job-wise?
- 8 Who else did you receive assistance from and what was its nature? Did it help?
- 9 What did you do yourself? Did it help?
- 10 What was the most impactful assistance you received?
- 11 Did your age have any bearing on what assistance you received in your view?
- 12 Would further assistance have helped? If yes, what kind? If no, why not?
- 13 Regarding skills transfer and new training to get from your retrenched job to where you are now:
 - a. Were you keen on further training? Why/Why not?
 - b. Where did you do the training and why there?
 - c. What type of training was it?
- 14 Was the training based on advice/an assessment of possible new jobs available and realistically suited to you? If yes, who was involved in the assessment? What did you gain for the assessment?
- 15 Was the training based on an assessment of your current skills and knowledge that is, was your current skills and knowledge taken into account?
- 16 Was the training delivered in ways that suited you?
- 17 Overall, what do you think of the skills transfer and retraining you received?
- 18 Did you receive any assistance after you finished the retraining?

- 19 If yes what and with what impact. If no, would you have liked to?
- 20 What are your thoughts about having been retrenched?
- 21 Given your experience, what are the key things you think should be done to help older workers who are retrenched to get a new job?
- 22 Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Thank you for the information you have provided for our study.

B. Interview schedule: VET Providers

Professor Victor Callan and Dr Kaye Bowman were recently awarded funding from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to undertake the above project. The aim of this research is to explore the enablers and barriers (such as personal, organisational, community or government factors) to successful skills transfer, reskilling and training for low-skilled older workers who experience industry restructuring in an attempt to identify good practice.

Funding and support for this project was provided by the Australian Government Department of Industry through the National VET Research program – a competitive grants program – managed by NCVER. The interview questions are based on a draft working model we have developed through a literature review.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

- 1 Tell me a little bit about the training your organisation provides.
- 2 What's your role in your organisation?
- 3 What experience do you have in helping older workers (aged 45 years and more) to overcome job loss due to retrenchment caused by industry restructuring?
- 4 What experience does your organisation have in helping older workers (aged 45 years and more) to overcome job loss due to retrenchment caused by industry restructuring?
- 5 What services does your organisation offer to help older displaced workers get a new job?
- 6 Does your organisation apply a particular set of procedures /strategies to assist these older displaced workers?
- 7 If no, do you think a particular/set of procedures /strategies could help older displaced workers to overcome job loss?
- 8 How does your organisation ensure it provides older displaced workers with relevant training?
- 9 How does your organisation go about skills recognition (RPL) that are transferable, especially those with no or lower level qualifications?
 - a. What characteristics of older workers are taken into account when designing new training for them and explain how?
 - b. Are there other characteristics of older workers that should be taken into account in training design?
 - c. How does your organisation deliver new skills training for older displaced workers?

- d. What skills transfer and new skilling strategies have the greatest impact in support older displaced workers to get a new job, especially those with no or lower level qualifications?
- 10 To what extent do you agree with the following statements (yes, no, sometimes and explain answer):
- a. Displaced older workers are motivated and focused on finding a new job as soon as possible.
 - b. Displaced older workers are discriminating about what new learning they will undertake. They will not tolerate inappropriate or seemingly irrelevant content in retraining programs.
 - c. Displaced older workers want their existing knowledge and skills taken into account in determining what reskilling and training they will undertake.
 - d. Displaced older workers undertaking formal retraining can require additional learning.
 - e. Displaced older workers undertaking formal retraining can require additional financial support.
 - f. The nature and approach taken to skills transfer and reskilling and retraining is critical for displaced older workers.
- 11 Does your organisation work with other services/agencies to help older displaced workers to overcome job loss? What types of agencies?
- a. If not, why not? Do you think there's merit in working with other agencies? Why? Why not?
- 12 Does your organisation have formal or informal links/processes with these organisations?
- 13 If formal, how were these established?
- 14 If informal, how did these links come to be formed?
- 15 In your view how well do these interagency arrangements provide a holistic service to older displaced workers?
- 16 Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Thank you for the information you have provided for our study.

C. Interview schedule: Other services providers

Professor Victor Callan and Dr Kaye Bowman were recently awarded funding from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to undertake the above project. The aim of this research is to explore the enablers and barriers (such as personal, organisational, community or government factors) to successful skills transfer, reskilling and training for low-skilled older workers who experience industry restructuring in an attempt to identify good practice. Funding and support for this project was provided by the Australian Government Department of Industry through the National VET Research program – a competitive grants program – managed by NCVER. The interview questions are based on a draft working model we have developed through a literature review.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

- 1 What organisation are you from?
- 2 What is your role?
- 3 What services does your organisation provide to help older workers (aged 45 years and more) to overcome job loss due to retrenchment caused by industry restructuring, and especially those with no or lower level qualifications?
- 4 In your view, what would a well thought out program for displaced workers include?
- 5 What do you consider to be the most impactful strategies that need to be the point of focus to support older lower skilled displaced Australian employees to work through industry restructuring, and obtain a new job?
- 6 Is your organisation proactive in helping older displaced workers to overcome job loss?
- 7 In what way/how is your organisation proactive?
- 8 What other agencies/services does your organisation provide to help older displaced workers to overcome job loss?
- 9 Does your organisation have formal or informal links/processes with these organisations?
- 10 Some talk about the need for interagency arrangements to provide a more holistic service to older displaced workers? What are your views about this?
- 11 Do you have any other comments you would like to make?

Thank you for the information you have provided for our study.

NVETR Program funding

The National Vocational Education and Training Research (NVETR) Program is coordinated and managed by NCVET on behalf of the Australian Government and state and territory governments. Funding is provided through the Department of Education and Training.

The NVETR Program is based on national research priorities and aims to improve policy and practice in the VET sector. The research effort itself is collaborative and requires strong relationships with the research community in Australia's universities and beyond. NCVET may also involve various stakeholders, including state and territory governments, industry and practitioners, to inform the commissioned research, and use a variety of mechanisms such as project roundtables and forums.

Research grants are awarded to organisations through a competitive process, in which NCVET does not participate. To ensure the quality and relevance of the research, projects are selected using an independent and transparent process and research reports are peer-reviewed.

From 2012 some of the NVETR Program funding was made available for research and policy advice to National Senior Officials of the then Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE) Principal Committees. They were responsible for determining suitable and relevant research projects aligned to the immediate priority needs in support of the national VET reform agenda.

For further information about the program go to the NCVET Portal
<<http://www.ncver.edu.au>>.



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