HOPES AND DREAMS
Children and young people told us about their plans for the future and the things helping or stopping them from achieving their goals.

To achieve our hopes and dreams we need to have personal drive and resilience.

These people will help us achieve our hopes and dreams:
- parents and carers
- employers who give us a go
- friends
- Wi-Fi
- family
- teachers
- mentors
- adults willing to share their knowledge and experience.

In the future we want to:
- work
- do further study and training
- be successful
- do something we like and are good at
- have a balance in our lives
- be happy
- have a family.

Some of the things that might stop us reaching our goals are:
- lack of support from the adults in our lives
- where we live
- financial difficulties
- slow internet speeds and lack of Wi-Fi reliability
- being put under constant pressure to do well
- feeling like our choices aren’t valued
- not learning the skills to prepare us for the future workforce
- not being able to get the information we need to make choices about the future
- our physical and mental health
- family responsibilities (needing to look after others).

These are some of the things that will help us achieve our goals:
- work experience and volunteering opportunities to help us learn job skills
- more entry level job opportunities
- flexible work to fit around school and study
- understanding the career and education pathways we can follow
- having conversations about careers early and often
- practical information
- life skills
- public transport.
HOPES AND DREAMS

All children and young people have the right to imagine what their futures will look like and to know there is support available to help them achieve their goals. How they perceive education and the economy is important in supporting them to make important decisions.

It also creates an opportunity for decision makers to think about the implications for the emerging workforce in Queensland and how to support children and young people today for the roles they will take on in the future. Children and young people across Queensland are optimistic about their futures.

60% said they feel positive or very positive about their future.

They demonstrate clear understanding of their goals, the types of support they need to achieve them, and some of the challenges they face.

In the future, they want to experience success and move into employment, further education or training. Throughout the project, they identified the importance of education, employment opportunities and preparation for life after school as keys to their future success. Many children and young people also spoke about the importance of family and finding a balance between their responsibilities and the things they enjoy.

Children and young people were asked what they think is important in helping them achieve their hopes and dreams. From a list of factors provided, a significant proportion of respondents (90 per cent) indicated ‘my skills, talent and ability’ and ‘my education’ (87 per cent).

During focus groups, when asked what makes life a success, children and young people identified individual characteristics such as resilience, the ability to face challenges, finding what you love to do, being optimistic and being true to yourself as key factors. Most participants acknowledged the role they played in their own success.

‘Success is... finding out who you are and having the courage to be yourself and once you are it is a big success.’
Secondary student, North Queensland

‘For myself to achieve goals I will need to try my hardest at school... A positive mindset will also help with achieving my goals. Never give up.’
Postcard response, Far North Queensland

‘Teachers and parents help guide me into my future but it mostly depends on me and how I go about achieving my goals.’
Postcard response, South East Queensland

‘Well I guessed it 1st go - wanting to be an architect.’
Artwork submission, South East Queensland
Education

Most children and young people (76 per cent) reported education is important to them. Good teachers and schools were often listed by focus group participants when they discussed what they valued about their community.

In addition to the positive benefits of education, children and young people also value the contributions teachers and schools make in helping them achieve their hopes and dreams. In focus groups, most spoke about their teachers positively and saw their support as very important to succeeding at school, accessing further education and training, and fitting in.

"We need good teachers who help you understand and help you achieve your dream."
Primary student, North Queensland

"Teachers can help you fit in when you start high school."
Secondary student, South East Queensland

Tailored learning

Children and young people said it is helpful when adults explain information in different ways to take account of different learning styles. They raised the importance of varied teaching methods. They suggested increasing the links between what they are learning and real-world scenarios to help them learn and understand the relevance of what they are being taught.

"Often teenagers are told to embrace their individuality and be different, but the school system forces all students to go through the same tests and assignment and make them answer it the same way. Young people should be able to choose what they study and not be forced to complete certain subjects."
Postcard response, South East Queensland

"There needs to be a broader way of learning than how we are taught at school now. It shouldn’t be all about books."
Secondary student, South West Queensland

In general, children and young people highlighted the importance of having teachers they connect with. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students highly valued teachers who reflect their cultural heritage. They often spoke about how having more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers would improve their education by teaching in first languages and building their knowledge of culture and traditions.

Schools in regions

In regional areas, schools further enrich the lives of children and young people by providing access to activities and opportunities that may not be available in the wider community. Children and young people in regional areas said teachers often share important information about activities or events happening locally and would like this to be provided regularly and consistently.

"School gives you lots of opportunities in a small town that isn’t available otherwise. We wouldn’t get access to district, regional or state sporting opportunities without school. School also has a wider range of sport than we can access in town. Netball and rugby are the only club sports available but at school we get to try different things."
Secondary student, South West Queensland

Artwork submission, South East Queensland
‘More Indigenous teachers would help me achieve my future career goals because I grew up in the Torres Strait and English is a second language. I would be able to understand a bit more in school.’
Postcard response, Far North Queensland

‘We need more black teachers. There are only white teachers in our school.’
Primary student, Central Queensland

‘We need to teach traditional languages and culture backgrounds in schools.’
Postcard response, South West Queensland

‘Life would be better for children and young people if we learnt more about Aboriginal history in school time and learnt how Indigenous people lived.’
Postcard response, South East Queensland

Introduction of the new Australian Tertiary Admission Rank system

In focus groups, many children and young people said the upcoming changeover to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) system in secondary schools will mean a greater focus on individual performance, rather than the performance of their school or grade level. They acknowledged the benefits of this change.

‘We keep being told how hard it’s going to be but not giving details of why. They have some information nights but it’s not really detailed.’
Secondary student, South East Queensland

Participants are concerned about the way the changes are being communicated. This was particularly true for current year 10 students who will be the first cohort to go through the system in 2020. They suggested schools provide them with better, youth-friendly information about how the ATAR system works, the new methods of assessment, and the way grades will be calculated. They were worried about the amount of change they will need to manage and about the new system being ‘more difficult’. They would like to have clear, accurate information to answer their questions and resolve their concerns.

‘I don’t really know how the ATAR system is going to work but I don’t want my whole life’s work to be based on one exam and to impact the rest of my life.’
Secondary student, Central Queensland

‘It makes it difficult to feel confident that it will be ok when you hear that even the teachers are failing the practice tests. If they can’t do it how are they going to teach us?’
Secondary students, South West Queensland

Managing stress

Sixty per cent of survey respondents reported they were concerned or very concerned about the amount of stress in their lives. In focus groups, participants said the main contributing factors were school workloads, competing priorities and adult expectations.

School grades

Children and young people recognise the importance of good academic performance and many push themselves to succeed. Over half of survey respondents (54 per cent) indicated they were worried about their school grades and a third (34 per cent) worried their academic ability could be a barrier to achieving their hopes and dreams. This was even higher in Central Queensland where 63 per cent of survey respondents indicated school grades affect them personally and are of particular concern.

‘I’m in an excellence class for maths and I have to keep getting A’s to stay there. If for some reason I get a lower grade you can feel the disappointment from your teachers and parents.’
Secondary student, Central Queensland
‘There is endless stress. I worry about when all the stress will end. Some days I just wish I could skip to the good parts of life because it feels like the stress is forever. I just want one second when I’m not stressing about something. All the Positive Education Program stuff does nothing to help the stress.’

Postcard response, no other details provided

In focus groups, children and young people worried about how their school grades will impact on their future success and said this causes them to feel stressed. They said it was especially unhelpful when adults reiterated the importance of getting good grades. This puts undue pressure on them and increases stress when they feel they are not meeting expectations.

‘You kind of set expectations for yourself without knowing it. In maths and science, if I don’t get in the A or B+ range I get really frustrated with myself knowing that I was so close but so far. When you know you can achieve it and you don’t, you put extra pressure on yourself to achieve it. Having an older sister also creates added self-expectations because I want to be like her or do better than her.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

Children and young people demonstrated that while they are worried, they have many ideas for how they could feel supported in managing this stress. They suggested parents and schools put less pressure on them to succeed, provide more time to complete tasks, and provide more opportunities for practical skills and career-directed learning.

‘They could help us to prepare better. Once in Year 7 we had seven pieces of assessment due in one week. This year, this term, the maximum was three. The reduction in assessments was of great benefit to our mindset. For me personally, I feel a lot better when I can focus on assessments coming up gradually and not all at one time.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

Balance and free time

Children and young people spend over 30 hours a week at school and many participate in extracurricular activities after school. They consistently raised the difficulty of balancing schoolwork, extracurricular activities and spending time with family or doing leisure activities. They reported feeling overburdened with homework and assessment, which they saw as contributing to their stress and not always helpful to their learning. This was a common statement from participants in both primary and secondary years.

‘I’m getting home some nights at 6 pm and then I have dinner and then I have homework to do and then I miss a lot of sleep and feel tired all the time. And there is not a lot of time to spend with family.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a statement about whether they get enough free time to do things they like. Just over half (55 per cent) of surveyed children and young people agreed with the statement. Focus group feedback highlighted the challenges in balancing school and home life and the sacrifices which often had to be made by children and young people to prioritise school.
‘My parents encourage me to do an afterschool activity every day of the school week and that is a challenge because I don’t have enough time.’

Primary student, Central Queensland

‘If I were mayor I would take off some homework because kids are not getting family time because kids are spending too much time on homework.’

Postcard response, South West Queensland

‘Life would be better if … we had less pressure and more time. For young people life is a race: a race to learn, achieve, to develop, and mostly, to experience. When we grow old work and family life suffocate us … Our only chance to grow is impeded by pressure from parents and schooling. Less emphasis should be placed on due dates and word counts, and more on growth.’

Postcard response, South East Queensland

Children and young people identified when adults are positive and encouraging, it helps them feel more confident in their abilities and less worried about school. They appreciated when adults offered opportunities to talk openly about issues and competing priorities.

Children and young people in focus groups said they would like to know how to prioritise responsibilities and extracurricular activities around school. They also discussed the need for adults (and specifically teachers) to be mindful of competing priorities when allocating work and deadlines, and to provide more proactive strategies to help them before they feel overwhelmed.

Dealing with stress

Children and young people in focus groups said they would like diverse support systems to help alleviate stress and pressures arising from school and their other commitments. This included having access to adult mentors, peer-support mechanisms and informal support groups external to school where they are able to seek help.

‘A stress management group would be useful. My weekends are pretty packed because I normally have two games of rugby and then cricket on Sundays. I have to do all my homework on Saturdays.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

‘There needs to be more communication and coordination between subject teachers regarding setting homework to avoid overloading students. There should also be optional revision rather than homework. Even when there is not much assessment my main problem is homework. The small amount of time that I have at home each day is taken up with homework.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

‘Having you here as someone that is not part of the school, we are more likely to open up and be honest with each other. I like that this is a discussion in a small group and we are not just being lectured at which is not a constructive way. I know logistically our school couldn’t do this sort of thing every week but it would be really beneficial as it helps us to learn that everyone is different and has a different way of dealing with stuff.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

Children and young people identified when adults are positive and encouraging, it helps them feel more confident in their abilities and less worried about school. They appreciated when adults offered opportunities to talk openly about issues and competing priorities.

Children and young people want adults to take an interest in their education and be available when they need them. Focus group participants recognised the stressors and responsibilities adults have in their own lives, which can be a barrier to them providing support with concerns about school. They identified the importance of adults seeking support to help reduce their own stress, which may improve their ability to support children and young people.

On the topic of education, children and young people contributed their thoughts on the things they need and provided advice to adults on how they can support them.
ACTION PLAN: EDUCATION

What do kids need?

• clear and accurate information about the new ATAR system, including study strategies, sample exams, assessment methods and structure
• the option to ask questions of people who know the new ATAR system or who have completed exams
• support, positivity, love, reassurance, acceptance, understanding and encouragement
• adequate food and sleep
• reliable internet
• acceptance and information about different pathways and choices other than university
• experience and opportunities
• study and life balance
• freedom, trust and independence
• additional support and time on assessments and exams
• time for relaxation and play
• less pressure.

What do adults currently do that is helpful? What do adults currently do that is unhelpful?

What do adults currently do that is helpful?

• provide different opportunities from a young age
• give guidance and advice based on life experiences
• listen and provide support in decision making
• give support with homework
• provide financial support
• have a positive attitude which increases self-confidence
• consider and support mental health needs

What do adults currently do that is unhelpful?

• lack of information about the new ATAR system
• lack of alternative options for different learning styles
• lack of trust and support for students’ decisions
• don’t listen
• make decisions on behalf of students
• don’t allow students to try different pathways, experiment and learn from their own mistakes
• instil pressure and unrealistic expectations
• make comparisons to others including siblings
• show negative attitudes and lack of understanding about the current generation and their needs
• talk too much about the future
• overreact to situations
• use unhelpful messages – i.e. ‘you’re ok’ or ‘you aren’t trying hard enough’
• interfere without asking what they can do to help
• don’t celebrate successes and achievements
• lack of support and explanations and feedback on assessment tasks
• give too much homework.
What keeps adults from responding well?

- not knowing what students need or how to help
- lack of or outdated knowledge
- transport and location barriers
- generational differences and comparisons
- unrealistic expectations
- social expectations
- stress, work, busy schedules and financial pressures
- arguments and disagreements
- substance abuse
- don’t know what to ask or how to help.

What advice would you give to adults?

- teach proactive stress and time management strategies
- listen to the concerns of students and supply additional information when needed
- respect what young people have to say
- provide more information on grading criteria
- provide more practical learning opportunities
- give practice exams in earlier grades (Grades 5 - 8)
- have a central place where students can access relevant information
- give students opportunities to try to learn from their mistakes
- consider the opinions and thoughts of students
- have discussions in constructive ways and at suitable times
- be mindful of personal stress and how this impacts on students
- seek support or talk to someone if you are having issues
- support students to do their best
- ask how they can help
- be more trusting
- reduce stereotyping of teenagers
- don’t ‘over help’ or become overinvolved
- put less pressure and stress on students.
The sources of support for children and young people when they are making decisions.

- Parents
- Teachers
- Friends
- Religious community
- Youth worker
- Internet
- Coach
- Myself
- Family
- School counsellor
- No one

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This place I call home – the views of children and young people on growing up in Queensland
Planning for the future

Children and young people begin thinking about their careers at an early age and look to the adults in their lives as role models. Focus group participants spoke about the value they placed on being able to talk to others about their plans for the future, particularly with people already working in their field of interest. These people were seen as providing the most useful advice about careers because of their direct professional experience.

'I’d like to be a jet fighter pilot in the RAAF and I would speak to my father who is also in the air force.'

Secondary student, North Queensland

'I have a couple of career options. I try and talk to the person who is most related to the career/s I am considering. I have an idea of going into the Police Force or Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). I have a lot of older friends who have graduated from University and I have talked to them about options and gap years etc.'

Secondary student, South West Queensland

As they consider their future plans, children and young people turn to a range of people for advice. It is important to understand who these sources of support are and to make sure these people have the adequate knowledge to help children and young people make informed decisions.

Most (82 per cent) children and young people said they make their own decisions about their future but parents, carers and other adults were important sources of advice.

'My parents will help me with my future career. I have always been able to rely on them with anything. I have always been able to come to them with my problems. I know that they will support me no matter what I choose to do in the future.'

Postcard response, South East Queensland

Children and young people choose to speak to these people about their aspirations:

- 69% parents or carers
- 36% their friends
- 29% other family members
- 26% teachers
Survey respondents reported having conversations about their future frequently (46 per cent) or sometimes (34 per cent), while 16 per cent of survey respondents said these conversations ‘rarely’ occur. Focus groups gave some insight into why children and young people may choose not to discuss their future plans.

‘I think you are constantly thinking about it and wondering if in a few years’ time ‘am I going to be able to do this?’... With so many people constantly talking about it, you feel a bit of pressure.’

Secondary student, South West Queensland

“You can have an idea and talk to someone about them but if you have big dreams, they are not talking you out of it as such, but tell you all of the risks and chances of doing it and it kind of like puts you off it.’

Secondary student, South West Queensland

As discussed previously, regular and early conversations with experienced adults was a common request from children and young people to help them make decisions about study and careers.

‘Help me and other Queensland children better understand the variety of options in the workforce. If this was implemented in late primary school and early Secondary many young minds would have a career that they truly enjoy.’

Postcard response, Central Queensland

More broadly, children and young people raised the idea of being able to draw upon the expertise of people in their local community as a possible avenue to gain experience and knowledge in fields of interests or hobbies. This was also discussed as an education opportunity in regional centres, where more specialised subjects may not be offered in schools.

Only 8 per cent of survey respondents said they would talk to a school counsellor when they were making decisions about their future. In both primary and secondary schools, students demonstrated they were often unsure of who their career counsellor or guidance counsellor was and what their role was in assisting them to make decisions about their future. Some survey respondents (9 per cent) indicated ‘lack of school support’ as something preventing them from achieving their hopes and dreams.

The LSAC data reports a slightly higher proportion (85-90 per cent) of Queensland respondents between the ages of 14 – 17 years said they would discuss their future plans with their parents than was shown in the Growing up in Queensland survey results. The LSAC results show girls are more likely than boys to discuss their plans with friends. Young people living in non-metro areas are less likely to talk to a school career counsellor and friends than children living in metro regions.35

‘The subjects in city schools are completely different and they open up a huge range of different things to study in the future at university with different job opportunities e.g. film.’

Postcard response, South West Region

‘I’m really interested in photography. It would be great to find someone local who could mentor and teach me. At the moment I rely on YouTube.’

Secondary student, South West Queensland

‘More opportunities for people like us to get together regarding interests that could become career opportunities. That way we can work together .... The current situation is good but a bit isolationist. It would be great to discover all these like-minded people.’

Postcard response, South East Queensland

More broadly, children and young people raised the idea of being able to draw upon the expertise of people in their local community as a possible avenue to gain experience and knowledge in fields of interests or hobbies. This was also discussed as an education opportunity in regional centres, where more specialised subjects may not be offered in schools.

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We need more one on one time with career counsellors or teachers to help younger students understand their options in depth.’

Postcard response, South East Queensland

‘Lack of information’ was identified by 18 per cent of survey respondents as something potentially stopping them from achieving their hopes and dreams. Children and young people in focus groups said online information was often overly complicated or too general to be useful in making informed choices about education, training and other life decisions.

Specifically, they spoke about the difficulties in accessing clear information about their financial, physical, sexual and mental health. Information was spread across many sites, was too hard to find or too difficult to understand because of the technical terminology used. Most of the time they wanted to talk to a person to get answers to their specific questions.

Support in achieving future goals

As part of the survey, we asked children and young people about the things which might stop them achieving their hopes and dreams. In addition to finances (58 per cent), the availability of jobs (38 per cent) and academic ability (34 per cent), responses included their physical or mental health (26 per cent), family responsibilities (20 per cent) and having a disability (5 per cent).

Health

Demographic data highlighted that 33 per cent of Queensland children and young people, who responded to the survey, had personally experienced a long-term health problem or condition lasting six months or more. Eleven per cent reported having a long-term disability.

Of the survey respondents, 45 per cent listed health in the top 10 issues for children and young people. When we explored this issue in focus groups, the concerns related to their own health and the health of family members.

Children and young people often spoke of their fear of dying or losing friends and loved ones. They ranked these concerns as having a high impact on their lives but not something they necessarily considered on a frequent basis, unless the issue is currently affecting them.

Many children and young people receive support when they are living with chronic or terminal illness or disability. The same is true when people close to them are ill or die. However, it is important that appropriate support is available to all children and young people.

‘An individual doesn’t get cancer, a family does. People take breathing for granted. They don’t know how lucky they are.’

Primary student, South West Queensland

‘I’ve learned not to take things for granted… Not everything will go to plan, but you have to learn to deal with it.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

Caring for others

As part of the survey, respondents were also asked whether they do extra work to help care for, or do things for other people.

While results were fairly consistent across the state, children and young people in South West Queensland reported the highest rates of caring for someone elderly (43 per cent), someone who is sick (49 per cent) and someone who has a disability (31 per cent). This may be indicative of the level of services and other support available in their communities.

Around 60 per cent of children indicated they helped care for a family member living in the same home and 28 per cent helped care for a family member living elsewhere. In addition, around 12 per cent helped care for a neighbour.

Queensland children and young people mostly provide care for:

53% younger children
40% someone who is sick
37% someone elderly
26% someone with a disability
Children and young people say these are possible barriers to them achieving their goals:

**FINANCES**
- Social media opinions
- Lack of school support

**WHERE I LIVE**
- Lack of family support
- Race & Ethnicity
- Gender

**LACK OF JOBS**
- Self doubt
- Other discrimination

**DISABILITY**
- Gender
- Language difficulty

**Physical & mental health**
- Cost of licences
- Sexuality
Having a live-in family member requiring care was the most common response across every Queensland region. However, in Far North Queensland children and young people are less likely to help care for family members who live with them (52 per cent) and are more likely to care for their neighbours (17 per cent) than children and young people in other parts of the state. This may be indicative of the types of services available in their communities or the relationships they have with non-family members.

In focus groups, children and young people described the type of care they provide for others. This includes wide-ranging responsibilities such as looking after younger brothers and sisters or other children in their homes, through to helping others with self-care, mobility, communication or maintaining a home or property. These pressures are more pronounced in rural and regional areas where children and young people feel additional responsibility to help their families, particularly where there is illness or hardship because of the drought.

Survey respondents were asked whether helping care for others meant they have less time for other activities. The majority (53 per cent) indicated their caring responsibilities do not stop them from doing any other activities. For others, these responsibilities may have longer-term impacts because they said they have less time to do homework (23 per cent), go to school (5 per cent) and do schoolwork in class (5 per cent).

Additional support may be required for children and young people who have caring responsibilities affecting their ability to complete expected school tasks, particularly when their immediate family members may not be able to take on these responsibilities. People in the community, services and school can be vital supports in these circumstances.

As discussed previously, academic stress is a serious concern for children and young people. They are looking to the adults in their lives to help them manage their responsibilities so they have the best chance to achieve their future aspirations.

**Life skills**

Participants spoke about wanting to have practical information and skills to prepare them for life as an adult. In particular, children and young people want to know how to apply for a rental property, how to vote, and how to budget and manage finances.

> ‘More future days focused on life after school. Explaining the real world to your 11 and 12s. Example - what is tax and super? How to claim tax and grants. Help prepare us for life after school.’
> Postcard response, Central Queensland

**LSAC results reveal similar levels of caring responsibilities as shown in the Growing up in Queensland survey.**

They report 41 per cent of children aged 14 - 15 years said they have a responsibility to care for a parent or step-parent, grandparents or siblings. LSAC participants aged 16 - 17 years living in non-metro regions provided care for someone more frequently and for more hours each day compared to those living in metropolitan areas.36

20% of survey respondents said family responsibilities could be a barrier to achieving their dreams.

‘Looking after younger siblings, you have to take responsibility to be organised and on time, cook, take on some parental responsibility and step up to meet expectations. It helps reduce stress on parents and helps them out.’  
Primary student, North Queensland

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They also spoke about the need for skills and knowledge to write a good resume and job application and to perform well at an interview.

Across the state, children and young people said they feel underprepared for the practical skills they need to be an independent adult.

‘As a teenager I feel like money is something I am clueless about. I think learning more about how to handle money and basic after life skills will be crucial for our future and to find our own success and help others. I think running courses on how to deal with money, banks, writing invoices, buying houses, budgeting, and other related things would be very helpful (incorporating this into school curriculum would be preferable).’

Postcard response, South East Queensland

‘Life would be better if there was an area/facility where it was free and there were lots of beneficial activities for example, qualified people who can teach children life skills e.g. cooking, tax, as well as having someone to talk to and sporting activities.’

Postcard response, South West Queensland

Further education and training

When children and young people in Queensland were asked about their future plans, 80 per cent indicated interest in further training or education, for example university or TAFE qualifications.

University and vocational courses are the main point of entry into the types of careers they were seeking; however, reaching this goal was often seen to be affected by the individual’s location and their family’s financial status.

One in four (25 per cent) survey respondents said ‘where I live’ could be a barrier to achieving their hopes and dreams. For example, in rural and remote areas, children and young people spoke about having to move away to larger towns or cities to pursue careers in areas of interest. They also felt their schools did not offer the same opportunities as some schools in the city and this would disadvantage them when applying for university.

‘I really want to go to university but it’s more offered towards the bigger schools in bigger cities. It depends on what school you go to, like if you go to a grammar school or a state school, it depends what looks good paper. For example, a (private school) education would look better on paper than say a (country) state secondary.’

Secondary student, Central Queensland

They were aware of the high cost of moving away and living independently, and the financial implications for their families, so saw these as barriers to achieving their ambitions. More than half (58 per cent) of children and young people said financial difficulties could be a barrier to achieving their dreams.

Twenty-three per cent of survey respondents indicated their desire to complete an apprenticeship. Some survey respondents (14 per cent) said the cost of obtaining licences and tickets is too high, indicating this may be an issue for those who are seeking a trade career pathway.

‘I’m excited about moving away (to University) but worried about getting a job and balancing work, study and having enough money to live. It’s a big thing to leave my parents behind without extra help. We have a responsibility to support ourselves and not burden our family.’

Secondary student, Central Queensland

The Growing up in Queensland results cannot report on the differences in gender preferences for further education and training but LSAC data provides some detail on these differences. The LSAC results shows a higher proportion of 16 - 17 year old girls said they would like to complete a university degree (52 per cent of girls and 38 per cent of boys), while boys of the same age were more interested in completing an apprenticeship, traineeship or working in the family business (28 per cent of boys and 2 per cent of girls).37

I was trying to do a TAFE course online but I didn’t have the Internet so I had to do a five hour return trip to Brisbane to do it.

Secondary student, South West Queensland

The ability to access training and education in regional and rural areas is seen as restricted. They are aware of options for online study but limitations with internet speed, reliability and associated costs are seen as barriers to this education avenue.

Many secondary students who participated in focus groups spoke about their school emphasising the importance of obtaining a university qualification. Many said they would like more advice about and emphasis on alternative pathways, such as vocational education.

In schools they focus on university, we need more information about TAFE and other options and courses, broader information and pathway options.

Secondary student, South West Queensland

I think secondary schools need to have a program where they visit a day of work- like they have options (nurse, engineer, shop manager etc.) and maybe that will help us achieve our goals in life.

Postcard response, Central Queensland

More opportunities for young children to be involved in the career they wish to be a part of. School and your OP score may help to get in to uni, but it isn’t always possible to achieve this. More chances of alternate pathways would be helpful for children/students to achieve their future career goals.

Postcard response, Central Queensland

There are lots of misconceptions about how hard jobs are e.g. farm work is a lot harder than people think – people making judgements based on what you do and their incorrect ideas about them. They believe you are selling yourself short if you decide to work as a ringer rather than going to university.

Secondary student, North Queensland

Entry-level skills

When children and young people were asked about their plans for the future, the majority of survey respondents (92 per cent) indicated they were planning to get a job or look for work. Most focus group and workshop participants indicated it was important to them to have gainful and fulfilling employment in their profession of choice.

Children and young people in focus groups spoke passionately about needing more work experience opportunities so they can develop and demonstrate the skills valued by employers. Across the state, they spoke about the difficulty of finding work requiring little to no prior experience.

I’ve been putting my resume into a lot of different places and it’s just really difficult. A lot of kids get very let down by how many people let them down so they give up trying and start taking money from their parents instead of trying to get a job.

Secondary student, South East Queensland

They emphasised the importance of on-the-job training, which they said required an employer who was willing to invest in supporting their development. Despite these difficulties, children and young people in focus groups were eager to seek work experience opportunities using their networks and expressed an eagerness to develop skills and a strong work ethic to improve their employability and achieve future goals.

Children and young people in rural and remote areas spoke about the problems they experience when they want to access local employment opportunities. In these areas, part-time or casual positions outside of school hours are limited. Further, a lack of public transport in the region makes them reliant on parents or carers to drive them to and from work. For some children, this might mean parents have to travel long distances at night to collect them after their shift.
"I travel for a significant amount of time to get to school – school buses leave right on 3pm so this restricts whether I can access extracurricular activities or work. If you want to do these things this means parents have to travel a long way to pick you up. You get home when things are closed so you don’t get the opportunities kids in bigger towns get.”

Secondary student, Central Queensland

“There are not a lot of public buses that service where I live. I can’t use public transport and I have to get my parents to drive me.”

Secondary student, Far North Queensland

Children and young people said volunteering is a good way to gain useful skills to improve future employability as well as give back to the community. In this way, volunteering is seen as an equivalent to work experience. However, participants under the age of 18 said they were often prevented from volunteering due to their age. They said many organisations will only allow them to participate as part of a school activity, such as collecting donations.

“Even volunteering is difficult to get into if you are trying to get experience. We wanted to help out at the Children’s Hospital and we found out you have to be aged 18 to volunteer.”

Secondary student, South East Queensland

“Now that we are coming to the end of school there is a lot of pressure on us trying to figure out what we want to do for the rest of our lives. The information we receive about our options is pretty good for those who know exactly what they want to do but we are expected to know exactly what we are doing as soon as we graduate.”

Secondary student, South West Queensland

“There is not a lot of info about Uni until you reach Year 12. It would be good to have information earlier and about a range of options. There is a tertiary tour which is optional in Term 3 – seems too late to me.”

Secondary student, Central Queensland

In a few focus group sessions, participants spoke about wanting to start their own business and wanting to get more information and support to help them achieve this dream. While the topic of youth entrepreneurship was not widespread, it was passionately discussed when it was raised.

“Why can’t we get someone to teach us how to start and run our own business?”

Secondary student, South East Queensland

Children and young people want to understand different career pathways and types of jobs. They want to have this knowledge before they need to make decisions about their future and would like to have information and conversations earlier in their schooling and more regularly. Making decisions about subjects, courses and future careers, while seen as critical for their future success, is also a time of great stress for children and young people.
The future workforce

When discussing their education and career paths, children and young people in focus groups worry about the availability of jobs in the future, mainly due to automation and the digitisation of the workforce. They recognise relevant skills in the workforce are changing from their parents’ and carers’ generations. They are unsure how to determine the most important skills to safeguard their future employability and how to obtain these skills.

38% said ‘lack of jobs’ could be a barrier to achieving their dreams

‘As we get older the creativity is stripped away from you – no play the older you are – jobs are going to be replaced with robots – so creativity is the most important thing – robots can’t do creative things. Schools need to be flexible in what subjects they offer so you can do subjects that you want to do. The world is changing and the school curriculum should be changing with it.’

Secondary student, South East Queensland

I believe that expansions on subjects would help myself and other Queensland children better understand the variety of options in the workforce. If this was implemented in late primary school and early secondary many young minds would have a career that they truly enjoy. A new variety of subjects in the sciences, humanities and many more is a great way to give opportunities no one had in the first place.’

Postcard response, Central Queensland

The skills and the ways people will work in the future are changing. The way we skill young people for their careers must change too if businesses are to maintain their competitiveness in a global economy.38

(We need) a chance to try out future careers as a glimpse for our future. To already shape a dream for our own self. More than just usual education at school ... Getting people to visit for extra education ... e.g. learning about yourself (like confidence lessons).”

Postcard response, South East Queensland

‘At my school you can do traineeships through school but once you have left school there is little support (through the traineeship) in finding a job. You are left on your own. Schools should regularly bring in professional mentors to inspire students in their career path, e.g., visits from lawyers and nurses to talk about their occupation. Schools should be more proactive in helping us find employment and apprenticeships.’

Youth group participant, South East Queensland

‘How I would like to learn about the opportunities of how to get a job. In a fun park area in the middle of the city, we get to have a go at the job.’

Artwork submission, South East Queensland

As part of focus groups, children and young people developed an action plan presenting their views and suggestions to adults on the topic of employment. The following is a summary of the key points they raised.

### ACTION PLAN: EMPLOYMENT

**What do kids need?**
- employment experience and opportunities
- independence
- safe and reliable ways to get to work
- guidance and support
- positive and supportive role models
- encouragement and support from teachers.

**What do adults currently do that is helpful?**
- drive kids to work
- act as positive role models
- show support
- help young people choose pathways that are positive and will lead to success
- provide work experience opportunities.

**What do adults currently do that is unhelpful?**
- limit opportunities for work over school holidays
- take too much control over decisions
- believe they always know what is best without listening to the needs and concerns of young people
- don’t see things from a young person’s perspective
- lack understanding about the issues facing the current generation
- don’t take concerns seriously.

**What keeps adults from responding well?**
- lack of awareness of the difficulties young people have in finding employment
- restrictions or requirements which prevent opportunities being offered
- difference in mindset, attitudes and upbringing.

**What advice would you give to adults?**
- give young people freedom and opportunities to gain experience
- be supportive and understanding
- listen to the needs and concerns of young people
- take into consideration the challenges young people face today
- offer subjects that build skills for future employment especially for young people who don’t plan to go to university
- recognise the valuable contribution and perspectives young people can offer
- have greater awareness of generational differences and changes
- consider different options and solutions
- understand the situation fully before making judgements.
Responding to what we have heard

Children and young people across Queensland are optimistic about their futures and demonstrate clear understanding of their goals, the types of support they need to achieve them and some of the challenges they face. In the future, they want to experience success and move into employment, further education or training. Many children and young people spoke about the importance of family and finding a balance between their responsibilities and the things they enjoy.

When children and young people discussed how they were going to achieve their future hopes and dreams, one of the most important factors they considered was their support system. This was reflected in focus groups when they spoke about needing to talk to people who had knowledge and experience and could guide them in making decisions.

Most survey respondents said they knew how to find people and services when they needed help. However, many also said there should be more support available to them within their communities.

Fewer than half of children and young people (44 per cent) said they would use the internet (including web sites and social media) to find support. This suggests alternative resources need to be made available for children and young people and the people who support them.

For adults considering how to support children and young people in making decisions about their future, it is important to reflect on the information available to them and ask children and young people if they know how to find it and if it is helpful. This can be an opportunity for adults to answer questions or assist children and young people to find what they need.

The changing world of work and the skills they need to succeed are key areas of concern for children and young people. They also recognise they need information and life skills to make good choices about their future and successfully transition into adulthood. They are looking to the adults in their lives to help them do this.

Children and young people have lots of ideas and suggestions for what adults can do to support them in achieving their hopes and dreams. A summary of these follows.

Focus group
**LIFE SKILLS**

What did children and young people say they want to know?

We want information that:
- will help us prepare for becoming an adult and assuming adult responsibilities
- is practical, easy to understand and easy to find when it is needed
- incorporates life skill topics as practical examples in education subjects
- will help us manage finances and learn how to stay physically, mentally and sexually healthy
- tells us how we can have a say.

Adults could consider:
- do children and young people in your community have the practical skills they need to navigate life after school?
- how can you provide life skills information to children and young people that is suitable to their needs?
- do you have conversations with children and young people about the life skills they want and how they would like to learn them?

**TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

What did children and young people say they need for their training and education?

We want:
- information on different education options and pathways
- education programs that take into account our interests, what’s relevant today and for our life after school and how we like to learn
- support in having a school-life balance and help to manage stress
- you to be aware we may have many responsibilities in our lives
- mentoring so we can learn from experienced adults.

Adults could consider:
- do you provide adequate information to children and young people about different career pathways?
- how do you support children and young people in finding the things they enjoy doing, and the ways in which they learn best?
- do you support children and young people to make connections with community members to help support them in pursuing their dreams?

**EMPLOYMENT**

What did children and young people say they would do to help them get a job?

We want:
- work experience and volunteering opportunities
- career conversations early and more often
- opportunities to hear from industry professionals
- to learn relevant skills at school to prepare us for future work opportunities
- accessible and affordable public transport
- support and assistance for young entrepreneurs.

Adults could consider:
- how can you provide relevant information to children and young people about different career options from an early age?
- how can you create more opportunities for children and young people to forge connections with industry professionals?
- can you investigate or consider flexible work experience and volunteering opportunities to give children and young people the chance to build their skill set?
- are organisational policies barriers to children and young people participating in volunteering opportunities that would help them develop employment skills?
- do you have regular conversations about the way you can support children and young people to find pathways into the careers that interest them?