Deferring a University Offer in Regional Victoria

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Executive Summary

This report is based on longitudinal research originally commissioned by the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development in 2009. Now funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), it is supported by a partnership comprising the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) and a network of Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs). It builds on a previous longitudinal study of school leavers started in 2006 which was funded by the participating LLENs and which investigated the issue of disproportionately higher rates of university deferment in rural and regional Victoria (reports available at: www.http://www.yacvic.org.au).

This report represents a continuation of this work through a state wide partnership of stakeholders who seek to understand the impetus for and effects of deferring a place at university. The current study allows a comparison of metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers' outcomes. It presents the 2011 results from a longitudinal survey of school completers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort, who, when contacted as part of the Victorian On Track survey of school leavers in 2010, had deferred a place at university. The high rate of deferral amongst non-metropolitan school completers was the impetus for the current study, although the current survey allows a comparison of metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers' outcomes.

While annual surveys of school leavers provide a picture of their initial destinations, they do not provide a longer-term view of study and labour market transitions. For the target group of this study – students who have deferred a place at university – the longer term perspective is particularly important. Discovering what proportion of this group take up their deferred study (or another course) and understanding the barriers for those who do not are major issues. Describing the circumstances of those who are working or looking for work or not in the labour market are also important avenues of investigation if we are to ensure that the transition from school is a successful one for all young people. This longitudinal study of school completers in Victoria, who deferred their place at university, aims to do these things. It will track the regional and metropolitan deferrers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort, who were first contacted in 2010, for a further two years, in 2011 (this report) and again in April/May 2012.

The current report, based on the recent 2011 recontact of the cohort, comments on the destinations, activities and views of regional and metropolitan deferrers in their second year out of school, outlining their study and labour market activities since they were first identified as deferrers in 2010.

Key findings:

- This report presents the 2011 results from a longitudinal survey of school completers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort, who, when contacted as part of the Victorian On Track survey of school leavers in 2010, had deferred a place at university.

- This report comments on the destinations, activities and views of both metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers in their second year out of school, outlining their study and labour market activities since they were first identified as deferrers in 2010.

- When contacted in 2011, the deferrers in this study displayed a range of destination outcomes:
  - Approximately six in 10 (61.0 per cent) were attending university.
  - A further 11.8 per cent had entered vocational education and training courses.
  - A further 4.3 per cent had entered traineeships or apprenticeships.
  - Of the remaining 22.9 per cent of respondents, most were working (20.0 per cent).
  - Only a very small group (1.9 per cent) was looking for work, while an even smaller group (1.0 per cent) might be classified as inactive, that is neither in education or training, nor working, nor seeking work.

- The study has also provided data which indicate that female respondents were more likely to take up a place at the university, while male respondents were more likely to enter an apprenticeship or to be in the labour market without further education or training. However, the gender differences were more likely to impact on the labour market destinations of the non-metropolitan cohort.

- The report shows a clear social pattern, which is most evident in the proportions of respondents from each quartile entering university:
    - While 54.5 per cent of respondents in the lowest SES quartile took up a place at university, this rises steadily as socio-economic status rises, reaching a peak of 63.9 per cent for respondents from the highest quartile.
    - The transition rates to other destinations, especially the labour market destinations, tend to rise as socio-economic status falls.
    - For students from metropolitan Melbourne, the rate of transition to university rises as SES rises, while for non-metropolitan students, it remains very similar across the four different SES categories.

- The take-up of a university place is not so strongly affected by SES in the non-metropolitan regions. Other factors, such as financial and distance-related barriers, may be influencing the take-up of a university place. Students from a non-metropolitan location were four times more likely to report they did not take up their studies because they had been waiting to qualify for Youth Allowance.

- Most of the students did not receive income support. However, non-metropolitan deferrers were much more likely to be youth allowance recipients (32.2 per cent), compared with metropolitan deferrers (13.3 per cent).

- Metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers who took up their place at a university in 2011 also differed in the universities they entered. Nearly half of the deferrers from the non-metropolitan area (almost 40 per cent) took up university places that are located in regional areas. The universities with the biggest differences in intake of metropolitan and non-metropolitan students were Monash University, RMIT University and Deakin University, with Monash almost three times more likely to be a destination for metropolitan deferrers.

- Comparison of 2011 destinations among students from metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions revealed several patterns:
    - Deferrers from non-metropolitan Victoria were more likely to take up a place at university in their second year out of school than were students from the city, although this still does not compensate for the higher initial rate of deferral in non-metropolitan Victoria.
    - Students from metropolitan Melbourne were more likely to enter vocational education and training.
    - Both groups had a similarly low likelihood of being inactive or looking for work, but metropolitan students were more likely to be working full-time hours, while non-metropolitan students were more likely to be working part-time hours.

- In addition, there were also differences in the VET institutions frequented by the metropolitan and non-metropolitan groups. Metropolitan VET students were most likely to be attending a metropolitan VET provider, as might be expected. The non-metropolitan students, however, were more likely to be attending a metropolitan VET campus, with approximately four in ten attending non-metropolitan VET campuses and approximately six in ten attending metropolitan VET campuses.

- The majority of university students (62.4 per cent) were working. However, there are large differences between students from metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions in their likelihood of working and in the number of hours worked. Non-metropolitan students are much more likely not to be working at all – 48.6 per cent, compared with 27.9 per cent of metropolitan students.

- The data also showed that relatively small proportions of both metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents entered apprenticeships and traineeships, although the metropolitan respondents were slightly more likely to enter apprenticeships while the non-metropolitan respondents were slightly more likely to enter traineeships.

- A majority of the respondents (over 90 per cent) in study and training reported being satisfied with the way "things have worked out" since leaving school. There appears to be little difference between the proportions of non-metropolitan and metropolitan participants. However, satisfaction levels amongst those respondents belonging to the group who had entered the labour market without any further education or training were somewhat lower, with 75 per cent of the metropolitan respondents and 76.4 per cent of the non-metropolitan respondents believing that things had worked out the way they wanted since leaving school.

Introduction

This report is based on longitudinal research originally commissioned by the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development in 2009. Now funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), it is supported by a partnership comprising the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) and a network of Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs). It builds on a previous longitudinal study of school leavers started in 2006 which was funded by the participating LLENs and which investigated the issue of disproportionately higher rates of university deferment in rural and regional Victoria (reports available at: www.http://www.yacvic.org.au).

This report represents a continuation of this work through a state wide partnership of stakeholders who seek to understand the impetus for and effects of deferring a place at university. The current study allows a comparison of metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers' outcomes. It presents the 2011 results from a longitudinal survey of school completers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort, who, when contacted as part of the Victorian On Track survey of school leavers in 2010, had deferred a place at university. The high rate of deferral amongst non-metropolitan school completers was the impetus for the current study, although the current survey allows a comparison of metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers' outcomes.

Past reports arising from this project have examined the longer term destinations of regional deferrers from the 2006 Year 12 cohort, who were identified as deferrers when contacted by the On Track survey in 2007. This group of young people was re-contacted in 2008, 2009, 2010 and for a final time in 2011. Reports on the progress of these young people through their study and labour market trajectories were prepared and published for the commissioning bodies – the regional Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) and the then Department of Innovation, Industry and regional Development (DIIRD).

In summary, these reports (Polesel 2008, Polesel 2009 and Polesel, O'Hanlon and Clarke 2011) found:

- Rising rates of deferral amongst regional school completers, not just in Victoria but in other Australian states.

- Cost-related factors and financial barriers were found to be prominent in the reasons given by these young people for deferring a place at university.

- Non-metropolitan deferrers were much more likely to be from a low socio-economic status background than deferrers generally across Victoria.

- Over the period of the research, approximately seven in ten of these regional deferrers had taken up a place at university.

- Over eight in ten were in some form of education or training in 2010.

- Most of the remaining respondents were working, with only a small group (1.5 per cent) looking for work or inactive (neither in education or training, nor working, nor seeking work).

- Of those in education or training, most were satisfied with their study choice and satisfied with the way their school had prepared them for further study.

- Of those working but not in education or training, most showed high levels of satisfaction with aspects of their work and were satisfied, though to a lesser extent, with the preparation their school had given them.

- However, those who were not in education or training were likely to be working in mainly low paid positions requiring no qualifications and offering little on-the-job training.

- Deferrers in country Victoria whose achievement profile was low or who came from a lower socio-economic status background were less likely to take up a university place than others.

- Financial barriers remained prominent among the reasons given by young people for having not taken up a place in education or training.

- Students working long hours while at university were more likely to have dropped out of their course.

While these past studies were based on a cohort of non-metropolitan deferrers, the current report is based on research with a new, second cohort of school completers, which includes both metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers. The aim of the current survey is to find what proportion of deferrers take up their deferred study (or another course) and to understand the barriers for those who do not. Describing the circumstances of those who are working or looking for work or not in the labour market are also important avenues of investigation if we are to ensure that the transition from school is a successful one for all young people.

This longitudinal study of school completers in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan settings, who deferred their place at university, aims to do these things. It will track the regional and metropolitan deferrers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort, who were first contacted in 2010, for a further two years, in 2011 (this report) and again in April/May 2012.

Table 1: **Growth in deferral rate (metropolitan & non-metropolitan) 2004-2011.**
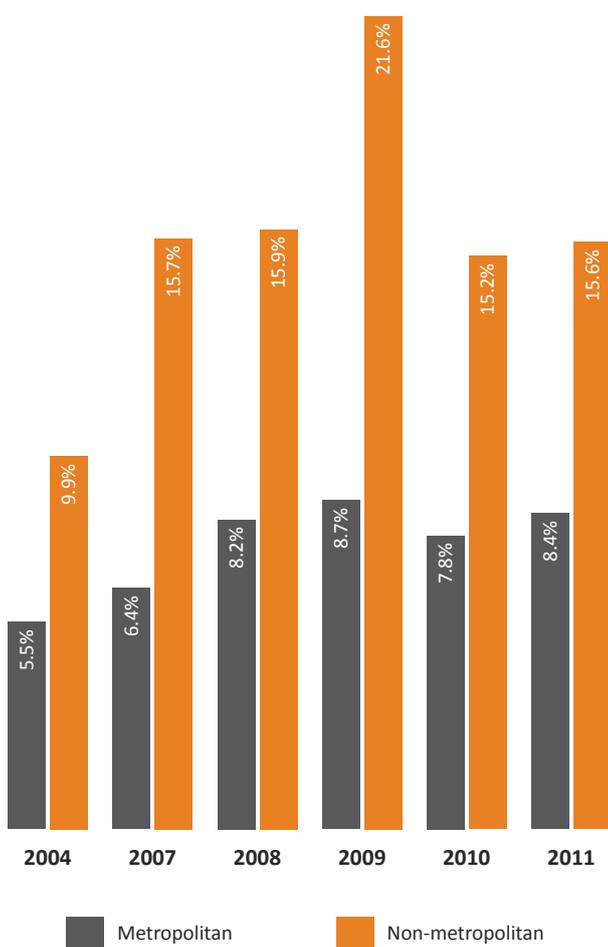
	Metropolitan	Non-metropolitan
2004	5.5%	9.9%
2007	6.4%	15.7%
2008	8.2%	15.9%
2009	8.7%	21.6%
2010	7.8%	15.2%
2011	8.4%	15.6%

The current report, based on the recent 2011 recontact of the cohort, comments on the destinations, activities and views of regional and metropolitan deferrers in their second year out of school, outlining their study and labour market activities since they were first identified as deferrers in 2010.

The issue which this study has examined is whether deferral constitutes a disadvantage for young people living in metropolitan and non-metropolitan Victoria. For example, do deferrers eventually take up their offer or do they take up a different form of education or training – or none? Are some groups less likely to take it up than others? What barriers might prevent metropolitan or non-metropolitan deferrers from taking up their place?

In regional Victoria this rate has risen from 9.9 per cent in 2004 to 15.6 per cent in 2011, although in terms of actual numbers, the rise is even more significant – from 541 young people in 2004 to 1441 young people in 2011. Recent tracking work carried out in Queensland (e.g. Department of Education Training and the Arts 2007) also confirms the tendency of non-metropolitan school completers to defer university places at a higher rate and suggests that the phenomenon of higher rates of deferral amongst non-metropolitan school completers may be a widespread occurrence across rural Australia. Across Victoria, there were 3594 deferrers from the 2010 Year 12 cohort identified in 2011.

The current study has the following objective:

- To compare the outcomes of the 2009 Year 12 cohort of metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers, in terms of their take-up of their university offer or their transition to other education, training and labour market destinations over a period of two years.

The key aims of this project are:

- Improved access to university for all students regardless of their home location.

- Improved support services for youth completing school.

- Improved support services for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As students deferring a place at university do not constitute a homogenous group, with the needs of students varying according to their home location and their socio-economic status background, improved targeting of services and support is seen as an important issue to address.

Characteristics of the sample

The On Track survey of 2010 identified 3253 deferrers. The final achieved sample was 2565 deferrers (resulting in a response rate of 78.9 per cent). It is important to compare this final achieved sample with all deferrers identified in 2010 – the broader cohort from which this sample was drawn. This is to ensure that the achieved sample does not differ too greatly from the population from which it was drawn in terms of its geographical location, achievement, gender, and socio-economic status (SES) profiles.

Table 2 compares these characteristics of the survey respondents contacted in 2011 with those of all the deferrers identified in the 2010 On Track survey. It can be seen that on all the measures reported, the final achieved sample is virtually identical to the original cohort of deferrers identified in the On Track survey, including the proportion of metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers. This reduces the likelihood of bias in the outcomes reported for the respondents in 2011 and strongly suggests that the final survey sample is representative of the broader cohort identified in the 2010 On Track survey (from the 2009 Year 12 cohort).

Structure of the report

Chapter 1:
Examines the study and labour market situation of Victorian deferrers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort as a whole in 2011.

Chapter 2:
Examines the study and labour market destinations of these deferrers broken out by metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents.

Chapter 3:
Examines the barriers to university entry for those who have not taken up a place.

Chapter 4:
Considers the respondents' satisfaction with their study and labour market destinations.

Table 2: **Comparison with all 2010 deferrers**

		2010 all deferrers (%)	2011 achieved sample (%)
N		3253	2565
Gender	Male	42.0	42.2
	Female	58.0	57.8
Geographical location	Metropolitan	56.4	56.3
	Non-metropolitan	43.6	43.7
Achievement	Lowest quartile	16.3	15.4
	Next lowest quartile	25.0	24.1
	Next highest quartile	30.8	30.8
	Highest quartile	27.9	29.7
Socio-economic status	Lowest quartile	14.9	14.2
	Next lowest quartile	23.6	22.7
	Next highest quartile	27.3	27.4
	Highest quartile	34.2	35.6

Main Activities in 2011

This section examines the main destinations of Victorian school completers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort who had deferred their university place in 2010, in their second year out of school (in 2011). It is important to note that young people contacted in the survey were asked detailed questions regarding both their study and their labour market situations. These were used to construct "main" destinations, for example university student or apprentice or full-time worker. These are reported in Table 1.1, Table 1.2 and Figure 1.1. However, students may also be in the labour market, usually as part-time workers, but sometimes seeking work. Conversely, it is possible to be neither a student nor in the labour market, i.e. not working and not seeking work. These more detailed destinations, which illustrate both the labour market and study and training destinations of our respondents, are presented in Table 1.3.

This section presents a summary of the destinations in 2011 of deferrers who had completed Year 12 in 2009 (see Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1). This table shows that 61.0 per cent of the group were attending university in 2011. A further 11.8 per cent were in a VET program and 4.3 per cent were combining employment with training as apprentices or trainees. In total, 77.1 per cent were in some form of recognised education or training. The remaining respondents were not in education or training of any kind. Most were working full-time or part-time – 20.0 per cent. Few were looking for work (1.9 per cent), and a very small group (1.0 per cent) was inactive, i.e. they were not in education or training and were neither working nor looking for work.

Figure 1.1: **Main destinations in 2011**

- University
- Employed full-time
- VET Cert 4+
- Employed part-time
- Entry-level VET
- Traineeship
- Apprenticeship
- Looking for work
- Inactive
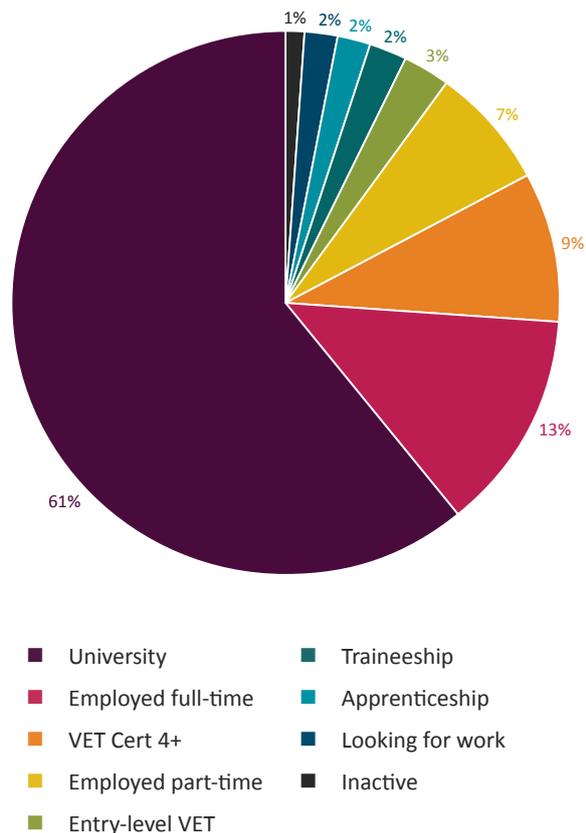
Table 1.1: **Main destinations in 2011**

	#	%
University (degree level)	1564	61.0
VET	303	11.8
Apprenticeship	51	2.0
Traineeship	59	2.3
Employed full-time	326	12.7
Employed part-time	189	7.3
Looking for work	48	1.9
Inactive	26	1.0
Missing (excluded from analyses)	1	0
Total (included in analyses)	**2566**	**100**

Table 1.2: **Main destinations in 2011 by gender**

	Males		Females	
	#	%	#	%
University (degree level)	612	56.5	952	64.2
VET Cert 4+	110	10.1	132	8.9
Entry-level VET	20	1.8	41	2.8
Apprenticeship	48	4.4	3	0.2
Traineeship	20	1.8	39	2.6
Employed full-time	151	13.9	175	11.8
Employed part-time	86	7.9	103	7.0
Looking for work	25	2.3	23	1.6
Inactive	12	1.1	14	0.9
Total	**1084**	**100.0**	**1482**	**100.0**

Table 1.3: **Study and labour market destinations 2011**

	University Degree		VET, Apprenticeship or Traineeship		No in education or training		All
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Not in the labour force	376	24.0	51	12.3	26	4.4	453
Apprentice/trainee	1	0.1	110	26.6	0	0	111
Working full-time	22	1.4	34	8.2	326	55.3	382
Working part-time	954	61.0	175	42.4	189	32.1	1318
Looking for work	211	13.5	43	10.4	48	8.1	302
Total	**1564**	**100.0**	**413**	**100.0**	**589**	**100.0**	**2566**

Table 1.4: **Study level and socio-economic status**

	Lowest quartile		Next lowest quartile		Next highest quartile		Highest quartile		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
University	199	54.5	354	60.8	427	60.7	584	63.9	1564	61.0
VET	49	13.4	77	13.2	75	10.7	101	11.1	302	11.8
Apprenticeship	8	2.2	9	1.5	14	2.0	20	2.2	51	2.0
Traineeship	12	3.3	16	2.7	19	2.7	12	1.3	59	2.3
Employed	83	22.7	116	19.9	145	20.6	171	18.7	515	20.0
Looking for work	11	3.0	7	1.2	16	2.3	14	1.5	48	1.9
Inactive	3	0.8	3	0.5	8	1.1	12	1.3	26	1.0
Total	**365**	**100.0**	**582**	**100.0**	**704**	**100.0**	**914**	**100.0**	**2565**	**100.0**

Gender differences are reported in Table 1.2. This shows that female respondents are more likely to take up a place at university, while male respondents are more likely to enter an apprenticeship or to be in the labour market without further education or training.

Table 1.3 presents a cross-tabulation of study level and labour market destinations, providing a more nuanced picture than that presented in Table 1.1. For example, while university degree students were previously presented as a single category, it is possible to see now their labour market destinations – working full-time or part-time, looking for work or not in the labour market.

This is also the case for young people in other study destinations. This shows that the proportion of young people in the labour market is actually much higher than shown in Table 1.1. For example, the number of part-time workers and the number of young people seeking work is much higher than can be gleaned from the summary destinations, even though most of these are university or VET students, whose labour market status may not constitute their primary activity or focus. Similarly, the large number of respondents who are not in the labour market is principally made up of university students, who are not working and not seeking work.

Table 1.4 reports destinations by quartile of socio-economic status (based on the socio-economic characteristics of the students' home address). It displays a clear social pattern, which is most evident in the proportions of respondents from each quartile entering university. While 54.5 per cent of respondents in the lowest quartile take up a place at university, this rises steadily as socio-economic status rises, reaching a peak of 63.9 per cent for respondents from the highest quartile. By way of contrast, the transition rates to other destinations, especially the labour market destinations, tend to rise as socio-economic status falls. These findings support the evidence presented in past reports from this project that the rate of transition to university may be affected by the financial circumstances of the deferring students and their families.

"While 54.5% of respondents in the lowest quartile take up a place at university, this rises steadily as socio-economic status rises, reaching a peak of 63.9% for respondents from the highest quartile."

Main Activities: metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents

The focus of this project has, in the past, been on deferring students from regional Victoria. The recruitment and surveying of a new group of deferrers from the 2009 Year 12 cohort allows comparisons to be made, for the first time, between respondents living in metropolitan Melbourne and those living in regional Victoria. This chapter considers the main activities of these two groups of respondents.

Table 2.1 presents evidence to suggest that deferrers from non-metropolitan Victoria are more likely to take up a place at university in their second year out of school than are students from the city. Students from metropolitan Melbourne, on the other hand, are more likely to enter vocational education and training. With respect to apprenticeships and traineeships, the differences between the two groups are not large, metropolitan students are slightly more likely to be apprentices, while non-metropolitan students are more likely to be trainees. The labour market differences between the two groups are largely related to the hours worked. Both groups have a similarly low likelihood of being in the situation of looking for work or inactive, but metropolitan students are more likely to be working full-time hours, while non-metropolitan students are more likely to be working part-time hours.

The destinations of metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents, broken out by socio-economic status (SES), are presented in Table 2.2. The destinations of both groups of respondents follow the SES patterns reported in the previous chapter, except for those students taking up their place at university. So, for both metropolitan and non-metropolitan students, transitions to VET and to the labour market tend to rise as SES falls. However, for metropolitan students, the rate of transition to university rises as SES rises, while for non-metropolitan students, it remains very similar across the four different SES categories.

This suggests that the take-up of a university place is not so strongly affected by SES in non-metropolitan regions. Rather it would seem that other factors may be influencing the take-up of a university place, factors which impact on the different SES groups in a more undifferentiated manner. The following chapter will examine the factors which impact on the decisions of these young people to take up or not take up their university offer.

Table 2.1: **Main destinations in 2011 – metropolitan & non-metropolitan deferrers**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
University (degree level)	817	56.6	747	66.6	1564	61.0
VET Cert 4+	168	11.6	73	6.5	241	9.4
Entry-level VET	34	2.4	27	2.4	61	2.4
Apprenticeship	34	2.4	17	1.5	51	2.0
Traineeship	25	1.7	34	3.0	59	2.3
Employed full-time	197	13.6	129	11.5	326	12.7
Employed part-time	127	1.9	62	5.5	189	7.4
Looking for work	27	1.9	21	1.9	48	1.9
Inactive	15	1.0	11	1.0	26	1.0
Total	**1444**	**100.0**	**1121**	**100.0**	**2565**	**100.0**

Table 2.2: **Cross-tabulation of study level and socio-economic status and location**

Geographic location	Destination in 2011	SES (IRSED) quartile (%)			
		Lowest	Lower-middle	Upper-middle	Highest
Metropolitan	University	39.1	45.6	56.0	63.4
	VET Cert 4+	15.8	20.5	9.4	9.4
	Entry-level VET	4.5	1.4	2.4	2.2
	Apprenticeship	3.0	3.7	2.1	2.0
	Traineeship	3.0	3.3	1.8	1.0
	Employed full-time	19.5	14.4	13.9	12.2
	Employed part-time	11.3	9.8	10.2	7.3
	Looking for work	3.0	0.9	2.6	1.5
	Inactive	0.8	0.5	1.6	1.0
	Total (%)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Non-metropolitan	University	63.4	69.8	66.1	65.5
	VET Cert 4+	8.2	6.0	6.8	5.0
	Entry-level VET	1.3	2.2	2.5	4.0
	Apprenticeship	1.7	0.3	1.9	3.0
	Traineeship	3.4	2.5	3.7	2.5
	Employed full-time	12.5	10.4	12.7	10.5
	Employed part-time	5.6	7.1	3.7	5.5
	Looking for work	3.0	1.4	1.9	1.5
	Inactive	0.9	0.5	0.6	2.5
	Total (%)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.3: **Cross-tabulation of achievement level and main destinations and location**

Geographic location	Destination in 2011	GAT quartile (%)			
		Lowest	Lower-middle	Upper-middle	Highest
Metropolitan	University	22.6	44.6	60.0	79.8
	VET Cert 4+	22.2	13.6	10.7	6.1
	Entry-level VET	3.2	3.5	2.7	0.9
	Apprenticeship	2.7	3.8	2.5	0.9
	Traineeship	4.1	1.3	1.1	0.9
	Employed full-time	25.8	19.3	12.1	4.5
	Employed part-time	14.0	10.4	8.4	5.2
	Looking for work	3.2	2.5	1.6	0.9
	Inactive	2.3	0.9	0.7	0.7
	Total (%)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Non-metropolitan	University	42.0	58.5	65.9	89.0
	VET Cert 4+	10.7	8.5	5.6	3.2
	Entry-level VET	3.6	4.1	2.4	0.3
	Apprenticeship	3.0	2.4	1.5	0.0
	Traineeship	7.7	4.1	2.1	0.6
	Employed full-time	18.9	14.3	14.1	1.9
	Employed part-time	10.1	6.1	4.7	3.5
	Looking for work	2.4	1.4	2.9	0.6
	Inactive	1.8	0.7	0.9	0.6
	Total (%)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

The destinations of metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents, broken out by achievement (GAT), are presented in Table 2.3. For both metropolitan and non-metropolitan students, transitions to VET and especially to the labour market tend to rise as achievement falls. However, as is the case for the previous SES analysis, rates of transition to university are somewhat higher overall for non-metropolitan students.

The destinations of metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents can also be examined in terms of gender differences, as reported in Table 2.4. This shows that female respondents from both the non-metropolitan and the metropolitan cohorts are more likely to take up a place at university. However, male respondents from the non-metropolitan area are more likely to be in the labour market without further education or training. This contrasts with the metropolitan group where gender differences are less likely to impact on labour market destinations.

Table 2.4: **Cross-tabulation of study level, gender and location**

Geographic location		Gender (%)	
		Female	Male
Metropolitan	University	59.9	51.7
	VET Cert 4+	10.7	12.9
	Entry-level VET	2.7	1.9
	Apprenticeship	0.4	5.3
	Traineeship	1.9	1.5
	Employed full-time	13.4	13.9
	Employed part-time	8.3	9.5
	Looking for work	1.5	2.4
	Inactive	1.2	0.9
	Total (%)	**100.0**	**100.0**
Non-metropolitan	University	70.1	62.2
	VET Cert 4+	6.4	6.7
	Entry-level VET	2.9	1.8
	Apprenticeship	0.0	3.4
	Traineeship	3.7	2.2
	Employed full-time	9.6	13.9
	Employed part-time	5.1	6.1
	Looking for work	1.6	2.2
	Inactive	0.6	1.4
	Total (%)	**100.0**	**100.0**

"For both metropolitan and non-metropolitan students, transitions to VET and especially to the labour market tend to rise as achievement falls. However, rates of transition to university are somewhat higher overall for non-metropolitan students."

University Students – metropolitan and non-metropolitan

Metropolitan and non-metropolitan deferrers who took up their place at a university in 2011 also differed in the universities they entered. As can be seen from Figure 2.1, some universities were much more likely to be entered by metropolitan deferrers and some by non-metropolitan deferrers. The most popular university destinations among metropolitan deferrers were Monash University, RMIT University and LaTrobe University. The top three universities for the non-metropolitan group were Deakin University Geelong campus, Ballarat University and La Trobe University Melbourne.

As reported in Table 2.5, the universities with the biggest differences in intake of metropolitan and non-metropolitan students were Monash University, RMIT University and Deakin University, with Monash almost three times more likely to be a destination for metropolitan deferrers.

Nearly half of the deferrers from the non-metropolitan area (almost 40 per cent) took up university places that are located in the regional campuses. This suggests that factors such as university location, the travel involved and a desire to stay at home are more likely to affect non-metropolitan students. It may also be the case that their study pathways may be partially determined by the location of their preferred study options. The barriers to the university entry for deferrers are examined in the following chapter.

As reported in the previous chapter, the majority of university students are also working – 62.4 per cent overall. However, there are large differences between students from metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions in their likelihood of working and in the number of hours worked. Non-metropolitan students are much more likely not to be working at all – 48.6 per cent compared with 27.9 per cent of metropolitan students – with the result that over seven in ten metropolitan students are working while at university compared with just over five in ten non-metropolitan students.

Figure 2.1: **Destination of 2011 university commencers (%)**
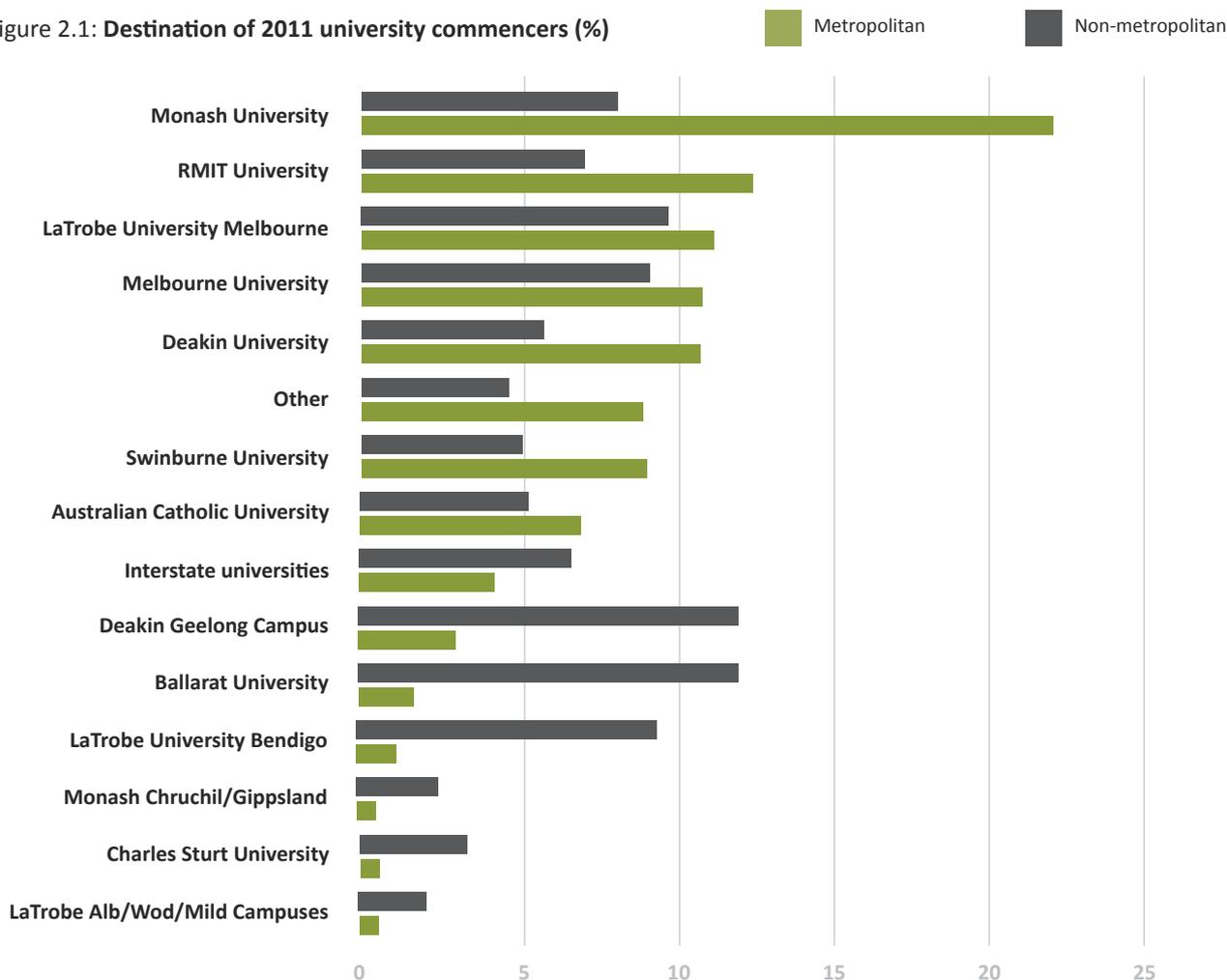
Table 2.5: **Destination of 2011 university commencers**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %	Total %
Melbourne University	10.7	9.1	9.9
Monash University	21.8	7.9	15.1
Monash Churchill/Gippsland	0.2	2.3	1.2
Deakin University	10.6	5.7	8.3
Deakin Geelong	2.7	11.7	7.0
LaTrobe University	11.1	9.6	10.4
LaTrobe Bendigo	1.0	9.4	5.0
LaTrobe Other Regional	0.1	1.9	1.0
RMIT University	12.3	6.9	9.7
Swinburne University	8.8	4.8	6.9
Ballarat University	1.4	11.7	6.3
Australian Catholic University	6.7	5.0	5.9
Charles Sturt University	0.1	3.1	1.6
Interstate Universities	4.0	6.4	5.0
Other	8.8	4.5	6.7
Total (%)	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 2.6: **Hours worked by university students**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan	
	#	%	#	%
Not working	228	27.9	363	48.6
Up to 14hrs	578	70.7	376	50.3
15hrs or more	11	1.3	8	1.1
Total (1564)	**817**	**100.0**	**747**	**100.0**

VET Students – metropolitan and non-metropolitan

The data reported earlier in this chapter in Table 2.1 show that metropolitan respondents were much more likely than their non-metropolitan counterparts to be attending a VET program. The difference between the two groups is entirely attributable to differences in the proportions of the two groups attending VET programs at Certificate IV level or above (11.6 per cent, compared with 6.5 per cent).

There are also differences in the VET institutions frequented by the metropolitan and the non-metropolitan groups. As Table 2.7 demonstrates, metropolitan VET students are most likely to be attending a metropolitan VET provider, as might be expected. The non-metropolitan students, however, are also more likely to be attending a metropolitan VET campus, with approximately four in ten attending non-metropolitan VET campuses and approximately six in ten attending metropolitan VET campuses.

Differences in the hours worked by VET students, as between those from metropolitan and those from non-metropolitan backgrounds, are not as pronounced as found among university students. Once again, the metropolitan students are more likely to be working, but the gap between them and their non-metropolitan counterparts is not large.

Table 2.7: **VET campuses metro and non-metro**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan	
	#	%	#	%
Metro Campus	181	89.6	58	58.0
Non-metro Campus	13	6.4	38	38.0
By correspondence	8	4.0	4	4.0
Total (302)	202	100.0	100	100.0

Table 2.8: **Weekly hours worked by VET students**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan	
	#	%	#	%
Not working	61	30.2	34	34.0
Up to 14hrs	123	60.9	52	52.0
15hrs or more	18	8.9	14	14.0
Total (302)	202	100.0	100	100.0

Apprentices / Trainees

The data reported earlier in this chapter in Table 2.1 show that relatively small proportions of both metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents entered apprentices and traineeships, although the metropolitan respondents were slightly more likely to enter apprenticeships while the non-metropolitan respondents were slightly more likely to enter traineeships.

Table 2.9 shows that were also some differences in the types of apprentices and traineeships accessed by the two groups, with the metropolitan group more likely to take up places in trade and construction related training, while those from non-metropolitan areas were more likely to take up training in office and administration positions. In part, this likely reflects the higher proportion of the metropolitan group in apprenticeships which tend to be in traditional trades, as opposed to traineeships which are often in office and administration-related areas.

Table 2.9: **Employment categories of apprentices and trainees**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan	
	#	%	#	%
Trade and Construction	32	54.2	18	35.3
Office and Administration	11	18.6	15	29.4
Sales and Hospitality	10	16.9	9	17.7
Teachers and Public Services	4	6.9	3	5.9
IT	2	3.4	2	3.8
Fitness and Recreation	0	0.0	4	7.9
Total (110)	59	100.0	51	100.0

Labour market group

Table 2.10 documents the job categories of those respondents who have made a direct entry into the labour market without further education or training. It shows that there are few differences between the metropolitan and non-metropolitan groups, a finding which supports data reported elsewhere which indicates that the labour market for young people is relatively homogeneous across different regions in Australia (see On Track reports).

Differences in the kind of training available to this group are also minimal, with similar proportions receiving some kind of training from their employers. However, metropolitan workers are more likely to receive their training at the workforce than are non-metropolitan workers (see Tables 2.11 and 2.12).

Table 2.10: **Employment categories of apprentices and trainees**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan	
	#	%	#	%
Sales and Hospitality	167	51.5	95	49.7
Office and Administration	72	22.2	34	17.8
Trade and Construction	38	11.7	37	19.4
Teachers and Public Services	26	8.0	5	2.6
Farm and Environment	8	2.5	14	7.3
Fitness and Recreation	6	1.9	2	1.1
Other	7	2.2	4	2.1
Total (515)	**324**	**100.0**	**191**	**100.0**

Table 2.11: **Training provided by the employer**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan	
	#	%	#	%
Training provided	134	41.4	61	37.9
Training not provided	190	58.6	130	68.1
Total (515)	**324**	**100.0**	**191**	**100.0**

Table 2.12: **The location of the training provided**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan	
	#	%	#	%
At the workplace	54	40.3	19	31.1
Away from workplace	20	14.9	15	24.6
Both	60	44.8	27	44.3
Total (515)	**324**	**100.0**	**191**	**100.0**

Looking for work

The proportions of metropolitan and non-metropolitan young people who were looking for work when surveyed were identical and relatively low – 1.9 per cent. Respondents in the two groups, however, had differing views on the reasons for their current situation. While both groups were equally likely to cite a lack of job experience, the non-metropolitan group were much more likely to nominate a lack of jobs, insufficient skills, training and qualifications, problems with transport and problems with health or disability (see Table 2.13).

There were not large differences between the two groups in the period of time they were looking for work (see Table 2.14).

Table 2.13: **Reason for unemployment**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Not enough job experience	70.4	71.4
Not enough jobs available	48.1	66.7
Not enough skills/ training	44.4	57.1
Not enough qualifications	44.4	61.9
Problems with transport	7.4	14.3
Health problem or disability	3.7	14.3

Table 2.14: **Period of unemployment**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Less than 3 months	70.3	66.6
3- 6 months	14.8	9.5
6- 12 months	11.1	18.7
12 months or more	3.7	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0

The Barriers to University Entry for Deferrers

Encouragingly, the proportion of non-metropolitan deferrers who take up a place at university is higher than for their metropolitan counterparts. However, it should be pointed out that this higher rate of take-up still does not fully compensate for the much greater rate of deferral that takes place initially. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, the proportion of non-metropolitan Year 12 graduates who deferred a place at university and then did not take up their offer a year later remains higher than for the equivalent group of metropolitan Year 12 graduates.

Figure 3.2 presents a cross-tabulation of reasons study was not taken up in 2011 by geographical location. All in all, the most common reasons for not taking up study were cited as travel, a gap year or that they had "found something else".

Figure 3.1: **Proportion of metropolitan and non-metropolitan 2009 Year 12 deferrers in university in 2011**
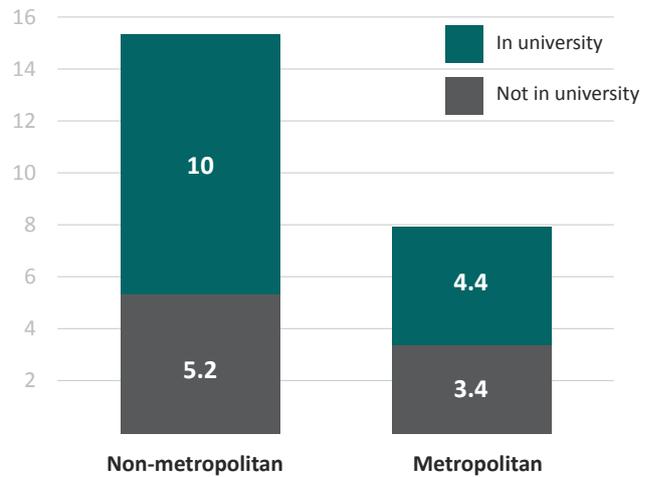

Figure 3.2: **Reasons why studies not taken up after deferring in 2010 (%)**
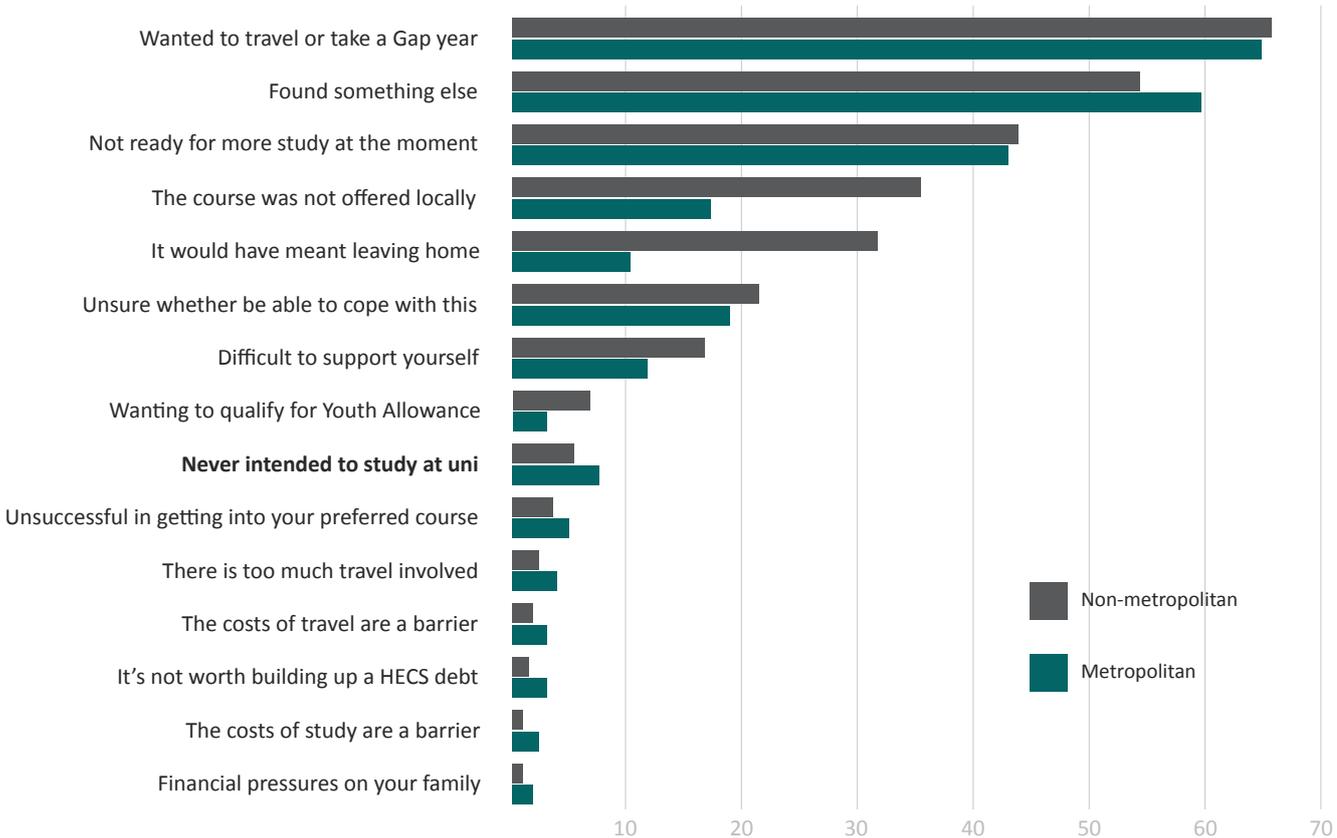
Table 3.1 presents a cross-tabulation of reasons why study was not taken up by geographical location. While the proportion of young people from metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas quoting travel, gap year or that they found something else was similar, the picture is dramatically different when analysing the financial and distance-related barriers. For example, students from non-metropolitan locations were four times more likely not to take up the studies because they had been waiting to qualify for Youth Allowance. Similarly, a much higher proportion of respondents from non-metropolitan areas (45.9 per cent) reported that they could not support themselves, compared with students from metropolitan locations (29.5 per cent). Furthermore, almost twice as many non-metropolitan students (30.7 per cent, compared with 17.5 per cent) indicated that financial pressure on their family was a barrier. The cost of travel was also much more likely to be nominated as a problem for young people from non-metropolitan locations (26.6 per cent, compared with 15.8 per cent).

In all, 55.2 per cent of non-metropolitan deferrers not in education or training nominated at least one of these financial barriers as a reason for not being in education or training in 2011, compared with 41.0 per cent of metropolitan deferrers.

Table 3.2 shows a cross-tabulation of youth allowance status and geographical location. Most of the students did not did not receive youth allowance. However, non-metropolitan deferrers were much more likely to be youth allowance recipients (32.2 per cent), compared with metropolitan deferrers (13.3 per cent). Non-metropolitan deferrers were also more likely to be registered and awaiting Youth Allowance. This is important as it is indicative of the importance of assisted independence while studying, particularly for the non-metropolitan students, who are more likely to be living away from home.

Table 3.1: **Reasons why studies not taken up after deferring in 2010 in cross-tabulation with geographical location (put % into Fig. 3.1)**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %	Total %
Wanted to travel or take a Gap year	64.2	64.7	64.4
Found something else	59.3	53.7	57.1
Not feel ready for more study at the moment	46.4	45.9	46.2
Difficult to support yourself	29.5	45.9	35.8
There is too much travel involved	22.6	33.5	26.8
The costs of study are a barrier	21.8	30.3	25.0
Not worth building up a HECS debt	19.5	21.1	20.1
Unsuccessful at getting into preferred course	18.9	13.8	16.9
Unsure if able to cope with the work	18.3	21.1	19.4
Financial pressure on your family	17.5	30.7	22.6
The course you wanted was not offered locally	16.6	34.9	23.6
The costs of travel are a barrier	15.8	26.6	19.9
It would have meant leaving home	9.2	30.7	17.5
Never planned or intended to study at university	7.2	4.6	6.2
Waiting to qualify for Youth Allowance	2.9	12.4	6.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 3.2: **Youth Allowance recipients while studying**

	Metropolitan		Non-metropolitan		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Receiving Youth Allowance	143	13.3	289	32.2	432	21.9
Not receiving Youth Allowance	914	84.8	562	62.6	1476	74.7
Registered awaiting allowance	21	1.9	47	5.2	68	3.4
Total	**1078**	**100.0**	**898**	**100.0**	**1976**	**100.0**

> "A much higher proportion of respondents from non-metropolitan areas (45.9%) reported that they could not support themselves, compared with students from metropolitan locations (29.5%)."

Satisfaction with Choices

This chapter examines the respondents' satisfaction with their study and labour market destinations. It begins with an examination of the differences between the views of metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents and then considers the comments made more generally by these young people when they were surveyed.

Overall, there appears to be little difference between the proportions of non-metropolitan and metropolitan participants who reported satisfaction with their current circumstances or that "things have worked out" the way they wanted since leaving school, although the satisfaction levels of the non-metropolitan group are consistently a little higher than for their city counterparts. In general, the findings suggest that high proportions of both groups were satisfied with their current destination and believed that things had worked out the way they wanted since leaving school.

University Students

Amongst university students, for example, 91.2 per cent of metropolitan students and 93.1 per cent of non-metropolitan students expressed satisfaction with their current study situation, while similarly high numbers (90.2 per cent of metropolitan students and 94.4 per cent of non-metropolitan students) believed that things had worked out the way they wanted since leaving school (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

Table 4.1: **University students' satisfaction with current study**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Very satisfied	44.6	53.1
Satisfied	46.6	40.0
Dissatisfied	7.8	5.8
Very dissatisfied	1.0	1.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 4.2: **Things worked out the way you wanted since leaving school – university students**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Yes	90.2	94.4
No	9.8	5.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

VET / Apprentices /Trainees

These predominantly positive findings also apply largely to the VET, apprenticeship and traineeship respondents. Over nine in ten respondents (metropolitan and non-metropolitan) expressed satisfaction with their current study situation – 91.9 per cent of metropolitan respondents and 94.0 per cent of non-metropolitan respondents (see Table 4.3). Similarly, 84.7 per cent of the metropolitan respondents and 87.4 per cent of the non metropolitan respondents believed that things had worked out the way they wanted since leaving school (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.3: **VET students, apprentices and trainees' satisfaction with current study**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Very satisfied	51.7	56.3
Satisfied	40.2	37.7
Dissatisfied	7.3	5.3
Very dissatisfied	0.8	0.7
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 4.4: **Things worked out the way you wanted since leaving school – VET students, apprentices & trainees**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Yes	84.7	87.4
No	15.3	12.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 4.6: **Things worked out the way you wanted since leaving school – the working group**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Yes	75.0	76.4
No	25.0	23.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

The Working Group

Satisfaction amongst those respondents belonging to the group who had entered the labour market without any further education or training fell below these high levels, but still comprised a majority. However, in this case there were large differences between metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents on the item measuring satisfaction with their current job status. While 100 per cent of the non-metropolitan group were satisfied with their job (with 60 per cent very satisfied), this fell to 64.3 per cent of the metropolitan respondents (with only 14.3 per cent very satisfied). On the item seeking their views on whether things had worked out since leaving school, the differences between the two groups were less pronounced – 75 per cent of the metropolitan respondents and 76.4 per cent of the non-metropolitan respondents believed that things had worked out the way they wanted since leaving school.

The looking for work and the inactive

For the small group of respondents who were looking for work or inactive when surveyed, the proportion reporting that things had worked out for them since leaving school drops to a lower level than that reported by any of the other groups of young people in this survey – 57.1 per cent for the metropolitan deferrers and 62.5 per cent for the non-metropolitan deferrers.

Table 4.7: **Things worked out the way you wanted since leaving school – the looking for work and the inactive**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Yes	57.1	62.5
No	42.9	37.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Table 4.5: **Satisfaction with current job**

	Metropolitan %	Non-metropolitan %
Very satisfied	14.3	60.0
Satisfied	50.0	40.0
Dissatisfied	14.3	0.0
Very dissatisfied	7.1	0.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Why Things Worked Out and Why They Didn't

The survey also asked respondents to provide further feedback and to elaborate on how things had worked out or not worked out for them. This section examines the themes that emerged from these comments.

Those for whom "things <u>have</u> worked out" since leaving school

Respondents who claimed that things had worked out the way they wanted since leaving school were very clearly in the majority. For this group, two main sets of factors emerged as the dominant ways in which things had worked out well.

The first may be grouped together as course-related factors. These comprised the most frequently cited factors by both non-metropolitan and metropolitan participants. In many cases, these comments related to finding a pathway which was appropriate. They included comments such as:

- *Well, I'm at the uni I wanted to go to, and I'm enjoying my course, even though it's a lot more work than I thought it was going to be…*

- *Well I guess I'm really happy with my course, I'm enjoying it.*

- *Also when I left school I didn't know what to study and I was hoping I would figure out what I wanted to study by the end of the year. And I did.*

- *I wanted to start low because I wanted to work my way up as I wanted to take up more things as I progressed. I wanted to start at a TAFE degree rather than going straight into a Bachelors.*

- *Well I found something I loved doing that I had no idea that I loved doing when I was at school. My school was very academic based and never thought of the performing arts as a career choice, but am very happy with that now. I moved to Melbourne from Bendigo, have made heaps of good friends at uni.*

The second most frequently cited group of factors by both non-metropolitan and metropolitan participants comprised employment and/or career-related factors. These included comments such as:

- *Well I've obviously done some studying while taking a gap year, doing a carpentry apprenticeship soon so I can build my own restaurant and house. Have set up a restaurant so I'm well on the way to managing my own business.*

- *I've found a job that I'm very happy with and that I enjoy doing. I suppose that I think that I can make a good living out of it.*

- *Just the fact that I've got a job and a little bit of experience in the work place/and now I'm doing a traineeship at work as well, and I'm enjoying that too."*

- *I've gained a lot of life experience, a better understanding of the Ballarat community, an improved understanding of people and a greater understanding of community issues and I understand. I've definitely got some career perspective now as well.*

- *I've gone straight into work and then straight into uni with no problems - nice and easy transition.*

- *Different jobs have opened up, what I am working in is quite good.*

- *I've got a career path/pretty much it's about the career.*

- *I've just got a full-time job, getting paid.*

- *I've set my career up by what I'm doing now.*

Factors relating to taking a Gap year and/or travelling were the third most frequently cited reason by metropolitan participants, although they were less frequently cited by non-metropolitan participants (coming in at fifth for this group). These reasons give a useful insight into the motivations of young people in deferring their university offer and taking time off. They included comments such as:

- *Well, I took the year off. Having the option to take some time off and being able to come back to study has worked well.*

- *It was good taking time off and travelling. It was the best thing for me.*

- *It's all good but you just don't realise the choices that come up. Being able to defer is a very good security blanket. Whatever I did last year I knew I could still come to uni which is good. Everything's just worked out, it's all good.*

- *It wasn't my first idea to get a job but university wasn't an option with accommodation and things like that, I didn't get onto residence so that's the reason why I didn't go/ the money with my traineeship is good though.*

- *I feel rested, refreshed and motivated to study.*

- *Taking a year off was good. It helped me work out what I wanted to do.*

Conversely, independence-related factors (including being eligible to receive Youth Allowance, living away from home or living on campus), while important for both groups, were the third most frequently cited factor by non-metropolitan participants but only the fifth most frequently cited factor by metropolitan participants. These included comments such as:

■ *I've got a job and I don't live at home anymore, so that's good.*

■ *I wanted to go overseas and stuff, so I got to do that. I deferred a year, and that's happened. And I have more responsibility now. I can stay out late and take public transport, because even a few years ago, I wasn't really allowed to. I feel more mature. I didn't have a lot of friends through school, but I've found new friendships through different social groups; I became a Christian recently, and through church, I've made more friends. I've gained more responsibility in more places. I'm a leader in some groups, at uni as well as church related stuff.*

In keeping with the differences noted above, non-metropolitan respondents more frequently mentioned Youth Allowance, and moving to the city or living on campus as positive ways in which things had worked out for them, for example:

■ *Well I'm financially pretty stable. In a good location and coping pretty well study wise.*

■ *Living conditions are working out well.*

■ *I'm living on campus which is good for the balance between social life and academic study and I'm just enjoying my independence I suppose.*

■ *Just earning enough money so I can support myself so I can go into study so I don't have to worry about money or about working as well as studying.*

Factors relating to achieving plans or goals or meeting expectations (or making good progress towards achieving them) were the fourth most frequently cited as ways in which things had worked out by both metropolitan and non-metropolitan participants. Examples include:

■ *It has all fallen into place. I planned this since year eleven and it is all working out except for Centrelink.*

■ *Plans have worked out so far.*

■ *Everything that I planned to happen has happened.*

■ *They've just succeeded. Things happened as planned, I reached my goals. I've achieved what I wanted to achieve. I've achieved a job and achieved studying what I want to study.*

Personal factors were the sixth most frequently cited ways in which things had worked out for metropolitan participants, and the seventh most frequently cited for non-metropolitan students. These comments included:

■ *In my full time job I gained a lot of social skills and felt more prepared for university, and my uni course is what I thought it would be.*

■ *I've progressed in the direction I wanted to - in terms of personal choices.*

■ *I've just had a good time.*

■ *Well I have my own part time job and I'm managing with university and I'm still keeping up with all my hobbies so it's a fairly balanced life.*

■ *Well having my own business is kind of having the lifestyle that I want.*

Factors relating to being generally happy were the sixth most frequently cited by non-metropolitan participants and the seventh most frequently cited by metropolitan participants. Feedback relating to being generally happy included:

■ *And generally am just happy with the way life is at the moment.*

■ *Just cruising along, everything's fine.*

■ *Nothing has really gone wrong.*

■ *They just have…. well everything's going well. I'm happy with how things are going so I suppose they're working out.*

■ *And haven't been struggling, everything is fantastic.*

The final category may be described as support-related factors. These factors relate to the importance of the support provided by family, relationships, educational institutions and employers in assisting these young people in making a successful transition from school. They included comments such as:

■ *(Because I) made good friends.*

■ *Well I guess I've earned a bit of money last year, made plenty of friends, got in a uni course, and generally am just happy with the way life is at the moment.*

■ *Study at university is going as well as I thought, I have work and family is supportive.*

■ *I'm still living at home so I don't have to pay for that kind of stuff.*

■ *Support from my parents has definitely helped make it work out.*

- *I've gotten training from Casey's, and also information to help out with getting a job, training online for getting work.*

- *I didn't have a lot of friends through school, but I've found new friendships through different social groups.*

Those for whom "things have not worked out" since leaving school

The group for whom things had not worked out was considerably smaller, but again their responses give us a clearer insight into the factors which affected the quality of their transition. And again, there were some differences between the metropolitan and non-metropolitan respondents in the emphasis placed on different kinds of issues.

Metropolitan participants more frequently cited travel or gap year plans not working out as at least one or the only reason why "things have not worked out" since leaving school. In addition to this, they appeared to also more frequently cite a lack of adequate support, advice and preparation for university or work, and to a lesser extent, personal issues such as a feeling a lack of motivation or direction.

On the other hand, non-metropolitan participants more frequently cited not being eligible for Youth Allowance and needing to defer (not being able to study straight away) as reasons.

The factors commonly mentioned by both metropolitan and non-metropolitan participants included course-related changes, difficulties or uncertainties (i.e., changing study plans), employment-related difficulties or uncertainties (including unemployment), having a lack of independence, support-related issues, changing travel and other gap year plans (not going according to plan), and other personal issues. In addition to changing travel or gap year plans, some students also mentioned changes in plans related to study, employment and independence.

Course-related factors were cited by many metropolitan students as at least one factor in explaining how things had not worked out. These responses were typically related to the course or university experience being different from what they expected (including not enjoying it as much), not getting into their first preference or not being able to go back to study after deferring. As illustrated in the quotations below, these were mentioned by students in both VET (TAFE) and university courses.

- *It's not what hasn't worked out, it's what has worked out differently. Just the way I expected university to be. As well as work, I wasn't really prepared for how hard it was going to be to get a job. Just the structure of it, the way that classes are structured, the way lectures are separate from tutes; we just weren't told about it.*

- *The course that I am doing. I originally didn't want to do that course, but I have to, because I didn't get into my first choice.*

- *I was planning to go to RMIT University and I didn't get into that and my second option was NMIT. Just a few things didn't turn out so well. When I took the gap year I planned to travel a lot but that didn't really happen.*

- *I didn't get into the course that I wanted to get into, and I was disappointed with the first institute I enrolled at. A lack of teachers that actually know how to teach! It wasn't very helpful.*

- *Just with courses and stuff I thought I was going to go to uni and then do it all but didn't, basically because the course was too hard for me and I just thought that university was not for me.*

As was the case for metropolitan participants, course-related factors were the most frequently cited by non-metropolitan participants, as at least one factor influencing how things had not worked out. In addition to those course-related issues mentioned by metropolitan deferrers, some non-metropolitan participants referred to not being at the university or campus they wanted to be at. Non-metropolitan participants also more frequently mentioned that they would have preferred not to defer (to go straight into study more often–not enjoying the course, it not living up to their expectations or not being prepared for university also appeared to be cited less frequently.

- *I am not sure what I want to do, whether I want to continue my course or not.*

- *I didn't get into the course I wanted to because I didn't get a high enough enter score.*

- *I didn't get the enter score I wanted, so I didn't go to university, I suppose.*

- *I just failed one of my classes in my course, which I would've liked to have passed just like everyone else.*

- *I wanted to go to a different university.*

- *Uni……… I'm just not enjoying it.*

- *Just the course was not what I expected it to be/ I don't know, I just feel like I was given a different perception before I got into it, then when I did it I realised it wouldn't get me where I wanted to be.*

- *Probably just like to be somewhere else right now, different studies/ just don't really like school at the moment because they don't have standards and they let anyone in.*

- *The course I wanted to do I didn't get into. I was pretty set on doing that, and I still really want to do it. Even what I'm doing now, I still want to.*

The issue of deferral particularly affected the non-metropolitan group. Many felt that deferral had held them back and that they would have preferred to have gone straight into a course, including, in one case, a TAFE program.

- *Going to uni did not happen...still raising money to be able to go to uni in the future.*

- *Because I have done no further study.*

- *Because I haven't gone back to TAFE or done any study.*

- *Well I was going to start a TAFE course this year and decided to more work and continue on with the job that I've got now its mid year. I'm going to get my P's finally and go from there. I decided to work more, and haven't had the motivation to start the course. It would have been really hard to get to where the course was in terms of transport.*

- *I wasn't able to go away to study, had to stay and work.*

- *I wanted to go to uni but then I never did.*

- *I probably would have preferred to study earlier, or just move/move from out of town/I would have preferred to go to uni.*

- *Ideally I would have jumped into a science course at Melbourne uni, but the circumstances in year 12 didn't allow for that, so.*

Employment-related factors/themes were cited by many metropolitan participants as at least one factor when elaborating on how things had not worked out. These factors were related to unemployment, difficulty in finding sufficient employment (i.e., taking longer to find it than they expected or desired), being in the wrong career or on the wrong career path (including not getting into their preferred workforce or career), and having unsatisfactory (or "horrible", undesirable, unexpected) employment.

- *When I finished school I thought life would be a lot easier, but it's not: school is nothing compared to life now. When I thought I finished school, I thought I'd find a decent Monday to Friday job like that, but it's been a year and a half, and I still have two part-time jobs.*

- *Just job-wise, like last year when I deferred I wanted to start a fulltime job, but I found it very hard to track down a job after just finishing school. And that's why I went into a course.*

- *As well as work, I wasn't really prepared for how hard it was going to be to get a job.*

- *I'm still working at a horrible job.*

- *And with my course, I am satisfied with it, but I'm not sure it is necessarily leading me towards a career that I am interested in.*

- *Well I was hoping to get a better job that what I got.*

- *Haven't really done anything. I should probably have done something by now. I couldn't find any work last year and I deferred studying. This year I got sick and still can't find any work.*

- *Definitely not the career I want to be in. I find it hard to find time to look for new jobs and go to interviews while having a fulltime job.*

- *If I set my mind on something earlier on, I would have started work earlier.*

Employment-related factors were also cited as at least one reason for things not having worked out by many non-metropolitan participants.

- *I've just been trying to find work, unsuccessfully, and trying to find out what I want to do with myself. Being in a relatively small country town doesn't fill you with much confidence either. No not really, that's about it.*

- *I didn't have a job at the start of the year.*

- *The fact that I don't have an apprenticeship and that's what I really wanted to do"*

- *I didn't have an option straight away that would lead to a career. Just options that fill in time if you know what I mean.*

- *I never thought I'd be in hospitality. Thought I'd be at uni.*

- *I guess employment wise. There are times where I didn't get the jobs I wanted, or the amount of hours I needed. And that just made things financially difficult.*

- *I just would have preferred a more stable job with more reliable hours.*

- *Well mainly because prior to getting this job I applied for a job in the navy, and I was expecting to be working in that, and then I got this job and am going in a completely different direction.*

Factors related to a lack of adequate support and/ or useful advice being received were cited by a small number of metropolitan and non-metropolitan participants as at least one factor when elaborating on how things had not worked out. These factors included advice and support (preparation) received at school and university (or an unspecified educational institution), as well as issues with family, friends or relationships. As illustrated in the examples below, these factors in particular tended to be cited in conjunction with other factors, particularly course-related ones.

- *I was disappointed with the first institute I enrolled at. A lack of teachers that actually know how to teach! It wasn't very helpful.*

- *I didn't have as much support as I thought I was going to have from university and what not. I guess my part time job didn't turn out like I thought it would either. It's put a dampener on how it's worked out.*

- *I think I just had a very different perception about university. I had planned to go from school straight to uni and I realised that uni is so different from what I expected. At our school, university was promoted as a centred learning system but I felt like I could easily get lost in it if that makes sense. I just felt like I could go under the radar, I mean if you need help you've got 500 people who all need help from one lecturer.*

- *I wanted to go back to study this year, and I called up RMIT because I was unable to do the paperwork. When it came to applying, they put a block on my account for some reason. I physically spoke to a lecturer because they told me I could not apply directly. The block was never actually lifted and I tried desperately to attend. RMIT should be fighting for me; I should not have been fighting for them. So this is why I couldn't go do the course this year. By then it was too late for me to attend any other courses. Now after working fulltime, I really want to go to uni.*

- *Just because of uni- I didn't realize how full-on it would be. At uni you don't get much help - that's what I mean.*

- *And just the fact that I wasn't prepared for uni life compared to school life.*

- *Probably socially and with university: I'm not entirely satisfied with my course. I mean socially with my friendship groups since leaving school have changed dramatically.*

- *How other people act towards each other is not how I expected, people are a lot more distrusting than I expected.*

- *I didn't have an option straight away that would lead to a career. Just options that fill in time if you know what I mean.*

Factors/themes related to having a lack of independence were cited by approximately ten metropolitan participants as at least one factor when elaborating on how things had not worked out. These factors included: not being eligible to receive Youth Allowance, not having enough money to start studying straight away (having to defer study), and/or difficulty supporting oneself, as well as still living at home or not being able to leave home, and being the carer of an ill relative.

- *I'm really happy with the way most things have worked out, except for not being able to get youth allowance: I worked a lot last year, and would've expected to meet the criteria, but fell short.*

- *Changes to plans really. Instead of doing physio I'm now going to be doing chemistry but didn't get straight into it and didn't have the money to start up straight away.*

- *It took ages to get my license.*

- *I'm still at home, I don't have any money.*

- *I was planning on getting into study a lot quicker but there were financial issues. You don't really realise how tough the real world is.*

- *I did intend to take on study, but when a relative fell ill, I took on that responsibility. But when I took a year off, when I was no longer a carer, I had to fully support myself, and study was no longer an option.*

Factors related to having a lack of independence were cited by both non-metropolitan and metropolitan participants. However, non-metropolitan participants cited Youth Allowance (or 'support from the government') issues more frequently and included difficulties in moving out of home to Melbourne.

- *Just financially it didn't work out. If I could have gone to uni straight away I would have. Youth allowance changes in our area as well did not make it work out.*

- *The big one was that Youth Allowance changed the rules (for inner rural students). That really mucked me around.*

- *Going to uni did not happen. Still trying to get a job now, still raising money to be able to go to uni in the future.*

- *I didn't get as much money as I thought I was going to get. I was counting on getting support from the government but I didn't get any so I have to work more.*

- *Well it's just I'm not where I expected to be. I didn't get into the course that I wanted to for starters. And then I had to move to Melbourne but I didn't get any of the houses that I wanted so I had to move in with random people. In my gap year I didn't get as much work as I was hoping, like I only got a full time job towards the end of the year. Before that I had a couple of casual jobs so I didn't save up as much money as I wanted.*

Personal issues such as including illness or injury, and lack of motivation and/or direction were cited by approximately fourteen metropolitan participants as at least one factor when elaborating on how things had not worked out. Similarly to support-related factors, these factors were also typically cited in conjunction with other factors.

- *I still haven't really figured out what I want to do yet.*

- *Just still not sure what I want to do.*

- *Leaving year 12 I was not really sure what I wanted to do, nothing specific.*

- *I suppose motivation. I haven't done as much travel as I wanted to in one year, so that's why I've done another gap year. A motivation issue there.*

- *I've changed my mind that many times. I guess I was going to study and then didn't study.*

Personal issues were cited approximately ten times as a least one reason why things had not worked out by non-metropolitan deferrers.

- *Still figuring out what I want to do. Thought I'd know by now.*

- *Still don't really know what I want to do.*

- *Personal reasons.*

- *I don't know I wish I could have figured what I wanted to do earlier, so I could get started.*

Travel and/or other GAP year plans not working out were cited by approximately eight participants as at least one factor when elaborating on how things had not worked out. The majority of these responses were related to travel plans. While GAP year/travel plans falling through were mentioned relatively frequently by metropolitan participants, they were only mentioned by one non-metropolitan participant, who was somewhat satisfied with other aspects of their life since school:

- *I was planning to go over to England this year for cricket but that didn't happen for money reasons but it's been alright since then.*

References

POLESEL, J., O'HANLON, C. & CLARKE, K. (2011) Deferring a University Offer in Regional Victoria – the 2006 Year 12 graduates four years out, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 24pp.

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