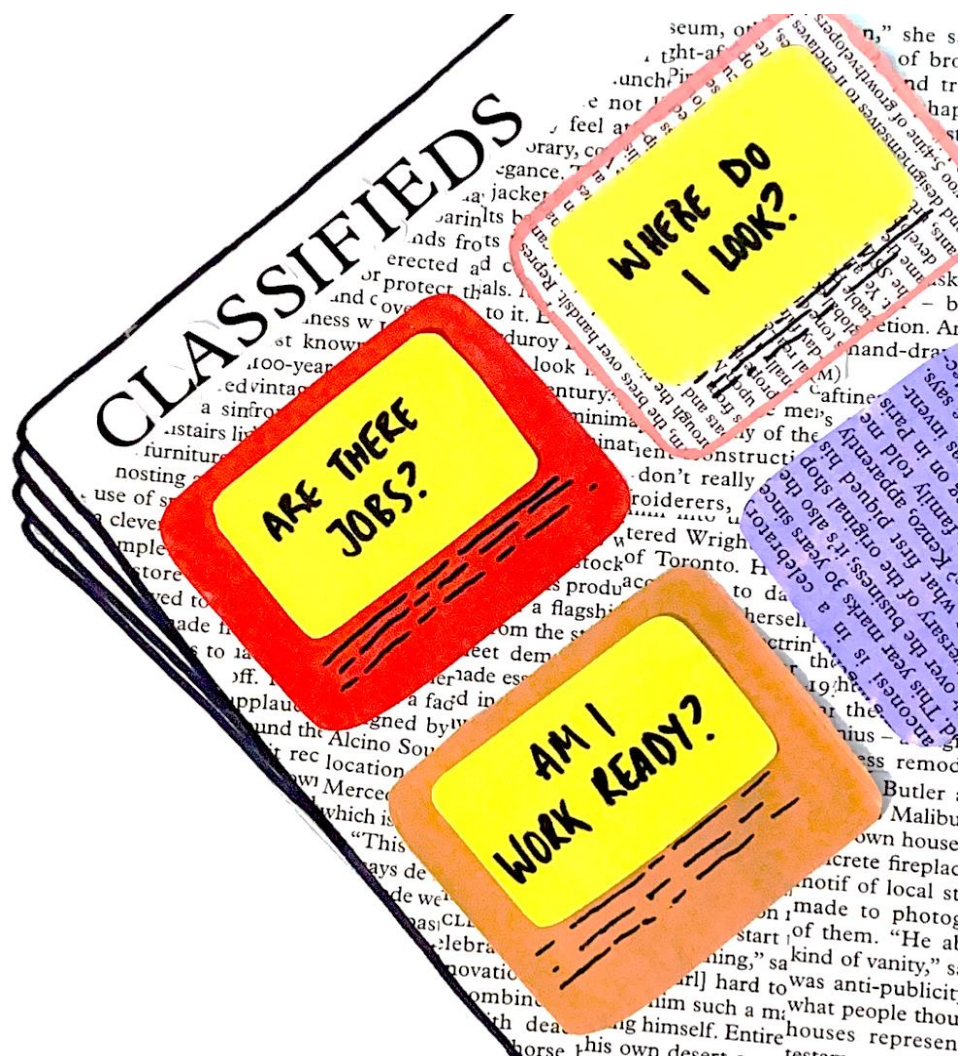


# How work works: getting young people employment in our growing industries



Youth-led research into jobs in our region, how to get them, and how governments can help

Greater Shepparton



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## For the Goulburn Murray Local Learning and Employment Networks (GMLEN)

Victoria has 31 LLENs funded by the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, through the School-Employer Engagement Support funding to increase school-employer engagement activities. This includes structured workplace learning, work experience and community work, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, guest speakers and presenters from different industries, workplace visits and industry tours, and work-readiness activities.



## Other reports in this series

This is the third report in this series:

Pope J, How Work Works: getting young people employment in our growing industries.

- Loddon Campaspe (2020). NCLLEN, CCLLEN and CRLLEN <http://www.ncllen.org.au/hww.html>
- North East. (2021) NELLEN <https://www.nellen.org.au/the-how-work-works-project/>

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# How work works

We are all worried about young people's futures as the news outlines the devastating impact COVID-19 is having on the industries that provide their early work experiences.

And yet, when we sent four interns out to interview employers in growing industries in our region, everyone—both employers and interns—came out hopeful.

There is no doubt that the job market is tough for young people, but our employers told us there are opportunities in our region. Many industries are experiencing skill shortages, have entry-level jobs, and are willing to train recruits.

Our interns were surprised that there are more opportunities than they thought, and that they have more to offer an employer than they expected, even when they have not had their first job.

To get to the jobs in our region, young people need more contact with employers earlier in school, and more opportunities to get vital work experience (and that might not be what you think!).

This report outlines our intern's road map for how to do that.

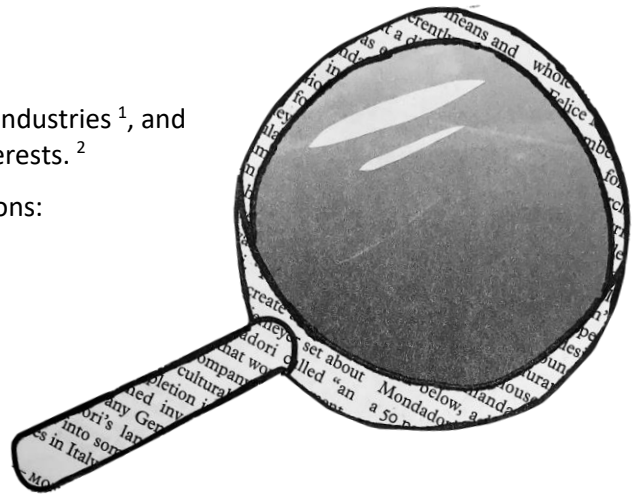
## Our research

Our four interns aged 17 to 25:

- » **Interviewed 15 employers** in our growing industries <sup>1</sup>, and
- » **Surveyed 69 young people** about their interests. <sup>2</sup>

This report outlines what they found in three sections:

- » **4 good news stories we all need to hear**
- » **4 things young people can do**
- » **4 things we should do next to help (recommendations to schools, government and other policy makers).**



## The good news

The good news is **there is entry-level work in our region** in a wide range of industries, and, despite COVID-19, many are growing. **All our employers want to hire young people** to ensure the future of their businesses, and to bring in new skills, modern perspectives, and fresh energy. **Young people have interests that match the growing jobs**, and employers are willing to train them.

*“It was really nice to ask ‘do young people bring any benefits?’ and they’d say, YES!! We want them!” (Intern)*

*“I’m surprised about employer’s willingness to train young people. Before, I thought they would think that was a hassle.” (Intern)*

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<sup>1</sup> See employers Appendix A and survey in Appendix B

<sup>2</sup> Modified for rural areas from avatars from LLEN developed *Find Their Feet Careers* events: Pope J (2019) Draft Find their Feet evaluation (unpublished). To explore Find Their Feet go to the website: [www.findtheirfeet.org](http://www.findtheirfeet.org)

We also heard that **being work ready for your first job, might not be what you think**. Employers are less worried about skills, and are more interested in your attitude and fit with their team. In the job application process, they are wanting to find out who you are, and what you are like.

*“I didn’t realise they are looking for attitude and a person that will create a good culture over skills. I saw a job I really liked, but I didn’t apply. But now I would because I actually do have those things they are looking for.” (Intern)*

## What young people can do

In the second part of this report, we outline all the things employers said make a good job application and interview. They want to see a **personalised application written specifically for the job** (throw out the template letter!). In the interview, they want to see you have researched, and are interested in, their company.

We also heard **experience is vital on your CV, but it does not have to be a job**. There are other ways young people can get experience. Employers are looking for community involvements, organising events, participating in sport – anything that shows you can commit to something.

Schools and communities can provide these alternatives.

Finally, we heard that no one knows what they are doing at first, but they work it out by talking to people. Our young interns felt reassured having spoken to these employers.

*“At the moment, you should just go for it. Half the time they’ll have jobs”  
(Employer)*

## What we should do next

While the jobs are out there, finding these opportunities is hard. Young people: are not hearing about pathways in school; have little chance to meet employers; and are faced with a complex process to find work that is difficult to navigate if you do not know how it operates.

These are all things we can fix.

The last part of this report outlines our young intern’s recommendations for what we should do next:

- 1. Fund rural careers education so young people can meet employers early in school**
- 2. Support vocational pathways and ensure every young person leaves school ‘work ready’**
- 3. Develop alternative forms of work experience**
- 4. Fund a ‘youth tab’ on the GROW Greater Shepparton jobs portal**

Preparing our young people for the future, and building a robust regional economy that can provide food, tourism, hospitality, and other products and services, depends on it.

## 4 bits of good news we need to hear...

1. There are entry-level jobs in a wide range of industries
2. Employers want younger employees
3. Young people's interests match what employers are looking for (but they do not know about the opportunities)
4. Nobody knows what they are doing at first

### 1. There are entry-level jobs in a wide range of industries

- » **All our growing industries reported having entry-level work.** These include specialist roles (where you need a qualification), hands on trade apprentice/traineeships, and administrative roles (the business support that is needed across all industries). Industries include: health, early childhood education, tourism, transport, manufacturing, construction, media, agriculture, local government, waste management and business support/ professional services. See our region's growing industries in Figures 1 and 2.

*"There are entry level jobs across a wide range of industries in communications: administration, digital coms, media, crisis coms, writing, moderating conversations on social media ... you can take it anywhere you want to go."*

*"There's a lot of entry level jobs in waste management and transport, whether you come straight out of high school, or want further tertiary education in engineering, management/ recycling of chemicals, etc."*

*"Health has customer service roles, allied health assistant roles, and graduate programs in nursing."*

*"The best thing about the construction industry is the job security – there's always work. You can get a job anywhere. There's a lot of room to progress."*

*"We have small kindergartens where a younger person can get really good experience mentored by an experienced teacher."*



» **COVID-19 has created strong demand for workers in some industries.**

COVID-19 has impacted every business, and while some reported having to take on fewer apprentices or let entry-level positions go because of shutdowns, others have been relatively unaffected, and have even grown. Many businesses told us they are crying out for workers as skilled migration has stopped. This has impacted all industries, even those that do not rely on skilled migrants, by generating competition for workers across the board.

*“The labour shortages are as bad as I’ve seen in 20 years.”*

*“[Pre-school education/childcare] has a huge number of vacant positions, and childcare is needed to get women back into work in all industries.”*

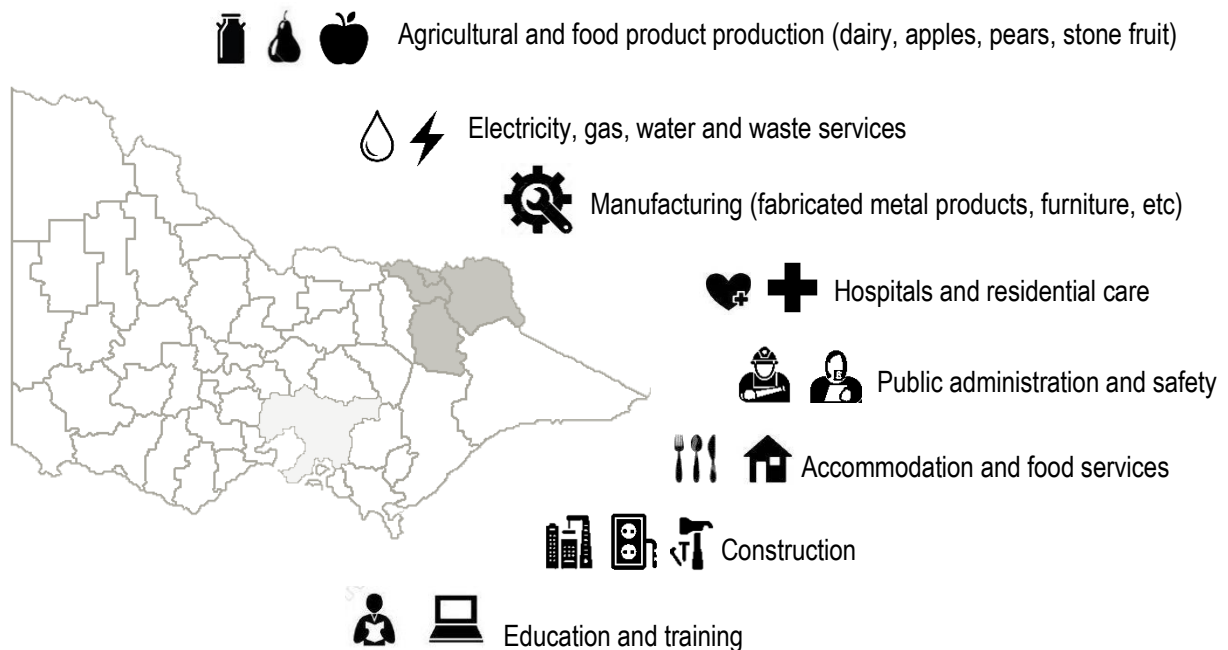
*“We have seen a digital/social media/online marketing boom, creating new challenges, and a lot of new opportunities for young people.”*

**Figure 1. Many industries in the Shepparton region are showing employment growth**



<sup>3</sup> Department of Jobs and Small Business (2018) *Employment Projections, five years to May 2024*. Available at <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/EmploymentProjections> Accessed 28 October 2019

Figure 2. Our region has some “comparative advantages” over other regions <sup>4</sup>



## 2. Employers want young employees

- » **Employers want younger employees to ensure their future.** Many of these industries workforces are aging and they are trying to attract young people to rejuvenate the workforce, for succession, and to develop younger customer bases.

*“As technology advances, and we need new skills, they bring tremendous benefit. They are new eyes in the business. They help us grow and develop.”*

*“We have 40 or 50 staff...when we bring in young people, it changes the working environment and people are a lot happier, livelier and keen to do stuff.”*

*“They are the future. If we don’t give them an opportunity, then we don’t have a future.”*

- » **Young people have some advantages over older people.** They can:
- Be more comfortable with **technology, social media, etc** and are quick to pick up new technologies in workplaces and adapt to change.
  - Bring **contemporary thinking**, up-to-date knowledge, and fresh perspectives into a business.
  - Be more **open to learning new things**.

<sup>4</sup> Infrastructure Victoria Industry Profile 2019 and the RDV Regional Partnership Road Maps 2019



- Bring **energy, freshness, and enthusiasm** to the workplace. They can make a workplace more enjoyable, and make an organisation more enterprising and give it currency, which will help it find new customers.

Young people can use these qualities to sell themselves.

*“Fresh legs we call them – they bring an energy boost to the workplace!”*

*“They bring a lot of new knowledge and information, which is very valuable.”*

*“They are so quick with technology. What takes us 2 days, takes them 2 minutes!”*

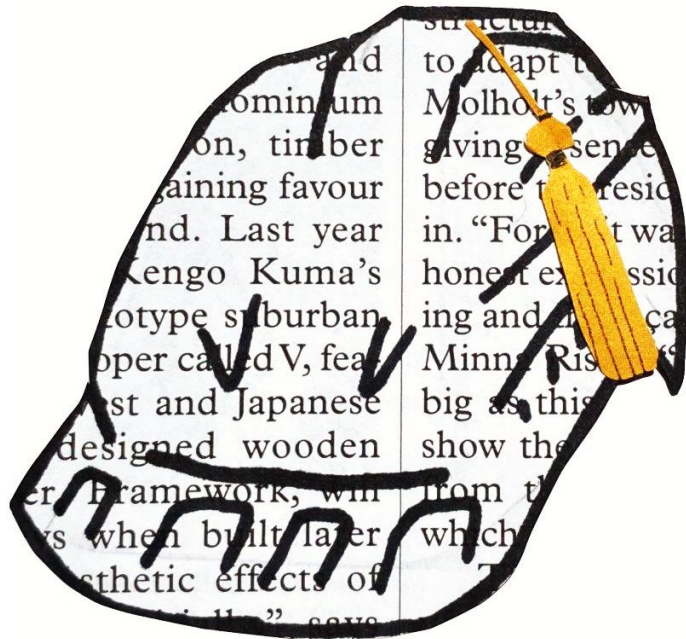
*“Young people have a much greater understanding of emerging technologies, who’s using those technologies, and how to communicate with young people.”*

- » **Employers are willing to train the right people.** Some employers are always looking for trainees. There are opportunities for young people as older workers retire, migration slows, and more people take a break from the city, increasing the demand for services in the region.

*“We can turn a glimmer of interest into the person we need with training.”*

*“I’m prepared to train the right candidate.”*

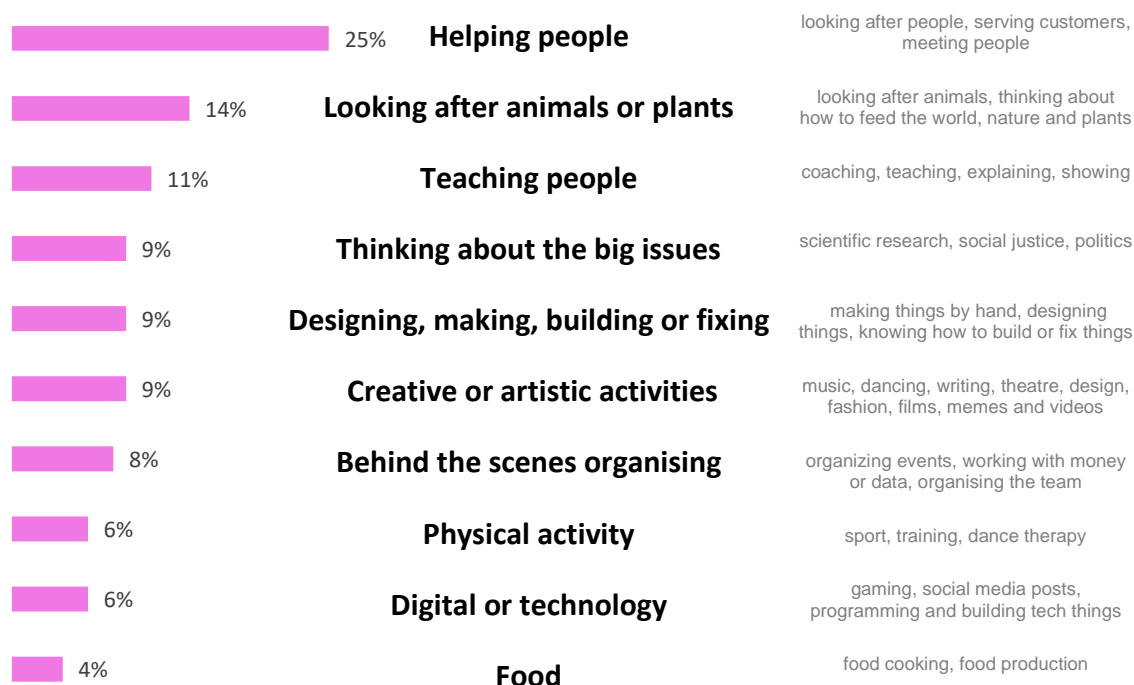
*“Our support and mentorship can overcome anything you don’t have, as long as you are interested and willing to learn.”*



### 3. Young people’s interests match what employers are looking for (but they do not know about the opportunities)

» **Young people’s career interests match current opportunities.** While only a small sample (67), our survey of young people shows their interests match the jobs on offer. Careers education is needed to help young people explore opportunities that will suit their interests, particularly in places they may not expect. This includes the industries in Figure 1 that are projected to grow, and the areas of competitive advantage in Figure 2, for which the best opportunities are in our region and might keep young people in the area.

Figure 2. Young people’s interests match the region’s opportunities <sup>5</sup>



» **Young people do not hear about the opportunities.** Our interns reported it was hard for young people to find out about the jobs, and employers reported they found it hard to find/communicate with young people. The channels employers currently use do not all work for engaging young people (see next section: *Do not know where the jobs are? You are not alone*).

*“We need to do a bit more in trying to reach young people.”*

<sup>5</sup> Survey of 67 young people aged 15 to 21 across Year 9 (25%), Year 10 (12%), Year 11 (10%), Year 12 (16%), Not in school (36%) – some respondents selected more than one interest

## 4. Nobody knows what they are doing at first

- » **Your first job will not be your best job (but will make a good story when you are the boss).** Our CEOs and business owners did not start out in the best jobs, but they were important for getting the experience and work readiness that makes it easier to find that next, better job. At the moment there is opportunity in the regions for that first step.

*“Use it as a stepping stone to build your foundations, you will get a different job later. Your first job doesn’t have to be the right one.”*

*“Be open to a challenge as no job will be perfect and you most likely won’t do it for the rest of your life. Be open to learning and absorbing as much as you can in your first role. Find someone to mentor you and help you find your next step and career.”*

Figure 3. Our employers first jobs



- » **You do not need to know ‘what you are going to be’, but work out what you like doing.**

*“There’s a lot of pressure to know what you want to do, but just try something you enjoy. If it’s something you like, there’s a good chance you’ll be a success at it.”*

*“You have a long bright future ahead of you. You can do a much wider range of things than in the past.”*

*“Just get out there and have a go!”*

# 4 things young people need to know ...

1. Being 'work ready' might be easier than you think
2. Employers are trying to work out what you are like in your application – throw out the template letter!
3. Work experience is vital, but it can be many things
4. Do not know where the opportunities are? You are not alone

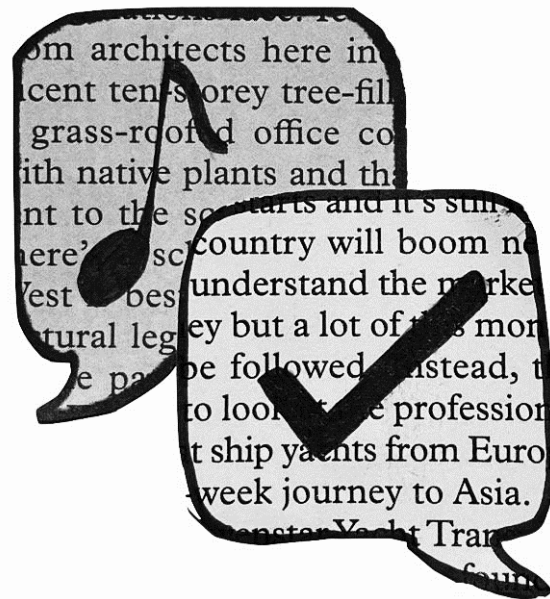
## 1. Being 'work ready' might be easier than you think

» **It is not just skills that make you 'work ready'**. While skills are important, employers are often willing to teach skills, whereas other things they cannot. Our employers unanimously reported a 'work ready' young person has:

- A good attitude – is keen and interested
- Willingness to learn and get as much out of the role as possible
- Interest in the industry and the type of work in it
- Reliability – the ability to commit and turn up on time

Some employers also mentioned other general capabilities including:

- Communication skills
- Organising and problem-solving skills
- Teamwork and the ability to develop good relationships
- Basic maths and finance to handle money
- Safety certificates such as White Card, First Aid, Responsible Service of Alcohol, etc



*“A good positive attitude is number one. Nothing is really a deal breaker if you have the right attitude.”*

*“Desire to work, desire to show up on time, and desire to learn.”*

*“You don't need much in the skill department. What would put you right at the front of the queue is if you turned up and said you want to be involved.”*

*“I look for those who genuinely want to dive into the field.”*

## 2. Employers are trying to work out what you are like in your application – throw out the template letter!

- » **Write a personalised job application that is specific for the job.** The best way to make your job application letter, CV and interview stand out is to be authentic and say something genuine about you. It's your personality and interests they are looking for. Our employers said the biggest 'red flag' is an application that was not written specifically for the job (a generic template letter), was obviously written by someone else, or if your parent did the approach for you. Never send a standard application.

Make sure your application letter and CV:

- **Are easy to read.** Use a clean simple layout and use bullet points. Proof read it! Your CV only needs to be 1 or 2 pages at entry-level.
- **Get straight to the point: why should they consider you for this job?** So they get a feel for you, tell them in one or two sentences up front about who you are and what you are interested in (hobbies, interests, ideas), why you care about the role, and your career objective.
- **Outline your experience.** Think about what you are good at, and what things you have done that you could include (look at the list on page 15).
- **Match your skills to the job.** Think about the skills your experiences have given you. Work on cars? That gives you mechanical aptitude and an engineering thought process. Babysitting? That makes you responsible, reliable and good with people.
- **Have good referees.** Relevant referees are essential – they will contact them. For some employers it is the first thing they look for. Do not use family. Ask a teacher, work experience supervisor, coach, someone you volunteered for, etc.



*“If it's someone's first job they may not have a lot to put on their CV. It's more the way they go about applying that makes them stand out from the crowd.”*

*“Your resume is just to give us a bit of a back story about who you are and what's led you to this point. And the amount of effort you give.”*

*“Put your best effort forward, tell us you are willing to learn, don't let lack of life or career experience deter you from a field you're interested in.”*

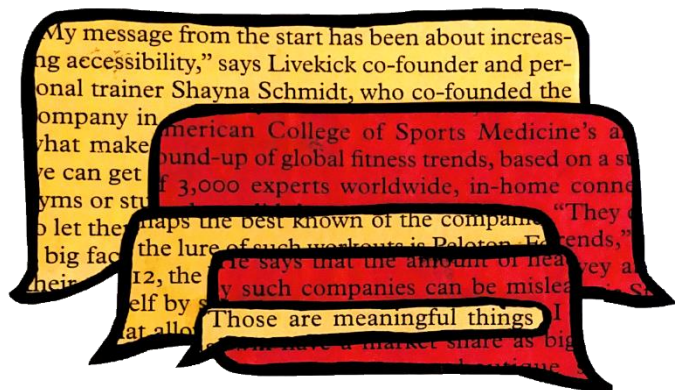
*“Generic/template resumes are a red flag to me.”*

- » **Do your research to understand what they are looking for.** It is important you read the job description and selection criteria, understand what they are looking for, and match your application to those things (but only by about 70% - if you cannot meet one of the criteria, they may still consider you if you have other strengths). Use your experience to demonstrate you meet each of the criteria and give examples. If you do not have experience, tell them why you would be good at the job.

*“When you are going for a job take the time to understand the organisation. Take the time to show you care enough to do some research.”*

- » **In an interview (formal or informal), employers are looking to see how you will fit with the team.** They know you will be nervous and are sympathetic to that. They just want to talk to you and find out whether you are a good fit for them. Present well (like you are serious about the job) and show up prepared. Make sure you:

- **Know something about the organisation**
- **Show you want to work with them (attitude)** – prepare an answer for why you want the job and give it even if they do not ask
- **Give real-world examples** to illustrate your experiences
- **Always have a question up your sleeve to ask them at the end**



*“I know people get nervous at interviews but remember the person interviewing you is nervous too.”*

*“Come in, in-person and make the connection. I’ll appreciate you speaking up for yourself and taking the initiative.”*

*“Conversational skills are so important: if you make eye contact and can hold a conversation with strangers, we’ll give you a go. Do things that give you practice with people face to face, instead of just texting people.”*

### 3. Work experience is vital, but it can be many things

- » **There are alternatives to work experience that employers value.** While work experience is vital, our employers told us it can be a lot of different things. Over and above part-time jobs they reported they will look for anything that shows a young person can commit to something. They are also looking to see if a young person is responsible, has initiative, and has teamwork, people/customer service, communication, and organisation skills. Examples of experience employers said they would look on favourably on a CV, over and above paid jobs, included:

- **Volunteering** or community work
- **A long-term commitment to a sport** (particularly a team sport), or other activity, and any leadership role undertaken (captaining, umpiring, coaching, setting up events, involvement in the club)
- **Project work or extra-curricular activities** in a school setting, additional work at university, or helping out at school
- **Tutoring or involvement in school holiday programs** (for example, with disability groups, or music programs)
- **Aged or child care** (babysitting)
- **Organising** an event, group, or competition (for example a gaming event)
- **Involvement in an interest, hobby or youth club**
- **Certificates:** White Card, First Aid, Responsible Service of Alcohol, or other certificates



*“Having had a job is tremendous, but I’m looking for other things too.”*

*“Volunteering is very powerful. It demonstrates a willingness to learn. Get volunteering experience.”*

*“Work experience is desirable and we are happy to get high school kids in on the weekends washing trucks to get it.”*

*“We mainly hire young people we have had on work experience so we can see how they handle work and how they fit in.”*

» **Academic skills are important but are not a deal breaker.** None of our employers said they were looking for your academic record first on your CV.

*“I’m looking to get a sense of you as a person, so less school and grades, and more about your interests and engagements and your referees.”*

## 4. Do not know where the jobs are? You are not alone

- » **There is no one place in our region where jobs are advertised.** Employers reported using (in order of mentions):
- Seek
  - Facebook
  - Word of mouth
  - Linked In
  - Walk-ins
  - Newspapers
  - Other social media
  - Universities
  - The local trade school
  - Footy clubs
  - School contacts.

Two used the local Shepparton GROW (Growing Regional Opportunities for Work) platform which is a free, community run, jobs portal that lets employers list opportunities, and job seekers search for them. It also provides some careers advice and can contact individuals to try and job match.

GROW Greater Shepparton is a collaborative program created by the Committee for Greater Shepparton (business, government, and community organisations) to increase job opportunities through procurement and employment across the Goulburn Valley.



*“Wow, this is difficult: young people don’t read newspapers; most don’t use Linked In; it’s hard to see how you’ll demonstrate a good attitude to Seek if you don’t have experience; and you might not hear about jobs word of mouth ....” (Interns)*



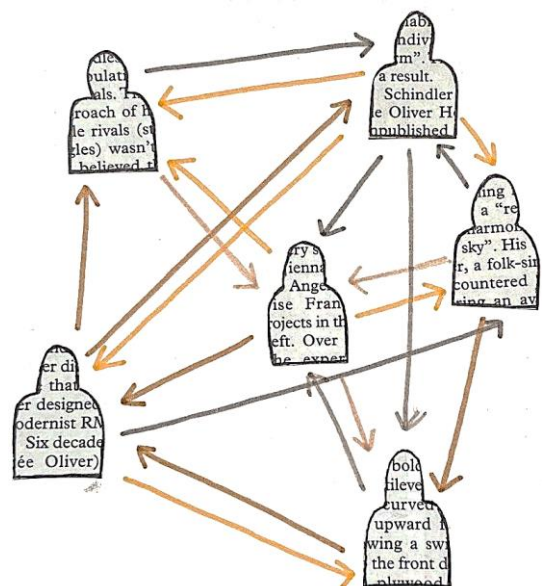
# 4 things schools and communities can do to help (recommendations)...

1. Fund rural careers education so young people can meet employers early in school
2. Support vocational pathways and ensure every young person leaves school 'work ready'
3. Develop alternative forms of work experience
4. Fund a 'youth tab' on the GROW Greater Shepparton jobs portal

## 1. Fund rural careers education so young people can meet employers early in school

» **Job opportunities exist in the region but young people do not know about them.** Young people need early opportunities to talk to employers to match their interests to growing industries. Careers education is currently underinvested in, starts too late, and does not connect young people to employers. At the moment the type of careers education young people get in our region depends on the school they go to. Rural young people need their schools to have the capacity to provide:

- **Continuous conversations with employers**, including those in non-traditional professions and the region's competitive advantages. Employers acknowledge it is hard for schools to showcase all the options and new virtual experiences should be developed.
- **Teacher development** to ensure subject teachers are up-to-date with modern workplace practices and non-traditional professions related to their field.
- **One-on-one contact with careers counsellors early in secondary school** to help students figure out what they like and are good at, to match their interests to growing industries and pathways, and to write individualised CVs.
- **Development of three basic work competencies** reported by employers: communications, organising, and team work skills (see work experience recommendation 3).



*“Teachers, including career teachers, don’t have a comprehensive understanding of the current career pathways or jobs locally.”*

*“A lot of careers teachers don’t have enough time. I would encourage schools to provide those services, but it all comes down to money.”*

**Recommendation:** Support the LLENs development of rural careers education for secondary schools that takes a localised approach in helping young people explore regional industries.

## 2. Support vocational pathways and ensure every young person leaves school ‘work ready’

- » **Our employers felt the emphasis is still on university pathways.** Vocational pathways can lead to good incomes and faster employment (as they are where the skills shortages are) and young people suggested seven simple things schools could provide that would help them be ‘work ready’ on vocational pathways (below). These things matched the things desired by employers.

**Recommendation:** Support the LLEN to help schools partner with community organisations to ensure every young person leaves school with (in order of the proportion of young people who would like school assistance):

1. An understanding of work finance (Tax File Number, Superannuation, etc) (86%)
2. Safety training of some kind: Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA), White Card, First Aid Certificate, Working with Children Check, Life Saving Medallion (71%)
3. An understanding of how to find jobs (63%)
4. Information about how to write a job application and ace an interview (59%)
5. Opportunities to meet employers (industry tours, etc) (55%)
6. A good quality work experience (or community volunteering project) (46%)
7. A driver’s licence (51%)

*“I am not a fan of ‘you have to go to university to be successful’. We need schools to treat the trades equally to see Shepparton grow and succeed.”*

*“We need more curriculum based around understanding life-skills: setting up a Tax File Number, a bank account, work terminologies, explaining what a probationary period is on a contract... We have young guys turning up for work and they don’t know what a Tax File Number is.”*

## 3. Develop alternative forms of work experience

- » **Early work experiences are a critical foundation for successful careers, but many of our young people are missing out.** Work experience builds aspiration, job readiness, and contacts, but it is difficult for employers in rural areas to provide, particularly since COVID-19. We need new and innovative ways to ensure all young people get these important employability experiences at school. Alternatives include:

- **Community internships**, In teams, young people could undertake meaningful short work projects that solve community and business challenges (a website for a community group, an online shop for a sole trader, a community engagement panel for local government, etc). An example came from an intern, whose class went to a low resourced primary school and spent a week building, painting and resourcing a library. The intern said when they saw how little these school kids had, they became committed to helping and spending time with them.
- **Virtual Reality experiences**: where young people could experience a range of workplaces, and undertake typical work activities, to get exposure to a broader field of industries and roles (including exposing young women to higher paying trades). GMLLEN is at the forefront of the development of such a platform.

**Recommendation:** Fund a program of youth internships and Virtual Reality experiences for schools in the region.

*“School [should] prepare students by offering excursions, placements, work experience – showing behind the scenes of the industry and giving the opportunity to network and communicate.”*

*“It’s not all the school’s responsibility ... We all need to come together as in schools, the community and family to provide positive mentors and create [places outside of] home and school to explore. Everyone has a part to play.”*

#### 4. Fund a ‘youth tab’ on the GROW Greater Shepparton jobs portal

- » **Young people, their parents, career specialists, and others need access to local labour market information.** If GROW Greater Shepparton can capture the lion’s share of local job ads, it will not only be a place where young people can go to find opportunities, but it will provide real time data about the local economy that can be used by everyone in the careers education eco-system to make better decisions.

**Recommendation:** Fund a ‘youth tab’ on the GROW Greater Shepparton jobs portal, and a supporting facilitator to make sure young people can find it, and who can distribute its data to drive careers education decision-making in the region.



<https://growgreatershepparton.com.au/>

## Appendix A. The employers

### Health and other care services

Donna Holmes Employment Services Manager

**Goulburn Valley Hospital**

### Education and training

Ronni Druitt CEO

**Goulburn Regional Pre-School Assoc.**

Debbie Parish/Marsh, Business Relationships Consultant

**MEGT**

### Information, media and communications

Anthony Murphy, Founder/CEO

**Attention Media**

Fiona LeGassick Manager of Communications and Engagement

**Greater Shepparton Council**

Enna Giampiccolo, Manager of Communications & Engagement

**City of Darebin**

### Tourism, food & beverage, accommodation

Ingrid Thomas, co-owner

**Foodstore/Teller Collective**

Gerry Ryan, Owner

**Nagambie Brewery/Jayco**

### Agricultural food production

Michael Parker, Chief Engineer

**JefTomson**

Jon Lee Training and HR Systems Coordinator

**Unilever**

### Construction

Amanda Herezo, People and Culture Manager

**CPE Construction Cobram**

### Engineering and trades

Adam Furphy, Managing Director

**Furphy's**

Wayne Ford, Service Manager

**Watters Electrical**

Phill Lahm, Manager

**Hot & Cold Shop**

Rosemary Congram, Financial Controller

**Total Plaster Supplies**

Zane Foott Operations Manager

**FoottWaste Solutions**

## Appendix B. The interview questions

We'd like to start by asking you a couple of questions about you and your industry....

1. Firstly, can you tell us about your first ever job?
2. Can you tell us, what types of entry-level jobs there are in your industry? Why is it an industry young people should look into?
3. How has COVID impacted on entry level work in your industry?
4. How do you find young workers? Where do you look or advertise?

Now we'd like to ask you a few questions about being "work ready" for work in your industry.

5. What does a work ready young person look like? – what does the ideal young person have?
6. What is the most important thing you look for on a CV or job application?
7. Are there any "red flags" for you in terms of a young person not being work ready?
8. Do young people bring any benefits to your industry?

Finally, we'd like to ask you about how schools prepare young people.

9. Are there things you think schools could be doing, to better prepare them for your industry?  
Even simple things ...
10. Is there any other advice you would give us about being prepared for our first job?