



It's not about age

Pathways for engagement in employing mature age people and existing workers as apprentices: an employer perspective

Dr John Mitchell, Graeme Dobbs and John Ward
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Pathways for engagement in employing mature age people and existing workers as apprentices: an employer perspective:

Final Project Report: Mature age apprentices are good value, Dr John Mitchell, Graeme Dobbs and John Ward

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Canberra Office

24 Brisbane Avenue
Barton, ACT 2600
Phone: 02 6273 2311
Facsimile: 02 6273 3286
Email: info@acci.asn.au
www.acci.asn.au

Mailing Address

PO Box 6005
Kingston, ACT 2604

Melbourne Office

Level 3, 486 Albert Street
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
Phone: 03 9668 9950
Fax: 03 9668 9958
Email: melb@acci.asn.au
www.acci.asn.au

Mailing Address

PO Box 18008
Collins Street East
Melbourne, Victoria 8003

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Executive summary

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) undertook this investigation in February-June 2010 into the views and opinions of employers about increasing the apprenticeship pathways for mature age and existing workers. The study examines options that actively encourage the engagement of mature age and existing workers in apprenticeships.

Detailed case studies and interviews provide consistent and compelling evidence of the value of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships. The main value from the case studies and interviews is to provide rich and in-depth insights into good practice in attracting and retaining mature age and existing worker apprentices.

The positive attitudes of employers towards mature age apprentices are evident on every page of this report. Hopefully, these overwhelmingly positive insights of the interviewees and case study participants will inspire other employers, industry leaders and policy makers to continue to attract and support mature age people and existing workers. They in turn demonstrate the courage and determination to start an apprenticeship, often many years after leaving secondary school.

Most employers involved in the study believe that mature age and existing worker apprentices have much to offer, and they value the attributes of maturity, loyalty and experience that mature age apprentices bring to their businesses.

A comment from one employer sums up the views of a majority of interviewees, case study subjects and survey respondents, simply stated: "Mature age apprentices are good value".

Other representative comments by employers interviewed about the attributes of existing worker apprentices include:

They've developed work ethics they can immediately bring to the table. And not just work ethics, but life skills as well.

Our existing workers already have most of the skills we need but lack the qualification. They are very loyal.

We always need more skills and existing workers are another source of apprentices for the company. They are also more loyal and stay with us once they have got their trade.

They are familiar with the company and how the business works.

We know the person and their capabilities. They have built up loyalty to the company.

They've got some experience, some life skills and they are a little bit more reliable.

Many of our existing workers already have a lot of skills and experience. An apprenticeship or traineeship enables those skills to be recognised.

We know that they work well and have the right attitude. We have seen them learn on the job as trade assistants and then go into the apprenticeship with those skills already.

They have the experience and are productive as a result.

Similar comments by employers relate to the attributes of mature age apprentices:

[They have] demonstrated ability, demonstrated hand skills, demonstrated practical skills.

Mature age workers come to us with existing knowledge. They know when to listen. They are keen and motivated. Because of this they are easier to manage as well.

It's (mature age) definitely seen as an advantage. They have a little bit of extra skill and life skills. And life experiences are important as well.

They're just that little bit more settled. They've got through that raging hormone thing.

They are experienced and productive. Their work ethic is stronger and they understand the need to conform with what the business needs.

For the oil and gas industry and the places that we send our apprentices like offshore facilities such as oil rigs, you need a level of maturity.

They've developed work ethics they can immediately bring to the table. And not just work ethics, but life skills as well.

Clearly, employers value mature age and existing worker apprentices.

Systematic approach endorsed

The value of developing a systematic approach to the attraction and retention of mature age and existing workers as apprentices was endorsed by employer and stakeholder interviewees and employer survey respondents. This reinforced the findings from two previous studies of apprentices by ACCI (*A systematic approach to the attraction and retention of apprentices*, Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward 2009a and; *Worth their weight in gold*, Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward 2009b).

A systematic approach is defined as “. . . evidence-based, logical, rigorous, thorough, targeted, engaging, interventionist, customised, benchmarked and continuously improved.” (Mitchell et al. 2009a).

The systematic approach set out in this Executive Summary provides practical strategies for attracting and recruiting mature age apprentices, then progresses to strategies for managing, supporting and guiding them. In most cases the systematic approach used for mature age and existing worker apprentices will be different from that used for youth apprentices. For example, interviewees for this study commented repeatedly on the following benefits from mature age apprenticeships:

- **Career not just a job:** the value proposition an employer can put to a mature age or existing worker is that an apprenticeship can lead to a long-term career; whereas the employer’s pitch to a younger person often places a greater emphasis on the immediate benefits of becoming a tradesperson.
- **Earlier productivity:** employers can benefit from the enthusiasm, maturity and previous skills acquired by mature or existing workers and so will be able to provide them with meaningful work as soon as possible and as much as possible.

- **Pathways for development:** employers can expect mature age apprentices to be more responsive to advice about future career pathways and about opportunities to undertake continuing skills development.

A range of parties other than employers can contribute to the development and maintenance of a systematic approach, including government agencies, industry bodies and training providers.

Project methodology

The project used a pragmatic, mixed-methods approach involving the collection and analysis of qualitative as well as quantitative data. The data collection methods comprised a literature review (section A1), survey (section A2), interviews (section A3) and case studies (section A4 and section B). This use of multiple data sources, or triangulation, underpins the validity of the findings. The names of people interviewed are set out in Appendix 3.

Definitions of mature age and existing worker apprentices

The term ‘apprentice’ is used in a range of ways in the literature and not always consistently. Much of the material available does not distinguish between traditional apprenticeships and the much broader range of ‘new’ apprenticeships that cover apprentices and trainees in trades and non-trades. The definitions adopted in the project are discussed in Figure 1.

employers can benefit from the enthusiasm, maturity and previous skills acquired by mature or existing workers

Figure 1. Definitions

- This project adopted a definition of ‘traditional apprentice’ that is consistent with reporting by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER). Hence a traditional apprenticeship is characterised by a contract of training within a trade (major group 4 of Australian Standard Classification of Occupations {ASCO 2} occupations) at Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level III qualification or above with more than two years expected duration for full-time contracts and more than eight years expected duration for part-time or school-based contracts (Australian vocational education and training statistics, Apprentices and Trainees, NCVER September 2007). As NCVER notes, this definition “may not be consistent with legal definitions of apprentices in some jurisdictions”.
- Regarding the term ‘mature age’, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) uses three main age categories: less than 25 years; 25 to 44 years and 45 years and over. For the purposes of this project a narrow definition along these lines was not appropriate. There is a clear distinction between the issues and concerns of employers in recruiting and training an apprentice moving directly from school to work and the issues and concerns associated with potential apprentices who have had experience in the workforce as well as significantly wider life experience.
- Hence the project adopted a broad interpretation of ‘mature age and existing worker’ to the extent that while generally referring to the 25 to 44 years and 45 years and over groups it will not necessarily exclude younger people if appropriate. Similarly, the project interpreted ‘mature age and existing worker’ to mean persons currently or recently employed. This interpretation would not generally include long-term unemployed persons.
- In the interviews and case studies for this project employers were invited to draw distinctions between existing workers from their own firms and from outside. While they generally preferred the former they were generally positive about both groups.
- For consistency, the term mature age, not mature aged, was used in this report, following the preferences of the Macquarie Dictionary, for example “mature age student”. As mature age and existing workers were often the same people in the minds of the interviewees for this study, for brevity the term mature age is often used in this [report instead of both terms](#).

Key findings from the literature review

Before the recent economic downturn, a significant component of the response to the skills shortage agenda was focused on issues associated with apprenticeships: increasing commencements, reducing attrition and attracting disengaged apprentices back to their trade, among other issues. The more recent literature continues to express concern about skills shortages in the longer term and in particular the relationship of skills shortages with economic recovery and ongoing productivity.

However, the workforce challenge facing Australian industry goes beyond skills shortages and beyond the process of economic recovery. Workforce skills needs “are deepening and intensifying with different skills required for the workforce of the future” (*A Framework for Building the Skills of the Existing Workforce*, National Industry Skills Committee 2008). In the

future, “. . . there will be increased demand for more sustainable and low pollution approaches in our industries and the way that we live” (*Keep Australia Working*, Australian Government 2009). These new demands will have an impact on employment and on the required skills of the existing workforce.

Transformation of this awareness into action will require a raft of strategies. Employers need to be aware of the potential contribution existing worker apprenticeships can make to workforce planning and productivity as the economic recovery unfolds and the challenges of a low carbon economy become apparent. The growing body of literature on workforce development needs to be balanced by research and information designed to support employers who are dealing with problems within their businesses; that is, research and advice that helps employers to:

- build workforce development strategies into their business planning,
- develop a sound understanding of the pathways that underpin mature age and existing worker apprenticeships, and
- reliably assess the return on investing in mature age or existing worker apprenticeships as a strategy for managing the projected trade skills needs of the enterprise.

This report is one attempt to balance the literature and provide such research and advice for employers.

Key findings from the survey

The survey contained 44 questions and received responses from 170 employers in March-April 2010. The analysis of the survey showed that employers value mature age and existing worker apprentices, and they rate their attributes highly and are very willing to employ them. They believe their return on investment in a mature age or existing worker apprentice generally is more positive than their investment in a traditional youth apprentice.

Employers are aware of the reluctance of mature age or existing workers to take up apprentices and believe this reluctance has much to do with the low apprentice wage.

Employers are not confident they can attract enough mature age and existing worker apprentices and they are pessimistic that fluctuations in supply and demand will attract more of these people to apprenticeships. Employers are looking to industry associations, government agencies and training providers to attract more of these people.

Despite the fact that they value mature age and existing worker apprentices, employers are inexperienced in supporting them and could benefit from more guidance on how to integrate on-the-job learning with meaningful work.

Clearly, employers would like more information about mature age apprentices, such as incentives, administrative requirements and available employer support.

Key findings from the interviews

A total of 36 employers and stakeholders were interviewed. The 30 questions asked in the interviews were based on the findings of the literature review and, more particularly, the outcomes of the employer survey. The eleven sets of interview questions aligned with the dimensions of apprenticeships that employers identified in the survey as most important:

- Advantages to employers of hiring existing workers.
- Basis of the employer's decision to hire mature age apprentices.
- Value for employers of hiring mature age apprentices.
- Opportunities available to employers for hiring mature age apprentices.
- Personal qualities of mature age apprentices valued by employers.
- Management of mature age apprentices.
- Career development strategies for mature age apprentices.
- Provision of meaningful work for mature age apprentices.
- Role of government and industry bodies regarding mature age apprentices.
- Role of training providers regarding mature age apprentices.
- Employers' needs for more information about mature age apprentices.

The interviews reveal that employers are aware of the important role a mature age apprenticeship can play within an organisation's workforce development strategy, enabling organisations to meet their strategic goals more effectively.

Employers also realise that while a mature age apprenticeship will provide an individual apprentice with a qualification and a job, it will also create a career development pathway and plan.

The interviews show that these benefits for both employer and apprentice

Clearly, employers would like more information about mature age apprentices, such as incentives, administrative requirements and available employer support.

particularly apply when the mature age apprentice is also an existing worker within the organisation. In these cases there is an immediate synergy between the goals of both parties as well as a shared commitment to positive outcomes all round.

Key findings from the case studies

The case study consultations were designed to probe the dimensions of attraction and retention of apprentices at a level not possible with statistical enquiry. The format of the consultations involved asking standardised questions (modelled on the questions used in the employer interviews) and semi-structured questions designed to stimulate individualistic responses that would complement the statistical results from the survey and telephone interviews.

The six 'good practice' employers selected as case study sites enriched and validated the major findings from the literature review, survey and interviews. In particular, the case studies emphasise:

- The value of employers recognising the skills acquired by their existing workers and promoting the value of an apprenticeship to these workers.
- Mutual benefits for employers (e.g. multi-skilled, flexible, productive, and loyal staff) and mature age and existing workers (e.g. improved job satisfaction and career options) of the latter groups undertaking an apprenticeship.
- Strategic advantages for organisations recruiting mature age and existing worker apprentices as part of the overall workforce development plan.
- Effectiveness of workplace training for mature age and existing worker apprentices in preference to off-the-job training with youth apprentices. Usefulness of promoting career and study pathways to mature age and existing worker apprentices.

The case studies refer to six very different contexts, ranging from a large mining company in Mt Isa Qld to a bakery in Orange NSW and an engineering company in Murray Bridge SA, and provide consistent and compelling examples of the value of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships.

A final note on further information in other reports

In addition to this final report, three other key reports were generated during the project and will be of interest to employers seeking further information and data:

- The literature review, most of which is reproduced in Section A1.
- The report on the survey of employers, *High return on investment*.
- The report on the national interviews, *They're just more mature*.
- The case studies collection, *They see it as their future*, as set out in Section B of this report.

Each report provides important information that underpins this final report. For example, the report from the national interviews contains numerous compelling quotations from insightful employers and stakeholders, arranged in an easy-to-read manner around critical questions and issues for all employers of mature age or existing worker apprentices.

Strategic recommendations

Strategic recommendations for employers and systemic stakeholders about the attraction and retention of mature age people and existing workers as apprentices

1. It is recommended that, with a view to attracting and **recruiting** apprentices, more employers be encouraged to value their return on investment in mature age or existing worker apprentices, given their personal qualities and previously acquired skills and their ability to help the organisation meet its strategic goals.
2. It is recommended that industry associations, government agencies and training providers be encouraged to **attract** more mature age and existing worker apprentices, given that many employers are not confident they can attract enough of these people and they are pessimistic that fluctuations in supply and demand will attract more of them to undertake apprenticeships.
3. It is recommended that, given that many mature age and existing workers are reluctant to take up an apprenticeship, the long-term **benefits** be promoted, such as a long-term career as well as potential work variety, job security and satisfaction and possibly salary increases and promotions.
4. It is recommended that employers inexperienced in **supporting** mature age and existing worker apprentices be provided with guidance on the following strategies:
 - How to integrate on-the-job learning with meaningful work for mature age apprentices.
 - How to avoid placing them in training settings where they are the only adults among youth apprentices.
 - How to identify, with expert help, apprentices' learning difficulties related to literacy or numeracy.
5. It is recommended that employers promote **career pathways** to mature age and existing worker apprentices; and in particular promote the view that the apprentice can not only acquire a qualification and a job but create a career development pathway and plan.
6. It is recommended that **training providers** be encouraged to increase their provision of flexible learning options for mature age and existing worker apprentices, including offering more recognition of prior learning and more on-the-job training and shortened training requirements, as well as the provision of higher level qualifications in trade programs and continuing professional development programs.
7. It is recommended that **awareness programs** be provided that show employers how mature age and existing worker apprenticeships can have an effect on the bottom line of the business through the potential return to employers, such as increased retention of staff, increased skills capacity in the organisation and higher productivity.
8. It is recommended that employers be provided with **information** from the broader perspective about the value of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships – not just detailed information about subsidies and similar topics. This information could assist the employer in preparing workforce development plans and strategies.

Recommendations of practical strategies

Specific recommendations for employers of practical engagement and retention strategies

The following practical strategies are based on data collected in the literature review, survey, interviews and case studies. They are especially based upon the good practice of those employers interviewed for this study who successfully manage mature age and existing worker apprentices.

A. Engagement strategies

A1 Strategies for engaging with and attracting existing workers as apprentices

- a. **Reassess** existing workers as potentially providing an increased pool of prospective apprentices.
- b. **Focus** on the relative ease of recruiting apprentices from existing workers drawn from your own organisation, compared with recruiting someone not known to the company.
- c. **Identify** ways to recognise and reward the commitment and loyalty of existing workers in remaining with the firm and starting an apprenticeship.
- d. **Recognise** that some of the advantages of existing worker apprenticeships also apply to existing workers recruited from outside the organisation.
- e. **Value** existing workers' maturity, which could mean a lower occupational health and safety (OH&S) risk.
- f. **Value** that existing workers already know the company and sometimes don't require in-house training on company policies and procedures.
- g. **Acknowledge** publicly that existing workers often have demonstrated many of the important personal qualities required to succeed as an apprentice and tradesperson – such as a work ethic and a capacity to work in a team.

- h. **Encourage**, where appropriate, interested workers to undertake a pre-vocational program to gain confidence and demonstrate commitment.
- i. **Recognise** the current skills of existing workers and identify and address their skill gaps to increase their confidence and give them a launch pad for successfully commencing and undertaking an apprenticeship.
- j. **Promote** to existing workers the benefits that apprenticeships can provide for them, including increasing career options, becoming multi-skilled and building self esteem and confidence.
- k. **Recognise** that existing worker apprentices are often more aware of the role an apprenticeship might play as part of their career development because they have acquired examples and models of career progression from their work colleagues.
- l. **Develop** policies and systems that encourage and support existing workers to apply for and start apprenticeships.

A2 Strategies for engaging with and attracting mature age apprentices

- a. **Shift** your thinking about apprentices away from solely focusing on traditional straight from school model in order to increase the pool of available talent.
- b. **Develop** a positive attitude to the existing skills often held by mature age people, to enhance your firm's capacity to cope with skill shortages.
- c. **Recognise** that mature age apprentices often are more immediately productive in the workplace because of their previous work experience and better understanding of issues such as OH&S.
- d. **Value** the higher level of stability and reliability often demonstrated by mature age apprentices.

- e. **Appreciate** mature age persons who will be committed to their apprenticeship and see it as part of a career path.
 - f. **Accept** that the previous experience of mature age apprentices generally makes them more comfortable in the workplace and this facilitates better communication.
 - g. **Respect** that one of the valuable characteristics of mature age apprentices is the higher level of confidence they demonstrate in the workplace environment.
 - h. **Appreciate** that often they know when to listen, they have an understanding of when it is appropriate to take the initiative and they generally know how to provide feedback.
 - i. **Identify** mature age applicants who are likely to be effective team players and business and customer focussed.
 - j. **Remember** that the management and supervision of a mature age apprentice is generally easier and less time consuming than the supervision of a youth apprentice.
 - k. **Acknowledge** that a barrier for many mature age people applying for an apprenticeship is their perception of a low wage, so focus their attention on the long-term benefits such as job variety, satisfaction and security and hopefully wage growth.
 - l. **Review** the wage paid to the mature age or existing worker apprentices, where possible, given that their productivity is often high because of their existing skills.
 - m. **Provide** positive reinforcement and success stories to the mature age person considering an apprenticeship, especially as advertising and promotional material about apprenticeships generally portrays young people.
 - n. **Describe** to the mature age person the flexible approaches to apprenticeships that are available, such as on the job training and in some cases shortened programs, as they may not be aware of these changes to apprenticeships.
 - o. **Point out** to mature age and existing workers the benefits of adding an apprenticeship to their previous skills, such as becoming multi-skilled and versatile and being able to maintain interesting work by switching between tasks.
 - p. **Be aware** that mature age people considering an apprenticeship are often worried about the time that has elapsed between their last year of school and the start of an apprenticeship, and the impact this could have on their ability to cope with the 'theory side' of the apprenticeship.
 - q. **Identify**, with the help of experts, any literacy and numeracy issues that may be a problem for mature age applicants.
 - r. **Seek** a balance of mature age and traditional youth apprentices, to benefit from the attributes of both groups.
 - s. **Ensure** that the recruitment processes include a proportion of mature age applicants.
 - t. **Determine** if a mature age person applying for an apprentice is not 'set in their ways' and will have difficulty taking instruction, particularly from younger supervisors or mentors.
 - u. **Clarify** for mature age applicants for apprenticeships the nature of the work involved, as they may have unrealistic expectations about it.
- B. Retention strategies**
- B1 Strategies for managing mature age and existing worker apprentices**
- a. **Design** meaningful work for mature age apprentices to maintain their enthusiasm and give them opportunities to demonstrate their willingness to learn.

- b. **Adjust** training plans so that full advantage is taken of existing skills and experience.
- c. **Identify** gaps in all apprentices' knowledge and experience and attempt to fill those gaps.
- d. **Appreciate** that many existing workers are motivated by the potential to increase their employability and career options.
- e. **Plan** and customise an effective skills development approach for each mature age apprentice, rather than treat them as all the same.
- f. **Ensure** that training providers provide mature age and existing workers with opportunities for recognition of prior learning (RPL).
- g. **Show sensitivity to** cultural issues within the organisation that could be a disincentive for mature age apprentices – for example, the apprentice's possible suspicion of management initiatives and not wanting to be singled out from their colleagues.
- d. **Encourage** the training provider to link on-the-job training to the development of improved teamwork, so the mature age or existing worker apprentice can benefit from collegial group support.
- e. **Express** publicly the value you place on mature age workers who demonstrate the characteristics of reliability, confidence, commonsense and ability to work in a team.
- f. **Compliment** mature age apprentices who have clear career goals and are able to see the long-term benefit of having up-to-date skills and the associated increase in job options and career security.

B3 Strategies to promote ongoing skills development and career pathways

- a. **Promote** the view that a mature age apprenticeship is simply one stage in a career.
 - b. **Identify** mature age and existing worker apprenticeships as one particular stage of the organisation's workforce development strategy.
 - c. **Connect** apprentice training with the development of improved teamwork and staff morale.
 - d. **Encourage** mature age and existing worker apprentices to consider the immediate benefits of training, such as the company retaining satisfied clients leading to more secure employment.
 - e. **Foster** the understanding that improved skills will increase productivity, which leads to sustainable business and jobs.
 - f. **Reward** staff members who use their apprenticeship training to improve work performance, for example, by providing them with pathways to promotion.
 - g. **Inform** clients that mature age staff members are undertaking apprenticeships in order to demonstrate to all parties, including staff, the company's commitment to learning and continuous improvement.
 - h. **Provide** a continuing program of post-trade training to sustain the skills base of the workforce, including the skills of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships.
- a. **Inform** mature age and existing workers that you understand that beginning an apprenticeship requires courage and determination and that you will provide them with appropriate support.
 - b. **Ensure** you do not overlook the need for personal and professional support for mature age apprentices. While employers often experience fewer difficulties with mature age apprentices, many say there is not much difference between managing mature age apprentices and traditional youth apprentices.
 - c. **Provide** the same induction and support programs for mature age apprentices as those provided to young apprentices, to avoid over-estimating the support required by older apprentices. However, where the mature age recruit has obvious prior knowledge it might be possible to provide shorter induction programs.

- i. **Foster** their learning after their completion of the apprenticeship, for example, by promoting vendor training or other courses.
- j. **Identify** and negotiate skill development needs with the employee and provide an ongoing development program that is either informal or formal or both.
- k. **Give** concrete examples to mature age and existing worker apprentices of how completing the apprenticeship will create opportunities for higher wages, increased job opportunities and improved job security.
- l. **Request** training providers to deliver their services flexibly. The traditional 'off-the-job' approach can work for youth apprentices but employers need more training provided 'in the workplace' if they are to fully benefit from the experience of mature age and existing workers.
- m. **Require** your training provider to align the training to the organisation's context and the mature age apprentice's needs.
- n. **Encourage** the trainer, the apprentice and the apprentice's supervisor to talk with each other regularly to more successfully integrate theory with practical on-the job training
- o. **Expect** trainers to have up-to-date industry skills so they can gain the respect of experienced mature age and existing workers undertaking an apprenticeship.
- p. **Require** the training provider to model a consistent, predictable and effective approach to recognition of prior learning (RPL) that can potentially shorten the time to complete an apprenticeship for many mature age and existing workers.
- q. **Encourage** training providers to inform mature age apprentices about the full range of advanced skills appropriate to the trade.
- r. **Encourage** training providers to design and promote their services as part of an apprentice's career development and training pathway.

B3 Strategies for accessing and using information

- a. **Become** aware of initiatives undertaken by government to promote apprenticeships generally – including mature age apprentices – that encourage employers to take on apprentices.
- b. **Seek out** appropriate, available information about mature age and existing worker apprenticeships and find out how to access it easily.
- c. **Look** to combined initiatives by government and industry bodies to encourage existing workers to upgrade their skills through an apprenticeship.
- d. **Request** from other parties, such as apprenticeship centres, that the marketing strategies targeting prospective mature age apprentices make these potential candidates aware of the opportunities associated with the apprenticeship itself and the longer-term career benefits arising from it.
- e. **Support** marketing approaches that provide positive images of mature age apprentices.
- f. **Encourage** apprenticeship centres and industry bodies to consider keeping registers of mature age persons who are interested in apprenticeships.

Section A: Findings from the research

This section sets out the findings from the research as follows:

A1. Developing an understanding of pathways for mature age apprentices

Based on the literature review

A2. High return on investment

Based on the survey

A3. They're just more mature

Based on the interviews

A4. They see it as their future

Based on the case studies

A1

Understanding the pathways for apprentices

A1: Understanding the pathways for apprentices – summary of literature review

The following text is an abridged version of the literature review. The key findings from the literature review are set out in the Executive Summary.

Purpose of the literature review

This literature review was undertaken in December 2009 as a first step in this project. The literature review had a dual purpose:

1. To ensure that existing knowledge is captured about the effective strategies relating to pathways for engagement in employing mature age people and existing workers as apprentices.
2. To guide development of the employer survey instrument that underpinned Phase 2 of the project.

The findings from the literature review underpinned the design and implementation of the survey of employers, intended to elicit an employer perspective on the issues described in sections A2. The findings from the literature review, the outcomes of the employer survey and field interviews and an analysis of a number of case studies all informed this final report and its recommendations.

Scope of the literature review

From an employer's perspective the specific issues around the employment of mature age and existing workers as apprentices sit within the broader framework of workforce development for their business as a whole. The variety of factors that have an impact on an employer's decision about taking on a mature age or existing worker as an apprentice mirrors factors applying in that broader framework. The scope of this review, therefore, includes papers and research on workforce development generally, where the discussion and

findings are relevant to the issues associated with mature age and existing workers.

Current context for the literature review

Much has been written about the role of the workforce in shoring up the economy and productivity growth. Government, industry and vocational education and training (VET) providers all recognise this role and have developed policies and strategies to enhance the impact the workforce has on the economy.

Three major high-level themes underpin this recognition:

- 1. An understanding that the productivity gains needed to underpin economic recovery depend on the availability of the right skills in the workforce.**

“We must recognise that our future economic strength is going to depend on developing the right skills needed to underpin the next period of prosperity.” (Julia Gillard, *The Big Skills Conference*, March 2009)

- 2. The appreciation that it is essential to maintain the skills base of the existing workforce, and indeed to develop that skills base in directions that will drive the recovery.**

“Australian firms should be careful not to throw away their recent investments in workers. They will need a skilled workforce to remain strong and productive, both to sustain themselves over the downturn and take advantage of growth and new opportunities.” (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, December 2008)

“In a period of economic stress and fluctuating business confidence, every effort must be made to secure jobs and drive productivity gains across all industries . . . If work-skills training momentum is not increased Australia could find itself with skills shortages when employees are needed to stoke the fires of economic recovery.” (ACCI Review November 2009)

- 3. An understanding directly targeting existing workers is a critical strategy for optimising training outcomes and maximising the return on investment for employers.**

“We must recognise that our future economic strength is going to depend on developing the right skills needed to underpin the next period of prosperity.” (Julia Gillard, *The Big Skills Conference*, March 2009)

“A slowdown in 2009 would provide industry with the time and internal capacity to engage in a renewed period of staff training and workforce development.”
(*Employment and Skilling Implications of the Australian Economic Slowdown*, National Industry Skills Council, December 2008)

“The journey from education to employment is no longer a continuous trajectory involving predetermined progression and an easily identifiable ladder of opportunity. The pathways undertaken by individuals as they move between the varying education sectors and work are increasingly diverse.”
(ACCI Review, November 2009)

Methodology for the literature review

The methodology used to identify literature relevant to this review included the following steps:

- Internet search using the terms Adult Apprentice, Mature Age Apprentice, Apprentice Pathways, Apprenticeship Barriers, Apprenticeship Benefits, Apprenticeship ROI and , Workforce Planning,
- Search of NCVER publications and the VOCED database and classification of items returned through the NCVER and other searches according to relevance and currency,
- Development of a list of key papers and references for the review and cross checking of the list against reference lists within the key papers.

The criteria for inclusion in the literature review were:

- Relevance – containing substantial material directly related to the scope of the review.
- Currency – generally published in 2005 or later.

A discussion is provided in Figure 1 in the Executive Summary of this final report of the definitions of mature age and existing worker apprentices.

General themes in the literature

An initial scan of the literature relating to the role of mature age and existing workers in a general workforce development context, and the more specific role relating to engagement as apprentices, suggest that while there are clearly a number of unique issues associated with the employment of mature age and existing workers as apprentices, many of the factors employers need to consider are common to the recruitment of traditional apprentices.

The table below attempts to capture the unique and common factors relevant to mature age and existing workers identified through the initial scan of the literature. It is designed to provide an organising framework for the documentation of the ideas and issues discussed in the literature.

As well as providing a framework for documenting existing knowledge, it is intended to help in the identification of gaps in our understanding of areas where further research and investigation will assist employers to develop effective strategies for their own business needs.

“The journey from education to employment is no longer a continuous trajectory involving predetermined progression and an easily identifiable ladder of opportunity. The pathways undertaken by individuals as they move between the varying education sectors and work are increasingly diverse.”
(ACCI Review, November 2009)

Table 1. Research questions and factors regarding mature age and existing workers

Stakeholder	Research questions	Factors
Employer	<p>What factors have a significant impact on an employer's decision to consider mature age and existing workers for apprenticeships in their business?</p> <p>What views, actions and attitudes of employers will encourage mature age or existing workers to consider taking on an apprenticeship?</p>	<p>Employer motivation and business outlook</p> <p>Positive, supportive workforce development/ workplace learning culture</p> <p>Benefits and risks</p> <p>Return on investment</p> <p>The possibility of age discrimination</p> <p>Disincentives</p> <p>Specific small to medium-sized organisation (SME) barriers</p>
Mature age/ existing worker	<p>What factors have a significant impact on a mature age or existing workers decision to consider taking on an apprenticeship?</p>	<p>Employee motivation, job security and future prospects</p> <p>Access to effective careers advice</p> <p>Benefits and risks</p> <p>Return on investment</p> <p>Fear of failure, educational background, literacy and numeracy issues</p> <p>Positive, supportive workforce development/ workplace learning culture</p> <p>Availability of learning support services through the registered training organisation (RTO)</p>
Government	<p>How can the Australian Government and state governments support employers and mature age or existing workers in their consideration of an apprenticeship?</p>	<p>Clear policy direction relating to workforce development and apprenticeships</p> <p>Development and implementation of a more seamless apprenticeship access and re-entry system</p> <p>Provision of access to current, reliable and easily interpreted information</p> <p>Optimal investment through employer and employee subsidies</p> <p>Support and mentoring systems for employers and employees</p>
Off-the-job training provider	<p>What actions by RTOs can facilitate mature age or existing workers apprenticeships?</p>	<p>Comprehensive recognition of prior learning (RPL) arrangements</p> <p>Effective implementation of competency-based rather than time-based progression</p> <p>Flexible service provision to allow easy integration with on-the-job commitments</p> <p>Contextualised, relevant content</p> <p>Accessible learning support services</p>
Industry	<p>How can industry organisations support employers and mature age or existing workers in their consideration of an apprenticeship?</p>	<p>Provision of access to current, reliable and easily interpreted information</p> <p>Support systems and networks for employers and employees</p>

Significant gaps in the literature

While the literature reveals a range of factors, as above, that will influence employers' decisions about taking on mature age or existing worker apprentices, there is little to guide employers about:

- How existing apprenticeship programs might be adapted to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks for the business.
- How existing apprenticeship programs might be adapted to meet the needs of mature age and existing workers.
- Balancing the tangible and intangible benefits and risks in determining a return on investment for the employer.
- The different issues faced by mature age and existing worker apprentices compared with traditional apprentices and how these differences impact on the employer's business, administrative and support systems for apprentices.
- Where the employer's efforts can be most effectively deployed.
- Where to direct employees for advice and support for decision making about career options and the potential of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships.
- The valuable role a workforce development strategy, the considerations that underpin it and the tools used to develop it can have in effective business planning.

Major themes in the literature

The major themes that emerge from the literature are summarised below.

Theme 1: Impact of the economic downturn

Before the economic downturn a significant body of literature developed around the impact of the skills shortage problems being experienced at that time. More recently there has been some recognition of the need for a broader approach to workforce planning if such problems are to be avoided in future.

While not referring to the recent economic downturn as a particular motivating force, the discussion papers *What does the Future Hold? Meeting Australia's Skill Needs* and *Powering the Workplace: Realising Australia's Skill Potential* and the summary paper *Workforce Futures* (Skills Australia 2009) present a case for a changed focus in how Australia approaches planning for our future skills and better utilising them to contribute to improved wellbeing.

Other writers have also recognised the need for a more strategic approach, for example:

The global financial crisis will not alleviate an ongoing critical skills shortage and the impact of an ageing workforce on Australian employers. Instead, it has shone the light on these issues as organisations around the world are faced with the need to reshape their workforces (*Workplace 2012 – Beyond the Global Financial Crisis*, Mercer 2008).

Any slowdown holds within it the kernel of opportunity. For much of this decade business in Australia has struggled to find the capacity to train staff. A slowdown in 2009 would provide industry with the time and internal capacity to engage in a renewed period of staff training and workforce development (*Employment and Skilling Implications of the Australian Economic Slowdown*, National Industry Skills Committee 2008).

Theme 2: Workforce Development – A strategy for economic recovery and international competitiveness

In its discussion paper *Skilling Australia for the Future* (Australian Government 2008) the authors note:

International research shows that without significant upskilling across the workforce, Australia's relative skill level will be lower than international competitors in the future. On the basis of the current level of skill formation, in 2020 Australia will have nearly three times the proportion of low skilled or unskilled workers than the best performing countries.

A solution to this problem goes beyond issues of school retention rates. The National Industry Skills Committee in *A Framework for Building the skills of*

the Existing Workforce (NISC 2008) notes that “decisions by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on the Human Capital Agenda for Australia have highlighted the need for Australia to improve the skills levels of its existing and mature age workforce.”

Industry is also taking this opportunity to look at the skills of the existing workforce:

Upskilling the existing workforce is an effective way to optimise training outcomes for business and boost productivity in the workplace. Upskilling existing workers maximises return on investment whilst minimising training costs for employers. (ACCI Review, November 2009).

Skilling the existing workforce has emerged as a critical priority for Australian industry and Australian governments. Skill shortages and technological and demographic change mean that now, more than ever, many of the skills needed by Australian business must come from the existing workforce. (*Skilling the Existing Workforce*, Australian Industry Group 2008)

A national survey of 500 CEOs, conducted in July 2009, *Skilling Business in Tough Times* (Australian Industry Group 2009) found that “more than a quarter of the companies surveyed have been severely affected by the downturn” - and contrary to the reactions in previous downturns, the report notes that this time around companies appear to be seeking to hold onto employees in preparation for the next upturn. Retraining staff on-the-job clearly was the preferred strategy for meeting skill needs in 2009-2010 “with 65.7 per cent of all respondents pursuing this option to secure the skills needs of their organisation.”

The Human Resources and Employment Committee of Standards Australia has identified workforce planning as an essential element in the achievement of business strategies and has produced a *Handbook on Workforce Planning* designed for use by all-sized businesses.

Theme 3: Workforce development for mature age and existing workers

The number of older people in the workforce has grown substantially in recent years. Workforce development

strategies need to take into account the increased diversity of backgrounds, motivations, attitudes and learning styles of mature age workers and minimise the barriers to participation that this diversity might create.

Older workers face barriers to participation in skills development including: employer attitudes; lack of information about options; work and family commitments; financial difficulties; attitudes to participation (*Skills Development for an Older Workforce*, Ferrier, Burke and Smith, NCVET 2008).

Ferrier, Burke and Smith also note “previous Australian and overseas studies have investigated the nature of good practice in skills development for older workers.”

The work indicates that while some changes to skills development programs are required to accommodate the needs of older participants these are generally small and can benefit participants in all age groups.

The conditions identified as contributing to success include:

- The integration of learning and work.
- Creation of sympathetic learning environments.
- Attention to appropriate staffing.

Theme 4: The economic downturn and apprenticeships

Recent NCVET data (*Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics – Apprentices and Trainees*, March Quarter 2009) show that apprentice and traineeship commencements peaked in June 2008 (almost certainly reflecting the impact of a variety of government initiatives in relation to skill shortages) and have declined significantly since. By the March quarter 2009, 15 to 24-year-old apprenticeship commencements in trade occupations had fallen by 23.2 per cent compared with the previous March quarter and by 7.5 per cent for non-trade apprenticeships. (*Keep Australia Working*, Australian Government October 2009).

Karmel and Misko have noted that, “While all facets of education and training are affected by the state of the economy, apprenticeships and

traineeships are potentially very sensitive, because they involve employment . . . Trade apprenticeships will be more seriously affected.” (*Apprenticeships and traineeships in the downturn*, Karmel and Misko, NCVET Adelaide 2009).

They note the potential for this decline to “sow the seeds for future skills shortages”.

Theme 5: Workforce development – employing mature age and existing workers as apprentices

The most recent literature reflects a consistent view of the potential role that adult apprenticeships play in contributing to economic recovery and effective workforce planning.

One approach to minimising training costs and maximising return on investment in training is increased commitment to upskilling existing workers to trade level or higher-level qualifications. In many cases existing workers have a sound level of knowledge of the work environment and the [of the] required job specific skills base. Existing workers also have had exposure to the industry and, unlike many new entrants into the industry, will have formed an understanding of the nature of the work . . . and thus [will] have an increased likelihood to complete training (*ACCI Response to the Australian Apprentice Taskforce Discussion Paper*, July 2009).

However, this recent literature largely addresses strategic issues and in general does not attempt to analyse the operational issues faced by employers making decisions about adult and existing worker apprenticeships.

Earlier literature more usually considers operational issues, but possibly because much of this work was produced during a period of growth and skills shortages there is a tendency to focus either on school leavers or workers who for various reasons have been out of the workforce entirely. The operational issues around the upskilling of existing workers, and in particular building their capacity to contribute to the enterprise as a qualified tradesperson within the development of a broad workplace development strategy, are not addressed in any comprehensive way.

Age and workplace experience should not be seen as a barrier simply because the traditional apprenticeship pathway is directly from school. In a recent ACCI report on factors pertaining to the return of previously disengaged apprentices back to their trade, Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward (2009b) note that employers were generally supportive of taking on mature age apprentices who had previously dropped out of their apprenticeship, provided the apprentice’s personal attributes included “commitment and motivation” (*Worth Their Weight in Gold : Practical Strategies for Engaging and Retaining Disengaged Apprentices*, Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward, 2009b).

Mature age and existing worker apprenticeships: Benefits and risks

The benefits and risks of employing mature age and existing worker apprentices are set out below.

Benefits for employers

The National Industry Skills Committee notes that there are many likely benefits from investing in mature age and existing worker skills development.

The benefits can include improved retention of existing employees, increased capacity of workers to take on new roles and tasks, linking organisational goals to workforce training and development and using existing, particularly mature aged workers, to pass on invaluable skills and experience to younger workers” (*A Framework for Building the Skills of the Existing Workforce*, NISC 2008).

Brunello (*Learning for Jobs – The Effect of Economic Downturns on Apprenticeships and Initial Workplace Training: a Review of the Evidence*, Brunello, OECD, Paris 2009) identified perhaps the most important factor motivating employers to consider existing workers for apprenticeships. He notes that since incumbent employees “have accumulated valuable firm specific human capital, firms are often reluctant to lose their skills because of a temporary downturn and tend to engage in some form of labour hoarding, which includes the provision of training.” Adult apprentices

Age and workplace experience should not be seen as a barrier simply because the traditional apprenticeship pathway is directly from school.

are valued for their maturity, mentoring of younger colleagues, dependability and safety-consciousness.

A further motivating factor for employers is the relative ease with which they are able to assess the attitude, maturity, reliability and potential of existing employees. In a report on factors impacting on the re-engagement of apprentices who had dropped out of their apprenticeship employers indicated that these factors rather than past history were the critical elements in the decision (*Worth Their Weight in Gold: Practical Strategies for Engaging and Retaining Disengaged Apprentices*, Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward 2009b).

Karmel and Misko (NCVER 2009) note that in a series of studies conducted by Nechvoglod, Karmel and Saunders (2009) the costs of supervising apprentices are high and are not offset by low wage costs. “[The] high cost of an apprenticeship to an employer is balanced by intangible benefits (such as loyalty, knowing the quality of the training and so on).” Because of the anticipated increased maturity and enterprise and industry specific knowledge of mature age and existing workers there is likely to be a reduced requirement for high levels of supervision with consequent reduction in the associated costs.

Incentive payments can make a difference to the employer and the employee. The Commonwealth’s “Support for Mid-Career Apprentices” program targeting Australian apprentices aged 30 or more can subsidise wages by up to \$13,000 over the first two years of the apprenticeship.

In its *Environmental Scan* (MSA 2009) Manufacturing Skills Australia confirms existing worker development and adult apprentices as key growth areas. MSA indicates that one area of motivation for this growth is the difficulty many employers have in understanding young people and their motivations: “Generation Y continues to baffle employers on the whole.”

Barriers and risks for employers

The NISC paper, *A Framework for Building the Skills of the Existing Workforce*, identifies specific barriers to investment in workforce re-skilling by firms. They include:

- A perceived likely low return on investment.
- Reluctance to invest in the development of lower skilled staff unless they are clearly going to need those skills in the future.
- Reluctance to invest in more highly skilled staff where skills are in high demand and workers are likely to be poached by competitors.
- Difficulty accessing relevant training that can be integrated with work schedules.
- Lack of knowledge of the training system.
- Administrative complexity.
- Employee resistance.

A range of writers confirm these and other barriers, as set out below.

In their response to the Australian Apprenticeship Taskforce Discussion Paper (July 2009) ACCI points out that the current level of incentive payments for business meets only a small proportion of the total costs of training an apprentice, which is estimated to be \$128,000. The paper argues that reform of current incentives for training is needed to streamline the payment framework, minimise administration and maximise the benefits gained.

In its national CEO survey *Skilling Business in Tough Times* (AIG 2009), the Australian Industry Group suggests an increase in incentives to train existing workers would be the measure most likely to lead to a boost in training.

Also, in *Skilling Business in Tough Times*, the Australian Industry Group identified that much of the success in workforce upskilling relies on the existence of well

developed literacy, numeracy and basic information technology skills in the existing workforce. In that survey over a quarter (25.1 per cent) of the respondents indicated a shortage of literacy skills with 22.5 per cent reporting numeracy skills shortages and 34.7 per cent shortages in IT skills.

The *ACCI Review, November 2009*, notes the results of the 2006 Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey released in November 2007 indicated that 46 per cent of Australian adults lack the literacy and numeracy skills to function effectively in the workforce and in everyday situations. Clearly, this issue represents a major barrier for employers seeking adjust to the economic recovery and increase productivity through a workforce development that targets existing workers.

In the recent paper, *Keep Australia Working* (Australian Government 2009), the authors identify one of the key lessons learnt from the round of the “Keep Australia Working” forums conducted in August 2009 and relating directly to apprenticeships. Employers identified the need to simplify the existing apprenticeship system and consider better financial incentives to take on apprentices.

The *ACCI Review, November 2009*, also identifies the need for Australian businesses to “have access to effective business planning and workforce development and diagnostic tools and training needs analysis and assistance.” “This would enable many businesses to identify areas of potential productivity growth and facilitate training for existing workers to meet skills needs.”

While many of the risks associated with engaging mature age and existing workers as apprentices are similar to the risks involved in any long-term recruitment decision, some significantly different factors apply when compared with taking on a traditional apprentice. The apprentice’s personal circumstances are likely to be more complex, requiring different kinds of workplace assistance and, rather than managing a transition from school to work, the employer will be supporting an apprentice returning

to study after what can often be a significant gap.

These risks can be managed through effective workforce planning that incorporates ongoing analysis of training needs and a formal or informal process for keeping track of employee skills.

Benefits for mature age and existing workers

Increased career opportunities, long-term prospects, improved well-being at work and increased earning potential are some of the more apparent benefits for a mature age and existing worker entering an apprenticeship.

The National Industry Skills Committee Strategic Issues paper, in *A Framework for Building the Skills of the Existing Workforce* (NISC 2008) notes that the benefits to existing workers from investing in skills development can include better career progression and new job roles, the acquisition of more portable skills and a greater capacity to deal with change. Intangible benefits include increased self esteem and the confidence to take on new challenges.

For workers looking to an alternative career, a mature age and existing worker apprenticeship provides an opportunity to move to a new work situation, with more interesting and challenging responsibilities supported by structured training, and time to learn and acquire new skills within a generally supportive learning environment.

One of the strongest motivating factors is the possibility of increased income and a long-term financial benefit. In their comprehensive report *Private returns to vocational education and training qualifications* (NCVER 2008) Long and Shah conclude that the rates of return to study in higher level VET courses mostly provide students with a better than adequate incentive to enrol. Further, age made only a small difference to the rates of return. It should be noted, however, that the ‘Return on Investment’ calculations for a mature age and existing worker are likely to be more complex than for a school leaver.

The apprentice’s personal circumstances are likely to be more complex, requiring different kinds of workplace assistance and, rather than managing a transition from school to work, the employer will be supporting an apprentice returning to study after what can often be a significant gap.

One further issue derives from the changed economic conditions. During a period of rapid growth and tight labour markets, employers are less concerned about qualifications when making recruitment decisions than they are during a downturn. Gaining a trade qualification enhances the employability of a mature age and existing worker and potentially provides for a more stable longer-term employment outlook.

Barriers to mature age and existing workers

Ferrier, Burke and Shah in *Skills Development for a Diverse Older Workforce* (NCVER 2008) note that previous studies identified employer attitudes towards older workers as among the main barriers to training participation.

However, they also note that “. . . older workers have been found to be often haphazard and ill informed in selecting training, lacking information about options and future skill demands. In addition, many older workers do not understand that the contemporary world of work requires them, more than in the past, to manage their own career and life pathways.”

Barriers to participation in workforce development programs by individuals are also identified in *A Framework for Building the Skills of the Existing Workforce* (NISC 2008), including:

- Low levels of investment (and support) by employers in skills development.
- Perceived low levels of financial return.
- Fear of failure.
- Lack of relevance of training opportunities.
- Competing pressures from work/family.
- Literacy and numeracy issues.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives have played an important role in reducing the barriers for mature-aged and existing workers to engage in formal training programs. The *ACCI Review, November 2009* notes that in 2007 some 5 per cent (50,000 of the 1.1 million) VET

students in Australia received RPL for all or part of their training. However, there is a tendency for the advice given by providers on issues such as recognition of prior learning and credit transfer to be inconsistent and ad-hoc (Jones et al. 2004). Clearly, within a system where enterprises are focused on the development of the existing workforce, there is an opportunity and a need to extend RPL and to have it make a significant difference for employers and employees on the barriers to mature age and existing worker apprenticeships.

An additional barrier is identified in the *ACCI Review* with the current stipulation that for some Australian Apprenticeships a prior qualification in the last seven years renders them ineligible for incentive payments.

The ACCI report (*Worth Their Weight in Gold: Practical Strategies for Engaging and Retaining Disengaged Apprentices*, Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward 2009b) notes that employers recognise that a lack of confidence could be a barrier for some of the applicants seeking to return to their trade.

The employers also expected that the apprentice, in some cases, had lost some confidence during the time away from the trade, but this confidence can be rebuilt with some targeted support strategies in the early months of re-engagement (Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward 2009b).

Roles for registered training organisations

Because of their historic and contractual role in apprenticeships, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) need to be responsive to the service and support needs of mature age and existing worker apprentices and their employers.

Training and skills development via flexible training pathways, whether on or off-the-job is vital, “A flexible and responsive education and training system that recognises the needs of mature learners is essential,” (*Engaging Our Potential: The Economic and Social Necessity of Increasing Workforce Participation*, Business Council of Australia 2007).

“The capacity of internal and external education and training providers to understand the broader business needs and drivers of the enterprise and the skill needs which flow from these drivers. . . ” was identified by the Australian Industry Group as a pre-condition for an effective workforce skills development strategy (*Skilling the Existing Workforce*, AIG 2008). In its description of trials and case studies of enterprise experiences with skilling the existing workforce, this report noted that some trial sites were unable to achieve their project objectives “. . . where the RTO was not able to respond to enterprise needs within the required timeframe”.

The role of information and advisory services

A significant theme in the literature is the demand for up-to-date and reliable information to support decision-making by employers and workers considering engaging in a mature age apprenticeship.

There is a need for information, advice and guidance on possible career paths, as well as accessible labour market data, and a need for projections to support mature age and existing workers to manage their future employment options and expectations and to navigate the relatively complex administrative requirements associated with apprenticeships.

In *Skilling the Existing Workforce*, AIG notes that to achieve many of the pre-conditions for effective workforce skills development “. . . enterprises need access to high quality information and advisory services”. The most successful of the enterprise trials that underpinned the findings of this project “. . . received direct access to advisory services and this was a critical factor in their success”.

“It is no longer [sufficient] to perceive careers advice as merely assisting young people to make the transition from school to work. Individuals now need to make decisions about learning and work throughout their working life – creating a need for career development services to be extended across the whole of the working life.” (ACCI Review, November

2009). ACCI notes in particular that the “Support for Mid-Career Apprentices Programs” need to be more widely publicised and the benefits of upskilling existing employees made more explicit.

Community concern about easy access to information was identified through the recent round of “Keep Australia Working” forums and is acknowledged in the associated report: “Communities can find it hard to navigate their way through Government to find the services and assistance they need.”

The Australian Apprenticeships Training Information Service website (www.aatinfo.com.au) provides links to flowcharts including “The pathway to an Australian Apprenticeship” and “Potential Australian Apprenticeship Job Outcomes” for specific industries. While helpful, these resources are generic and do not address the broad range of information needs of existing workers.

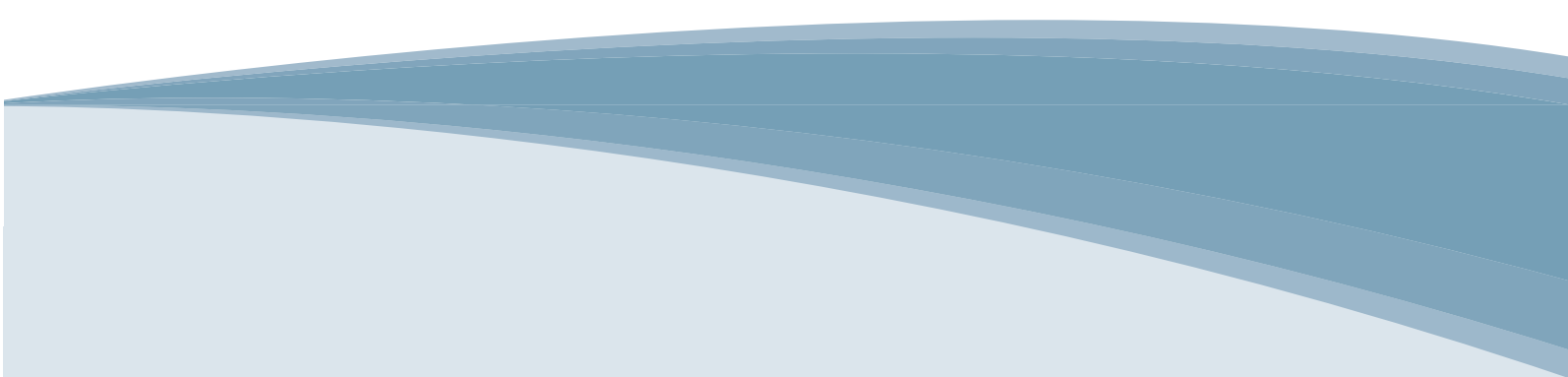
The special needs of small to medium enterprises

It is clear that small to medium enterprises (SMEs) take on a higher risk when investing in workplace training and hence in mature age or existing worker apprenticeships. Their staff turnover is higher; they have lower capacity for internal planning and are unable to generate economies of scale either in the delivery of training or the management of administratively complex systems such as apprenticeships.

In its *Skilling the Existing Workforce* (AIG 2008) project report the Australian Industry Group notes, “. . . the challenge of delivering effective workforce skills development [was] greater with small and medium size enterprises, particularly those facing significant competitive pressures requiring cost reductions and productivity improvements”.

In spite of its importance to the economy, the delivery of services to the small to medium enterprise sector of the economy has always presented difficulties for government training programs. The recent Australian Government ‘Enterprise Based

Productivity Places Program' announced on 5 November 2009, targets small and medium enterprises. It is particularly relevant to mature age apprenticeships as it covers training from Certificate III level and is “. . . designed to increase the skills of existing workers especially in occupations on the priority occupations list.”



A2

**High return
on investment**

A2: High return on investment – summary of survey

The following text is an abridged version of the project report, *High return on investment: findings from the 2010 survey of employers about mature age people and existing workers as apprentices*. Key findings from the survey report are set out in the Executive Summary of this final report.

Respondents' characteristics

As part of the 2010 project managed by ACCI a survey was conducted by John Mitchell and Associates in March-April of employers' attitudes regarding pathways for mature age and existing workers as apprentices.

Some characteristics of the survey respondents were as follows:

- 170 employers undertook the survey and around two thirds completed all 48 questions.
- The employers were drawn from a range of industry areas such as construction (23 per cent), manufacturing (22 per cent) and retail (11 per cent).
- 57.4 per cent of respondents were employers in small businesses with less than 20 employees, 26.56 per cent were employers from medium-sized businesses with 21-200 people and 16 per cent were employers from large businesses with more than 200 employees.
- Responses were drawn from all states and territories except Tasmania and the states with most returns were NSW (65 per cent), Victoria (18 per cent) and Queensland (7 per cent).

Employers regard mature age people and existing workers as more 'job ready' than youth apprentices

Major findings

Employers are positive about apprentices in general, regardless of age. When asked how important are apprentices in their workforce planning, on a scale from 1-7 where 1 = low importance and 7 = high importance, 71 per cent of survey respondents selected 5-7.

Employers particularly value mature age people and existing workers as apprentices:

- On a scale from 1-7 where 1 = unwilling and 7 = very willing to hire a mature age apprentice, 54 per cent of respondents selected 5-7.
- On a scale from 1-7 where 1 = poor and 7 = excellent experience after employing a mature age or existing worker as an apprentice, 69 per cent selected 5-7.
- On a scale from 1-7, where 1 = low benefits and 7 = high benefits of hiring mature age and existing workers as an apprentice, 61 per cent selected 5-7.

Employers regard mature age people and existing workers as more 'job ready' than youth apprentices:

- In terms of educational background and employability skills, employers see mature age and existing worker apprentices as superior to youth apprentices.
- In terms of their personal qualities, employers also believe that mature age apprentices have higher levels of commitment, motivation, reliability and adaptability than younger apprentices.
- In terms of work/life balance, employers believe that mature age apprentices have a better balance than their youth counterparts.
- Overall, employers are more willing to hire mature age apprentices than youth apprentices.

Employers believe the return on investment in a mature age apprentice is higher than in a youth apprentice:

- On a scale of 1-7 where 1 = low return and 7 = high return on their investment in a youth apprentice, 35 per cent chose 5-7.
- On a scale of 1-7 where 1 = low return and 7 = high return on their investment in a mature age apprentices, 61 per cent chose 5-7.

Employers see most of their organisation's future skill needs coming from their existing workforces:

- They prefer to develop their own workforces rather than recruiting from the outside, to ensure they have the right skills in place for business sustainability and increased productivity.
- They are more willing to hire existing workers as apprentices from within their own organisations than existing workers from outside their organisations.

However, employers are very aware of the reluctance of mature age and existing workers to undertake an apprenticeship, due to factors such as fear of failure or competing pressures from work and family. On a scale from 1-7 where 1 = low and 7 = high level of reluctance by mature age apprentices to take up apprenticeships, 48 per cent of employers selected 5-7.

Generally, employers do not think training providers meet the needs of mature age apprentices. They believe training providers could do much more, such as:

- Deliver more flexible training.
- Offer shortened training.
- Provide apprentices with more pathways to higher qualifications and continuing professional development.

Employers do not believe the forces of supply and demand are effective in increasing the number of mature age apprentices and feel that deliberate interventions are necessary. However, employers do not see themselves as the best ones to design or implement these interventions. They believe the design and implementation of an effective strategy for attracting increased numbers of mature age apprentices is better undertaken by the following parties:

- Industry bodies,
- Government agencies, such as Centrelink and DEEWR, or
- Training providers.

Employers are most interested in obtaining more information about issues associated with the employment of mature age apprentices, such as:

- Incentives, administrative requirements and available employer support for mature age apprenticeships.
- Methods of shortening the formal learning process for mature age apprentices.
- Ways of integrating on-the-job learning and meaningful work for mature age apprentices.

This interest in information fits with another key finding from the survey: Employers lack experience in providing support for mature age or existing worker apprentices.

Employers rate as 'very important' government subsidies for mature age apprentices. On a scale from 1-7 where 1 = low importance and 7 = high importance, 74.5 per cent of respondents chose 5-7 when asked to rate the importance of the Australian Government's 'Support for Mid-Career Apprentices' subsidy of \$13,000.

Employers believe the return on investment in a mature age apprentice is higher than in a youth apprentice:

Design of the survey instrument

The literature review identified the following key research questions, which influenced the design of the survey:

- Which factors have a significant impact on an employer's decision to consider mature age and existing workers for apprenticeships in their business?
- What views, actions and attitudes of employers will encourage mature age or existing workers to consider taking on an apprenticeship?
- Which factors have a significant influence on a mature age or existing workers decision to consider taking on an apprenticeship?
- How can the Australian Government and state governments support employers and mature age or existing workers in their consideration of an apprenticeship?
- What actions by RTOs can facilitate mature age or existing workers apprenticeships?
- How can industry organisations support employers and mature age or existing workers in their consideration of an apprenticeship?

The literature review also noted here is little to guide employers on:

- How existing apprenticeship programs might be adapted to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks for the business.
- How existing apprenticeship programs might be adapted to meet the needs of mature age and existing workers.
- Balancing the tangible and intangible benefits and risks in determining a return on investment for the employer.
- The different issues faced by mature age and existing worker apprentices when compared with traditional apprentices and how these differences affect the employer's business , administrative and support systems for apprentices.

- Where the employer's efforts can be most effectively deployed.
- Where to direct employees for advice and support for decision making about career options and the potential of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships.

The valuable role in effective business planning provided by a workforce development strategy, plus the considerations that underpin it and the tools used to develop it. The quantitative survey in this project was able to investigate some but not all of the above issues, as a number of them were more effectively explored through the interview process and case studies.

In response to the above research questions and employer issues, the survey sought to collect data from employers about each of the following topics:

- The attitudes of employers towards mature age workers.
- Employers' perceptions of the characteristics of mature age apprentices.
- Important attributes employers value when hiring mature age or existing worker apprentices.
- The risks and rewards of engaging mature age people and existing workers as apprentices.
- The most effective ways of supporting mature age apprentices.
- Training options.
- How to encourage mature age and existing workers as apprentices to undertake further study.
- Accessing information about mature age and existing worker apprentices from industry bodies and government.

The survey was designed to provide insights into employers' perception of the pathways available to mature age and existing workers as apprentices, at any time during the following broad sequence:

- Before: starting when the individual initially considers undertaking an apprenticeship.
- During: continuing on through the period when the individual undertakes an apprenticeship.
- After: looking ahead to the post-trade phase when the new tradesperson can undertake continuing professional development and career development activities.

The following survey analysis will provide a better understanding of employers' perceptions of the pathways through which a mature age or existing worker might undertake an apprenticeship, and ultimately embark upon a new career.

The decision to take up an apprenticeship

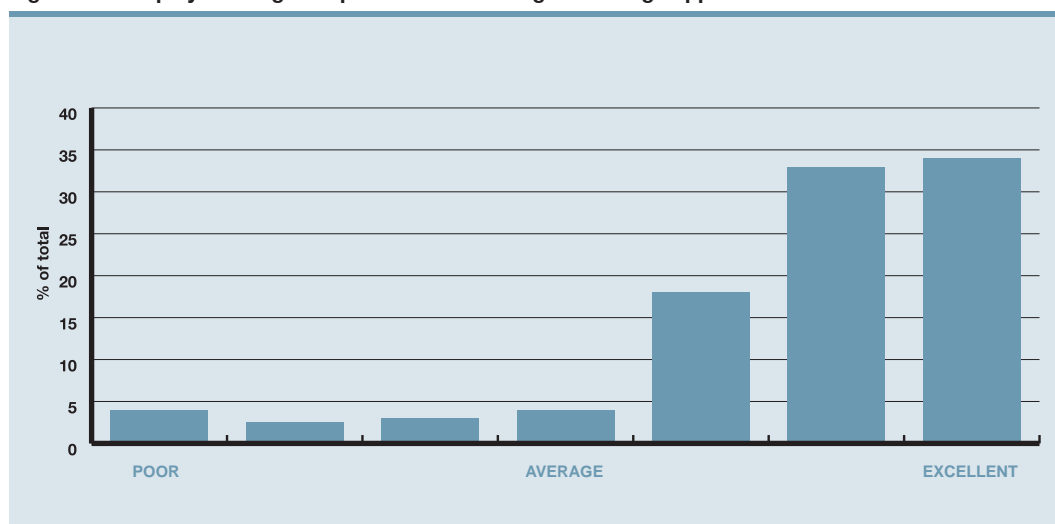
While there is a national interest in increasing the number of mature age apprenticeship, the growth rate of these apprenticeships remains low. The number of mature age workers who want to undertake an apprenticeship continues to be much smaller than the number of school leavers that want to undertake an apprenticeship. Why haven't more of these people undertaken mature age apprenticeships?

The survey results indicate that the reasons for the low take-up of mature age apprenticeships is not because of low demand for mature age apprentices on the part of the employers. Generally, employers show a very positive attitude towards apprentices chosen from mature age and existing workers, with 69 per cent of survey respondents indicating that their experience of mature age apprentices was good, very good or excellent (see Figure 2).

Why do employers have this positive perception of mature age and existing apprentices?

Previous research into employer attitudes towards apprentices and disengaged apprentices (Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward 2009a, 2009b) showed that employers value apprentices with good work-based skills and qualifications, but they also value apprentices who possess a range of personal attributes that underpin their professional conduct. These personal attributes include characteristics like reliability, motivation and commitment.

Figure 2: Employer rating of experience after hiring mature age apprentices



*Calculated with valid responses that claimed to have had experience in hiring mature age apprentices (n = 99)

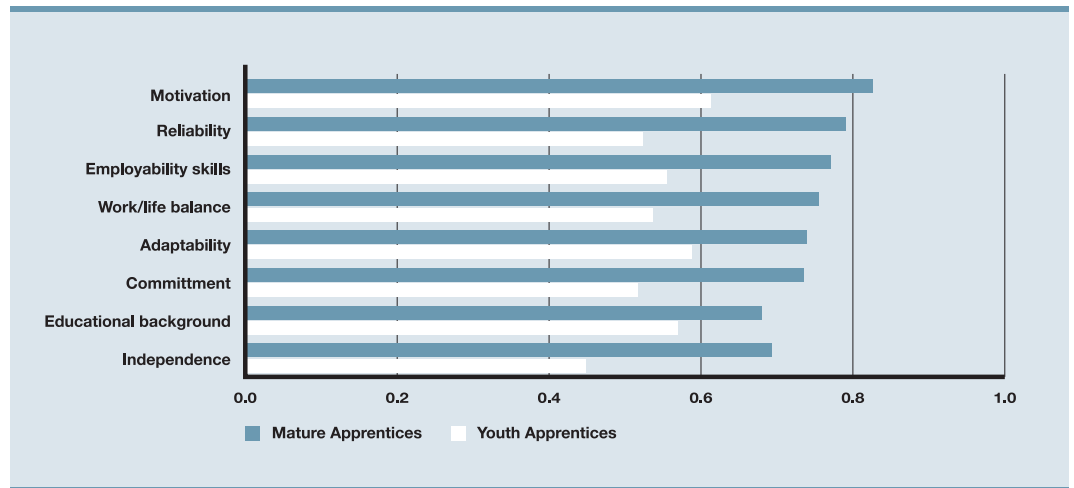
Notably, there is a slightly stronger willingness to hire mature age apprentices from within an organisation than outside an organisation.

Given these earlier findings, the 2010 survey asked respondents to rate the level of personal and professional attributes typically seen in mature age apprentice, as well as to rate the level of personal and professional attributes typically seen in traditional youth-based apprentices. A comparison of these ratings (see Figure 3 below) indicates that employers believe mature age workers come into an apprenticeship with better work skills and a set of personal attributes that are more pronounced than those of younger apprentices.

For example, in terms of their 'readiness for work', employers in 2010 rate mature age employees with far better employability skills – such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking – plus previous educational training. Similarly, employers believe the personal attributes of independence, reliability, motivation and adaptability are much higher among mature age apprentice than youth apprentices.

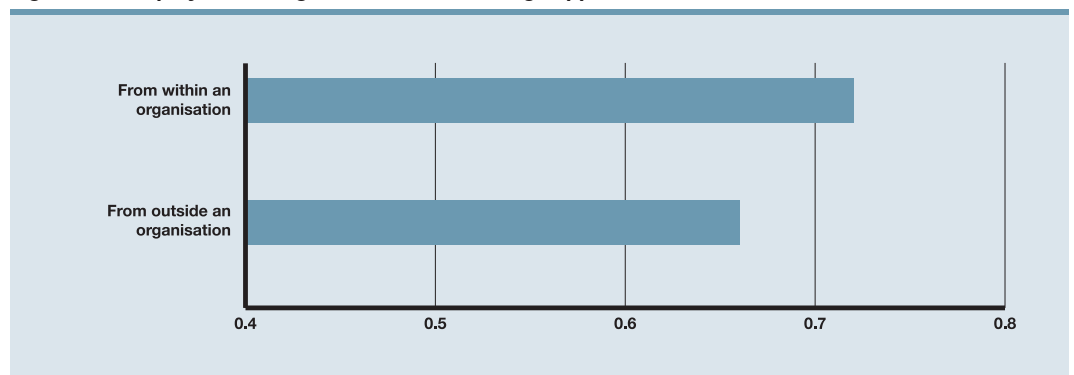
This positive attitude translates into a clear willingness among employers to hire mature age apprentices (see Figure 4 below). Notably, there is a slightly stronger willingness to hire mature age apprentices from within an organisation than outside an organisation. Nevertheless, the overall willingness to hire mature age apprentices from outside the organisation is by no means low.

Figure 3: Comparative rating by employers of selected skills of mature age and youth apprentices



* Ratings were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = no skill and 1 = a very high skill level.
 ** Paired sample t-test indicates that all of the above differences are distinct at the $p \geq 0.05$ level.

Figure 4: Employers' willingness to hire mature age apprentices



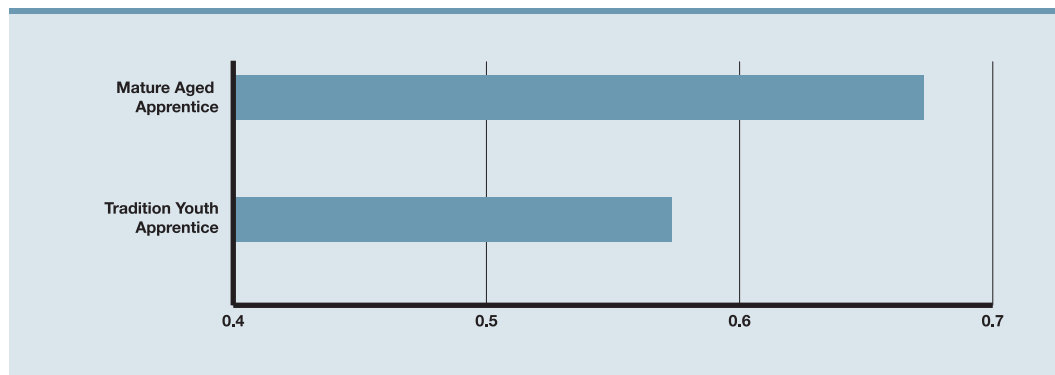
* Ratings were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = low willingness and 1 = indicates very high willingness.
 ** Paired sample t-test indicates that all of the above differences are distinct at the $p \geq 0.05$ level.

Given the above findings, it is not surprising that employers rate their return on their investment in mature age apprentices as being significantly greater than the return on their investment in traditional youth apprentices (see Figure 5).

Given the positive perception that employers have of mature age and existing worker apprentices, and their willingness to hire mature and existing workers as apprentices, the low take-up of mature age apprenticeships must be tied to the low wages of an apprenticeship and the resulting difficulties of balancing work and family commitments.

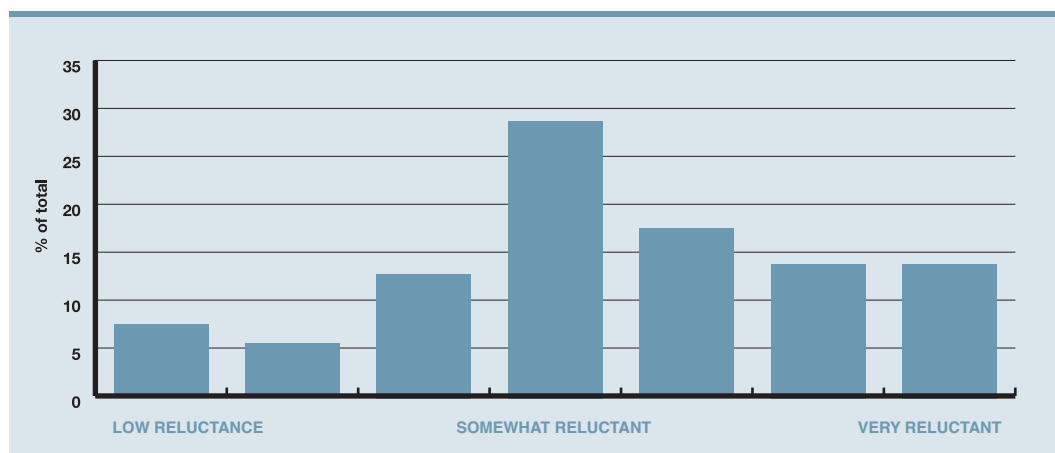
Results from the survey indicate that employers would generally agree with this assessment, rating average mature age workers as being 'somewhat' reluctant to take up an apprenticeship due to such factors as competing pressures from work and/or family (see Figure 6). Unfortunately, an in-depth examination of the question of mature worker reluctance to undertake an apprenticeship was beyond the scope of this quantitative survey. The survey results to show, however, that employers know about and appreciate this reluctance.

Figure 5: Comparative return on apprentice investment – mature age and youth apprentices



* Ratings were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = no return and 1 = high return.
 **Paired sample t-test indicates that all of the above differences are distinct at the $p \geq 0.05$ level.

Figure 6: Employer perception of the reluctance of mature age and existing employees to take up apprenticeships



*Calculated with valid responses to the relevant question (n = 123)

the most important attribute sought by an employer when hiring a mature age apprentice is motivation

Attracting mature age workers to an apprenticeship

Given that employers are aware of this reluctance on the part of the mature age employee to undertake apprenticeships, what do employers see as the best way to attract mature age employees to an apprenticeship?

The survey partly answers this question by requesting respondents to rate the extent to which they think various organisations, both government and private, might succeed in attracting mature age workers to work and study towards their trade certificates. Results from these questions are interesting in indicating that employers believe that those organisations with the greatest chance of attracting mature age employees to apprenticeships are industry bodies (e.g. ACCI), government agencies (e.g. Centrelink) and training providers.

Note that the employers rated their own ability to attract mature age apprentices as less than the above three parties. It should not be surprising then that employers have little faith in the broad forces of supply and demand attracting mature age apprentices. In all, employers do not see socioeconomic forces as a major influence on the number of mature age workers attracted to apprenticeships. Rather, they see the need for an intervention by industry bodies, government agencies and training providers.

The decision to employ mature age or existing workers as apprentices

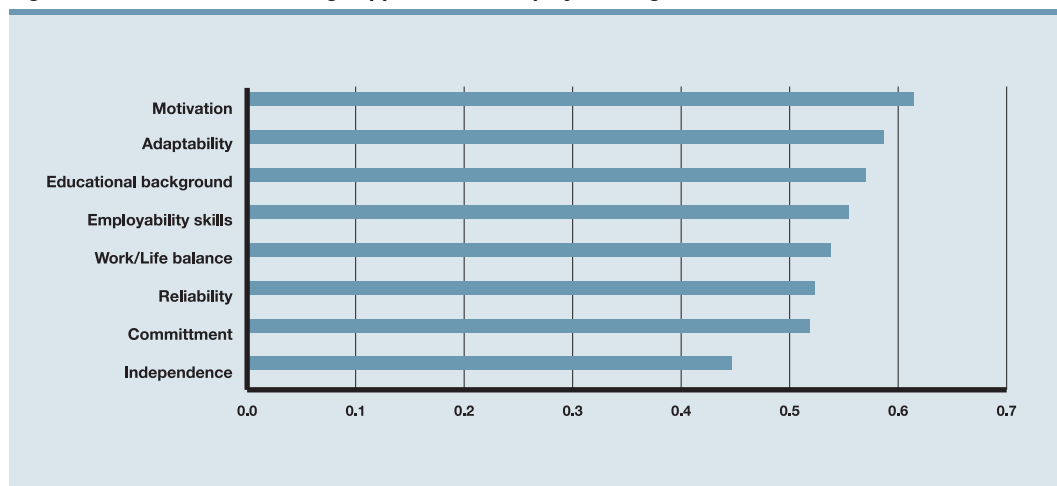
As noted above, there is a strong willingness among employers to employ mature age and existing workers as apprentices. Given this inclination, what is the average employer looking for when hiring a mature age or existing worker as an apprentice? The survey gathered data on this issue, asking respondents to rate the importance of various personal and professional attributes in their hiring decision.

Analysis of the survey data shows that the most important attribute sought by an employer when hiring a mature age apprentice is motivation (see Figure 7). It is notable that earlier research conducted for ACCI by Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward (2009a) also found motivation to be the most important attribute for employers when making hiring decisions about general apprentices. The current finding supports the idea that motivation is the most important personal quality looked for in a potential apprentice – whether mature age or not.

Returning to the mature age or existing worker apprentice, the second most important attribute sought by an employer is adaptability, that is, the ability to adapt to an organisation's corporate culture (see Figure 7). It is interesting to note that the top two attributes sought by an employer (motivation and adaptability) are personal attributes.

These results strongly suggest that pathways into an apprenticeship are more a function of personality than of professional skills, such as the candidate's existing technical skills in the trade area. This does not mean however, that professional abilities do not play a role. The next two most important attributes rated by employers are educational background and employability skills – both of which are professional skills. These are followed by the ability maintain a work/life balance, reliability, commitment and independence.

Figure 7: Attributes of mature age apprentices – Employer ratings



* Ratings were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = not important and 1 = very important.
 *The application of a one-way ANOVA to the above averages indicated that they are distinctly different at a $p \geq 0.05$ level.

Successful transition from work to study - the provision of support for mature age and existing worker apprentices

In a 2008 survey conducted for ACCI by Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward (2009a), employers were asked to rate their efforts in assisting new apprentices to make the successful transition from school to work. In the current survey, employers were asked to rate their efforts in assisting mature age apprentices make the successful transition from work to study. When the results from the two surveys are compared using appropriate statistical techniques, it appears that employers give significantly higher ratings to their efforts in assisting youth apprentices than to their efforts in assisting mature age apprentices (see Table 2 below).

This result suggests that there are a number of employers who are more focused on assisting youth apprentices to make the transition from school to work than they are assisting mature age and existing workers to make the transition from work to study. Please note: this result does not show employers as unsupportive of mature age and existing workers. Rather, it shows that employers are supporting both groups, with a preference towards supporting youth apprentices.

Table 2: Comparison of 2008 and 2010 ACCI survey findings: employer efforts to assist new and mature age apprentices make the successful transition to an apprenticeship

	Rating	SE Mean	Confidence Interval
Youth apprentices (2008 Survey)	0.79	.021	0.04
Mature age apprentices (2010 Survey)	0.70	.021	0.04

* Ratings for both years were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = no effort and 1 = high effort.
 * While care must be taken in comparing the two statistics from different survey populations, we can see that the confidence intervals calculated from each statistics indicate that the two ratings are distinctly different at a $p \geq 0.05$ level. It is interesting to note that the standard error and confidence interval are the same for both survey questions, suggesting that the distribution of responses to both questions is very similar.

employers are least confident in their ability to adapt the work and on-the-job learning to take into account mature age apprentices existing skills

The 2010 survey examined a number of specific types of support that employers might give to mature age apprentices to assist them in making a successful transition from work to study. While their overall ratings were quite high, there are significant differences between these ratings (see Figure 8 below). Employers seem to be most confident about providing mature age apprentice with support that directly relates to an apprentice's skill acquisition. This includes access to and provision of professional development, as well as the provision of professional trade-specific support from other employees. Interestingly, personal support also received a relatively high rating.

Employers were not as confident about their provision of managerial and supervisory support, and even less confident about their provision of mentoring. Finally, employers are least confident in their ability to adapt the work and on-the-job learning to take into account mature age apprentices existing skills.

These findings suggest that employers are more experienced in assisting youth apprentices. While employers value mature age or existing worker apprentices more highly, employers are indicating that they could benefit from more guidance about how to support those mature age apprentices.

Training mature age apprentices, access to higher level qualifications and professional development

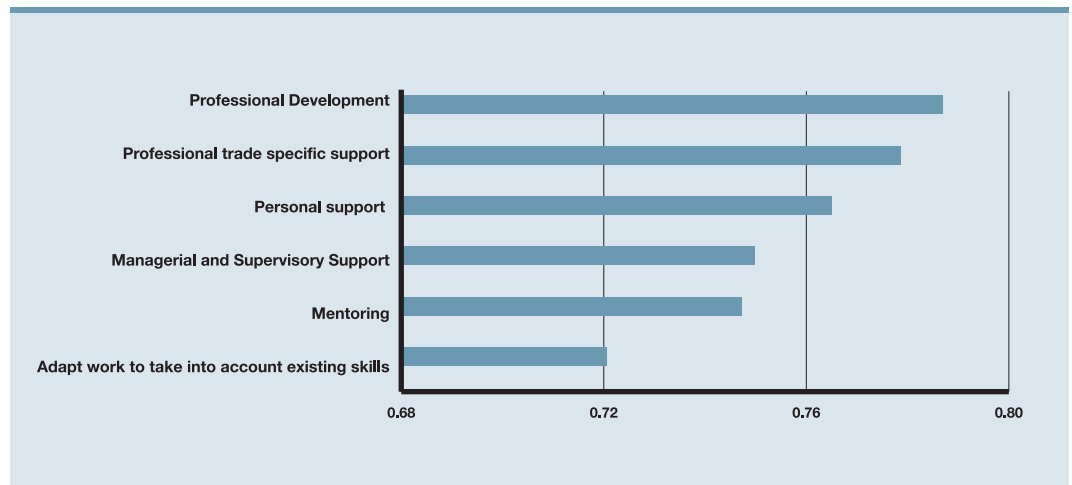
In line with the findings of Mitchell, Dobbs and Ward (2009a, 2009b), respondents to the 2010 survey did not rate training providers highly for the provision of training that met the needs of mature aged apprentices. On average, employers claimed that training provided by RTOs was meeting only 61 per cent of mature age apprentices' needs.

The results of the 2010 survey also suggest that improvement to this rating were dependent upon a number of factors - the most significant involving the way training is delivered rather than the skills that the training imparted.

Specifically, employers rated the following improvements in the provision of flexible learning options and shortened training requirements as the areas needing greatest change. The next suggested improvements were the provision of higher level qualifications and continuing professional development.

Aspects of training that were rated among the lowest in terms of need for improvement included the core enabling skills of language, literacy, and numeracy, and the employability skills of communication, teamwork and problem solving.

Figure 8: Different types of support provided by employers for mature age apprentices



*Ratings were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = no support and 1 = high level support.

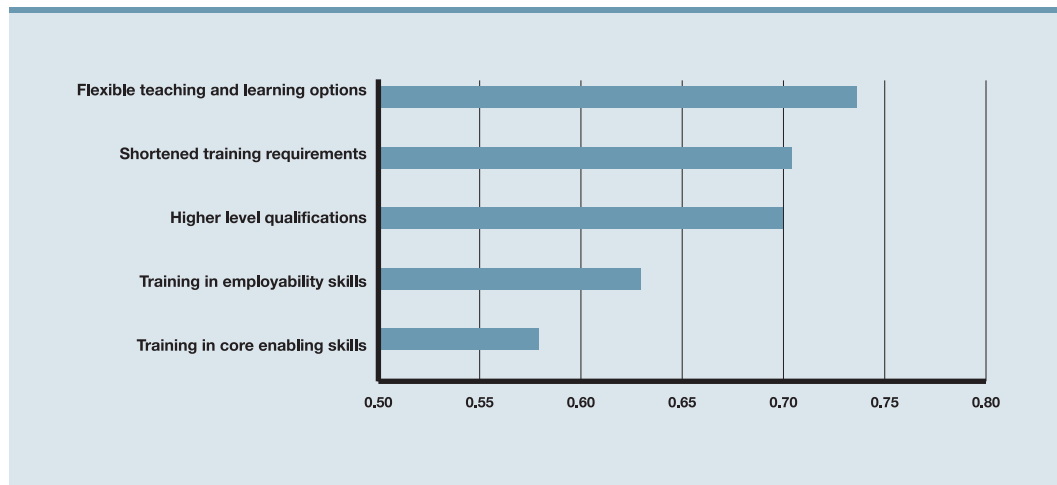
*The application of a one-way ANOVA to the above averages indicated that they are distinctly different at a $p >= 0.05$ level.

Information dissemination from government and industry bodies

Employers seem very interested in accessing more information about issues associated with the employment of mature age apprentices (see Figure 10). Of particularly high interest is information on incentives, administrative requirements and available employer support for mature age apprenticeships, methods of shortening the formal learning process for mature age apprentices, and integrating on-the-job learning and meaningful work for mature age apprentices.

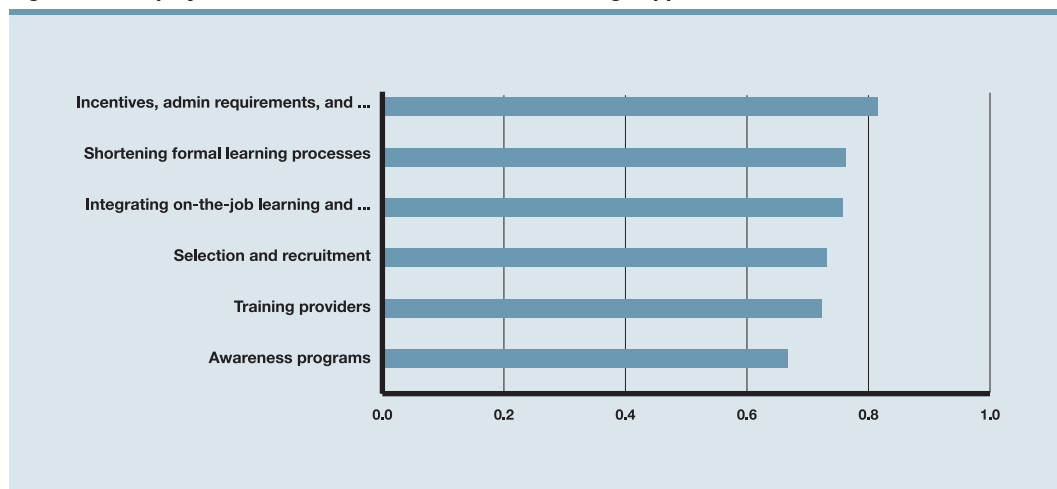
There is considerable interest in information relating to the selection and recruitment of mature age apprentices, and on various training providers. Information on awareness programs relating to mature age apprenticeship is of least interest.

Figure 9: Employer ratings of various mature age apprentice training needs

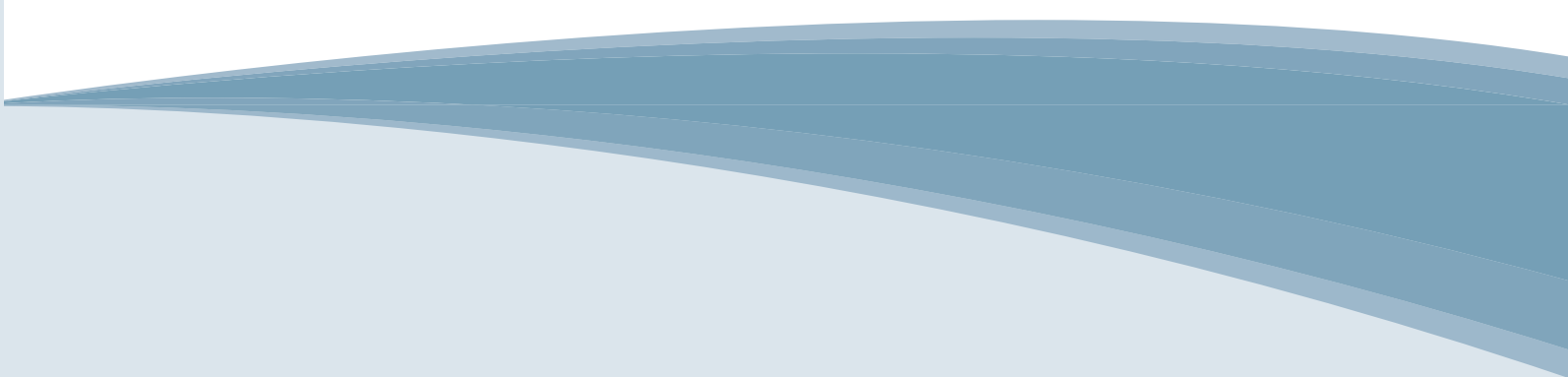


* Ratings were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = no need and 1 = high need.
 ** The application of a one-way ANOVA to the above averages indicated that they are distinctly different at a p >= 0.05 level.

Figure 10: Employer interest in information about mature age apprentices



*Ratings were converted to a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 = no interest and 1 = high interest.
 ** The application of a one-way ANOVA to the above averages indicated that they are distinctly different at a p >= 0.05 level.



A3

INTERVIEWS

They're just more mature

Findings from interviews with employers and stakeholders

Background and summary findings

These interviews provide additional data that validates findings from the survey conducted earlier in the year. The interview findings also inform the Final Project Report and associated recommendations about strategies for engaging and retaining mature age apprentices.

Interviews were conducted with the following people:

- Employers who have employed mature age people and/or existing workers as apprentices.
- Representatives of stakeholder groups, including employer organisations, registered training organisations (RTOs), group training organisations and an ACCI member organisation.

The questions asked in the interviews are set out in the body of this report. These questions were based on the findings of the literature review prepared in December 2009 and the survey of employers undertaken in March-April 2010.

“Basically life experience, they know that that’s what they want to do, they’re just more mature,” is one of the hundreds of positive comments about mature age apprentices made by employers in interviews conducted for this research project by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI). At first sight, the comment that “They’re just more mature” may look like a casual observation. But when seen in the context of over 35 interviews of employers, as set out in this report, it is a comment loaded with meaning. Its meaning includes:

- Employers interviewed for this report unanimously respect the attributes of mature age apprentices that come with age and experience.
- Employers value the benefits that mature age apprentices bring to their businesses.

Other similar comments by employers about the attributes of mature aged apprentices are:

“A better work attitude.”

“Stability and maturity.”

“Life skills and communication with people.

“They’ve got courage and conviction to make this life change.”

“Probably the mature behaviours that they have or should display. We’re pretty big on behaviours in our organisation: we look for good teamwork, good safety ethic, those sort of things.”

“Mature age apprentices are more productive. Young apprentices can be a drain on the business until they settle down and become a bit more mature.”

“Sometimes a lot of them are quite grateful and appreciative. You build loyalty with them because you’re giving them recognition.”

These positive attitudes of employers towards mature age apprentices are evident on every page of this report. Hopefully these overwhelmingly positive insights of the interviewees will inspire other employers, industry leaders and policy makers to continue to attract and support mature age people and existing workers who have the courage and determination to start an apprenticeship, often many years after leaving secondary school.

Profile Of The Interviewees

The interviewees in almost all cases were recommended by the state or territory chamber of commerce and industry or their nominees, as employers who had previous experience in employing as apprentices mature age people or existing workers.

In brief, the employers and stakeholders interviewed have the following characteristics:

- They represent a range of industries, from automotive to engineering, electrical, furniture, cleaning, transport, construction, food and hospitality, and oil and gas.

Basically life experience, they know that that’s what they want to do, they’re just more mature

- They represent large organisations, such as mining companies and the defence forces and small-medium businesses, such as a bakery, a labour hire organisation, a bus company, a plumbing firm and an electrical firm.
- They are based in metropolitan areas of Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Perth and Brisbane and in regional areas and centres, such as the Pilbara in Western Australia, Murray Bridge in South Australia, Townsville and Currajong in Queensland and Port Macquarie and Orange in NSW.

In addition, the employers range in job title from Manager to General Manager and Managing Director to Human Resource Manager and employ from one to hundreds of apprentices per year. Most of them employ between one and ten mature age apprentices.

While the majority of the employers interviewed were from enterprises that managed their own apprenticeship scheme, a small number of the interviewees were from group training organisations.

Summary Of Key Findings

The interviews reveal employers' awareness of the important role that a mature age apprenticeship can play within an organisation's workforce development strategy, enabling organisations to meet their strategic goals more effectively.

The interviews also reveal employers' awareness of the important role that a mature age apprenticeship can play for the individual apprentice, enabling the individual not only to acquire a qualification and a job, but also to create a career development pathway and plan.

The interviews show that these benefits for both employer and apprentice particularly apply when the mature age apprentice is an existing worker within the organisation. In these cases there is an immediate synergy between the goals of both parties and a shared commitment to positive outcomes all round.

There are advantages in employing existing workers as apprentices (Section 1)

Most employers make a clear distinction between existing worker apprenticeships who are drawn from their own organisation's workforce, and existing workers recruited as apprentices from outside their organisation. While they value both, they are attracted to the ease of recruiting their own existing workers. Most employers are focussed on existing worker apprentices drawn from their own organisation, but they recognise that some of the advantages of existing worker apprenticeships also apply to existing workers recruited from outside the organisation.

Most employers recognise the benefits that existing worker apprenticeships can provide for their companies, including:

- Providing an effective way of recognising existing skills as well as identifying and addressing skill gaps.
- Providing an effective way of recognising and rewarding commitment and loyalty.

Most employers recognise the benefits that apprenticeships can provide for existing employees, including increasing career options and building self esteem and confidence.

Many employers are using mature age apprenticeships as a key component of their workforce development strategy – to build the base of trade skills in the organisation. Some employers are responding to the increased complexity of their businesses by using mature age apprenticeships to multi-skill their existing workforce.

Some large employers have policies and systems that encourage and support existing workers to apply for and start mature age apprenticeships. Small to medium enterprises more commonly use existing worker apprenticeships to respond to particular business needs and individual circumstances.

The interviews show that these benefits for both employer and apprentice particularly apply when the mature age apprentice is an existing worker within the organisation

Existing workers already know the company and don't require in-house training on company policies and procedures.

Employers recognise significant advantages in recruiting existing workers as apprentices. These advantages include:

- Existing workers provide an increased 'pool' of prospective apprentices
- Existing workers have already demonstrated many of the important personal qualities required to succeed as an apprentice and tradesperson – such as a work ethic and a capacity to work in a team
- Existing workers' maturity generally means a lower occupational health and safety (OH&S) risk
- Existing workers already know the company and don't require in-house training on company policies and procedures.

Some key factors influence the decision to hire a mature age person (Section 2)

Employers are generally aware of the need to shift their thinking about apprentices away from solely focusing on traditional 'straight from school' model in order to increase the pool of available talent and enhance their capacity to cope with skill shortages and take advantage of the existing skills held by mature age and existing workers.

For existing worker apprentices drawn from inside an organisation, the wage is not usually an issue. Some employers in this category maintain the individual's previous wage because productivity is often not significantly decreased and the longer-term benefits of the arrangement outweigh any short-term issues. In these situations, obviously the wage is not a disincentive or deterrent for either employer or employee. However, most employers consider wage issues to be a disincentive for existing worker and other mature age apprentices who were not already employed with them.

For existing worker apprentices drawn from inside the organisation, the employer is often concerned about the apprentice's capacity to remain productive at work and find enough time outside work to do the required study.

Some employers are aware of cultural issues within the organisation that could be a disincentive for mature age apprentices – for example, the apprentice's possible suspicion of management initiatives and not wanting to be singled out from their colleagues.

Most employers are aware that mature age people considering an apprenticeship are often worried about the time that has elapsed between their last year of school and the start of an apprenticeship and the impact this could have on their ability to cope with the 'theory side' of the apprenticeship. A related matter is that some employers identify literacy and numeracy issues as a problem for mature age applicants and these issues often become apparent at the very start of the recruitment process with the completion of application forms.

Many employers appear to be seeking a balance of mature age and traditional youth apprentices. As a result they do not specifically target mature age persons. Rather than target them they try to ensure the recruitment processes include them.

The main concern of employers about taking on a mature age person as an apprentice is that they could be 'set in their ways' and have difficulty taking instruction, particularly from younger supervisors or mentors. Some employers note that a mature age person entering an apprenticeship may have unrealistic expectations about the nature of the work involved.

While employers recognise that there is some risk of 'poaching' once a good mature age apprentice obtained the trade certificate, this is not a major disincentive. In most cases it is compensated by the new tradesperson's increased sense of loyalty as a result of the support provided throughout the apprenticeship.

Mature age apprentices have some advantages over youth apprentices (Section 3)

Employers value the higher level of stability and reliability demonstrated by mature age apprentices. They generally believe mature age apprentices are more immediately productive in the workplace because of their previous work experience and better understanding of issues such as OH&S.

Employers identify higher levels of confidence in the workplace environment as one of the valuable characteristics of mature age apprentices. The previous experience of mature age apprentices generally makes them more comfortable in the workplace and this facilitates better communication. They know when to listen, they have an understanding of when it is appropriate to take the initiative and they generally know how to provide feedback.

Not surprisingly, many employers consider that the management and supervision of a mature age apprentice is generally easier and less time consuming.

Mature age people face some obstacles in considering an apprenticeship (Section 4)

Most employers believe there is a high level of interest in mature age apprenticeships but often that interest does not translate into applications, largely because of perceptions about a low wage. However, employers who offer mature age apprenticeships to their existing workers do not have difficulty attracting applicants – although in many cases they maintain salaries during the apprenticeship.

Some employers note that advertising and promotional material about apprenticeships generally portrays young people and as a result does nothing to indicate the wider range of approaches to apprenticeships that are now available – including mature age apprenticeships.

Most employers feel that the potential drop in wage compared to what they were earning previously deterred interest in mature age apprenticeships. Many employers indicate that more mature age persons would express interest in an apprenticeship if the government could do more to address this difficulty – not necessarily just through increased subsidies but possibly through a system similar to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS).

Some employers suggest that apprenticeship models where all training is delivered in the workplace would be more attractive to mature age people because they would not have to attend classes with much younger apprentices.

A number of employers indicate that apprenticeship information and promotions could address mature age workers more specifically by emphasising the value of having their existing skills recognised.

Mature age apprentices have personal qualities attractive to employers (Section 5)

Employers consider that the existing skills of mature age applicants for apprenticeships are less important than their personal qualities. Employers value mature age persons who are committed to their apprenticeship because mature age people see it as part of a career path.

In making a decision to take on a mature age apprentice, employers believe the right person can be taught the requisite skills but it is not usually possible to change an individual's previous attitude or motivation. Mature age applicants who have strong personal qualities are considered by employers to be more likely to be effective team players and more business and customer focussed.

Mature age apprentices tend to be easier to manage than youths (Section 6)

When first asked, many employers consider that there is not much difference between managing mature age apprentices and traditional youth apprentices. However, when asked to detail any differences that do exist they can list a range of areas where they find fewer difficulties with mature age apprentices.

Mature age apprentices need support services, as do youth apprentices (Section 7)

Most employers recognise that mature age apprentices have clearer career goals than young apprentices, although in most cases the induction and support programs used for mature age apprentices are the same as those for young apprentices. In a number of companies the standard induction programs are shortened to allow for the existing knowledge and expertise of the mature age apprentice.

Although employers generally see the extent and nature of the support provided to mature age apprentices as similar to that provided to traditional youth apprentices, when asked to give examples of the support provided they identify significant differences between the two groups.

A number of employers note that mature age apprentices are able to see the long-term benefit of having up-to-date skills and the associated increase in job and career security. Employers recognise that existing worker apprentices are often more aware of the role an apprenticeship might play as part of their career development because they have acquired examples and models of career progression from their colleagues.

Most employers view the mature age apprenticeship as simply one stage in the career of the apprentice and only a particular stage of the organisation's workforce development strategy. Such employers believe a continued program of post-trade and vendor specific training is necessary to sustain the skills base of the workforce. This ongoing development program is commonly an informal process during which skill development needs are identified and negotiated with the employee.

It is often possible to give meaningful work to mature age apprentices (Section 8)

Employers vary in their approach to designing meaningful work for mature age apprentices, with some taking deliberate steps and others not. Some employers adjust training plans so that full advantage is taken of existing skills and experience. Other employers see an advantage in using a standard approach to identify gaps in all apprentices' knowledge and experience and to fill those gaps.

Some employers are critical of inconsistent approaches by training providers to recognition of prior learning (RPL), which means it is difficult to plan and customise an effective developmental approach for a mature age apprentice.

Governments and industry bodies can assist in attracting more mature age apprentices (Section 9)

Employers are generally aware of initiatives undertaken by government to promote apprenticeships generally – including mature age apprentices – and to encourage employers to take on apprentices. Many employers feel that a combination of government and industry bodies working together would be the most effective way of attracting mature age workers to upgrade their skills through an apprenticeship.

Some employers feel that existing advertising approaches did not target prospective mature age apprentices and make them aware of the opportunities associated with the apprenticeship itself and the longer-term career benefits. Some employers feel it is important to show mature age apprentices in all apprentice advertising and promotions – not to single them out as a particular cohort.

Some employers suggest that apprenticeship centres or industry bodies might keep registers of mature age persons who were interested in apprenticeships.

Progressive training providers offer flexible services for mature age apprentices (Section 10)

Employers believe that training providers need to deliver their services more flexibly. The traditional ‘off-the-job’ approach can work for young apprentices but employers need the training provided in the workplace if they are to benefit fully from the experience of mature age and existing workers.

Workplace delivery would also make it easier to integrate theory with the practical on-the job training – with the trainer, the apprentice and the apprentice’s supervisor talking with each other regularly and in the context of the real work that has to be done. Many lecturers and trainers need more up-to-date skills if they are to gain the respect of experienced mature age and existing workers completing an apprenticeship.

With mature age and existing workers, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is an important part of the process. Some employers note inconsistencies between providers – making it difficult to advise and support prospective applicants. A consistent, predictable and effective approach to RPL would shorten the time taken to complete an apprenticeship for many mature age and existing workers. The great benefit would be the achievement of a trade qualification wage in the shortest possible time.

Provision of post-trade and other specialist training by training providers appears to be inconsistent and piecemeal. It often seems to depend on the particular skills available at the college rather than the full range of advanced skills appropriate for the trade. Training providers could do more to design and promote their services as part of an apprentice’s career development and training pathway.

More information could be provided to employers about mature age apprentices (Section 11)

Among employers broadly, there is inconsistent awareness of existing information about mature age and existing worker apprenticeships. A number of employers note that appropriate information is already available but others are not aware of that information or how to access it.

Employers would appreciate awareness programs that show employers how mature age and existing worker apprenticeships can improve the bottom line through the potential return to employers (such as increased retention) and the benefits for employers in building a career for existing workers.

There is a need to provide employers with information about the broader perspective – not just detailed information about subsidies and similar topics. Employers need to be aware of how mature age and existing worker apprenticeships can perform a strategic role in developing the skills of their workforce and preparing their workers for changes in the industry.

1. Advantages of existing workers as apprentices

The survey conducted in March-April 2010 suggests that employers have a strong appreciation of the benefits of investing in their existing workforce, to build in-house the skills they need for their business. The interviews conducted from April-June 2010 not only confirmed this finding from the survey, but extended it.

Some related and further findings from the interviews are:

- Most employers make a clear distinction between existing worker apprenticeships who are drawn from their own organisation's workforce and existing workers recruited as apprentices from outside their organisation. While they value both, they are attracted to the ease of recruiting their own existing workers.
 - While most employers are focussed on existing worker apprentices drawn from their own organisation, they recognise that some of the advantages of existing worker apprenticeships also apply to existing workers recruited from outside the organisation.
 - Most employers recognise the benefits that existing worker apprenticeships can provide for their companies, including:
 - providing an effective way of recognising existing skills as well as identifying and addressing skill gaps, and
 - providing an effective way of recognising and rewarding commitment and loyalty.
 - Most employers recognise the benefits that existing worker apprenticeships can provide for the employees, including:
 - increasing career options, and
 - building self esteem and confidence.
- Many employers are using mature age apprenticeships as a key component of their workforce development strategy – to build the base of trade skills in the organisation.
 - Some employers are responding to the increased complexity of their businesses by using mature age apprenticeships to multi-skill their existing workforce.
 - Some large employers have policies and systems that encourage and support existing workers to apply for and start mature age apprenticeships. Small to medium enterprises more commonly use existing worker apprenticeships to respond to particular business needs and individual circumstances.
 - Employers recognise significant advantages in recruiting existing workers as apprentices. These advantages include:
 - existing workers provide an increased 'pool' of prospective apprentices,
 - existing workers have demonstrated already many of the important personal qualities required to succeed as an apprentice and tradesperson – such as a work ethic and a capacity to work in a team,
 - existing workers' maturity generally means a lower occupational health and safety (OH&S) risk, and
 - existing workers already know the company and don't require in-house training on company policies and procedures.

Q1a Does your organisation seek to recruit your existing workers as apprentices?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Most employers seek a balance of mature age existing worker apprentices and traditional youth apprentices.</p>	<p>No - but we see the potential of existing workers.</p> <p>No – we make no distinction between existing workers and youth apprentices.</p> <p>Yes – we have an in-house program that encourages and sponsors existing workers as apprentices.</p> <p>Yes – it’s a deliberate strategy which we use to keep our employees up-to-date.</p> <p>No – it was quite accidental for the first one. That one worked out well but it set a precedent and led to problems so we are not encouraging them anymore.</p> <p>No – we don’t do any specific promotion but our approach is well understood throughout the company.</p> <p>No, no we don’t actively seek existing workers because mostly we’re employing either licensed plumbers anyway or someone who possibly is like a plant operator doing a lot of the drainage-type work, so we probably don’t have a lot of scope.</p> <p>Yes – it is an effective way of developing skills and acknowledging existing skills and abilities.</p> <p>Yes it is a deliberate strategy of upgrading the skills of trade assistants and ensuring we have good tradesmen.</p> <p>As a group training company we cover all kinds of apprentices – but some of our employers do target mature age apprentices.</p>

Q1b What are the advantages of recruiting your existing workers as apprentices?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Most employers can identify a range of advantages in recruiting their existing workers as apprentices.</p>	<p>Younger people coming out of schools don't realise the requirements in terms of being reasonable with notification if they're not going to be there and things like that, whereas someone who's been in a job prior understands that and is much more likely to do the right thing.</p> <p>They've developed work ethics they can immediately bring to the table. And not just work ethics, but life skills as well. They have probably come across difficult people or as customers in the past and in other trades or positions.</p> <p>Employers who have decided to turn their existing working into an apprentice already have a working relationship there. They know they've got a good employee, otherwise they wouldn't offer that opportunity. It's a safe way to go.</p> <p>The big thing with mature age worker is that they've got over all those hurdles that the younger ones have to contend with. They've been through the girlfriends, the new car, the driver's licence; they've been through that. And their life generally is fairly stable as compared with younger apprentices. So [the employer thinks] give me someone without all those hassles and we'll go down the pathway and we'll just train them and we don't have to worry about the other issues.</p> <p>Our existing workers already have most of the skills we need but lack the qualification. They are very loyal.</p> <p>We see a big boost in self esteem with the existing worker apprentices – as they acquire skills and see that those skills mean something to their employer.</p> <p>A great advantage of existing worker apprenticeships for is that they fill in the gaps. There is a longstanding tradition in workplaces of acquiring skills – but not all of the skills and not all the way. The apprenticeship fixes this.</p> <p>We always need more skills and existing workers are another source of apprentices for the company. They are also more loyal and stay with us once they have got their trade.</p> <p>They are familiar with the company and how the business works.</p> <p>We know the person and their capabilities. They have built up loyalty to the company.</p> <p>Existing workers are up-to-date with company policies and procedures such as OH&S.</p> <p>They've got some experience, some life skills and they are a little bit more reliable.</p> <p>One is of course the fact that they know the business, they know the business. They have an ability to absorb and learn more quickly perhaps than a school leaver, maybe not in every instance. Then there is of course their maturity and their communications and people skills, not in all and every instance but in a fair proportion of instances.</p> <p>Many of our existing workers already have a lot of skills and experience. An apprenticeship or traineeship enables those skills to be recognised.</p> <p>We know that they work well and have the right attitude. We have seen them learn on the job as trade assistants and the go into the apprenticeship with those skills already.</p> <p>They have the experience and are productive as a result. It's very different for someone just out of school.</p> <p>The fact that they know your systems and processes: it gives them a bit of a kick-start to the apprenticeship.</p>

They've developed work ethics they can immediately bring to the table. And not just work ethics, but life skills as well.

They've got some experience, some life skills and they are a little bit more reliable.

Q1b (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>Mature age apprentices are good value.</p> <p>Mature age apprenticeships help us develop the skills of our employees – and provide some subsidies and tax breaks to take some of the financial load.</p> <p>There weren't any advantages really – we weren't able to use the persons existing skills to any extent but had to pay him a full adult wage.</p> <p>There is possibly a better retention rate at the end of the apprenticeship. Currently ours is about 50 per cent for youth apprentices – but we haven't had enough mature age apprentices to judge, We are hoping this is the case.</p> <p>They've got existing knowledge of how our business works and our expectations and probably we already know what their work ethics and practices are like. You wouldn't want to put yourself through it if you knew they were not committed.</p>

Q1c What are the advantages of recruiting existing worker apprentices from outside your organisation?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Even when recruited from outside the company, most employers view the maturity of existing worker apprentices as a significant advantage.</p>	<p>They are more focussed than young people just coming out of school. They know what they want and are used to a working culture.</p> <p>They know what it is like outside – they can compare the advantages of a career with us.</p> <p>They are more settled than young people. They know what they want and how the apprenticeship helps them get there.</p> <p>The fact that they've actually got experience, although it might be in a totally unrelated field, it might have been retail sales and they've gone into a trade or a semi-skilled occupation. And the ability to absorb more quickly, to be able to communicate more positively and not be afraid to ask questions. A school leaver, young people, often find it hard to absorb instructions. They start in a job and have to keep coming back and saying what do I do now? I've forgotten what you told me etc, etc. I mean it's just a maturity thing, it's just all part of the learning process but with the mature age people that's not an issue, they are able to communicate, absorb instruction much more quickly than a school leaver in a lot of instances.</p> <p>There is no particular advantage – unless they have specific relevant skills. Well there are no advantages to us.</p>

They know what it is like outside – they can compare the advantages of a career with us.

2. Factors influencing the decision to hire a mature age apprentice

The survey for this project identified a range of views among employers regarding the wisdom of hiring mature age or existing workers as apprentices. The following interview questions in bold were designed to assist in understanding more about the decision to hire mature age people and existing workers as apprentices.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- Employers are generally aware of the need to shift their thinking about apprentices away from solely focusing on traditional ‘straight from school’ model in order to increase the ‘pool’ of available talent and enhance their capacity to cope with skill shortages and take advantage of the existing skills held by mature age and existing workers.
- For existing worker apprentices drawn from inside an organisation, the wage is not usually an issue. Some employers in this category maintain the individual’s previous wage because productivity is often not significantly decreased and the longer-term benefits of the arrangement outweigh any short-term issues. In these situations, obviously the wage is not a disincentive or deterrent for either employer or employee.
- However, most employers consider wage issues to be a disincentive for existing worker and other mature age apprentices who were not already employed with them.
- For existing worker apprentices drawn from inside the organisation, the employer is often concerned about the apprentice’s capacity to remain productive at work and find enough time outside work to do the required study.
- Some employers are aware of cultural issues within the organisation that could be a disincentive for mature age apprentices – for example, the apprentice’s possible suspicion of management initiatives and not wanting to be singled out from their colleagues.
- Most employers are aware that mature age persons considering an apprenticeship are often worried about the time that has elapsed between their last year of school and the start of an apprenticeship and the impact this could have on their ability to cope with the ‘theory side’ of the apprenticeship.
- Some employers identify literacy and numeracy issues as a problem for mature age applicants and these issues often become apparent at the very start of the recruitment process with the completion of application forms.
- Many employers appear to be seeking a balance of mature age and traditional youth apprentices. As a result they do not specifically target mature age persons. Rather than target them they try to ensure the recruitment processes include them.
- The main concern of employers about taking on a mature age person as an apprentice is that they could be ‘set in their ways’ and have difficulty taking instruction, particularly from younger supervisors or mentors.
- Some employers note that a mature age person entering an apprenticeship may have unrealistic expectations about the nature of the work involved.
- While employers recognise that there is some risk of ‘poaching’ once a good mature age apprentice obtained the trade certificate, this is not a major disincentive. In most cases this is compensated by the new tradesperson’s increased sense of loyalty as a result of the support provided throughout the apprenticeship.

Q.2a In your experience, why might mature age people or existing workers be unlikely or unwilling to undertake an apprenticeship?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers are generally aware of the factors that may deter a mature age person considering the commencement of an apprenticeship.</p>	<p>Wage is the biggest factor.</p> <p>Wage is a major concern, and probably the length of time that it sometimes takes to obtain that qualification.</p> <p>Going back to school.</p> <p>I think it's the dilemma of going back to school and going through that real formal process of school, whereas nowadays it's a little bit easier, a little bit more informal.</p> <p>I think the most common one is wages. There is a sacrifice involved, I mean even if they're in a semi-skilled occupation, they're usually earning what to them is a reasonable amount of money. And there is an element of the fact that if they want to acquire trade skills at that stage of their life they've usually got to take a pay cut to be able to do it, which is often difficult with family commitments and the like. So I'd say primarily, wages is an issue, little bit of fear of the unknown, where is this going to take me? What if I flop? You know those [sorts] of questions that people ask.</p> <p>I've had some employers say to me that they don't want somebody that's mature age because they are set in their ways, which makes no sense to me, because they want to make a change in their life. Why would they have applied? There's no logic to it. I think those employers lose out. But it's not common. I would say probably less than five percent of employers make that comment.</p> <p>It's a four-year commitment and if you look at a lot of mature age people getting into an apprenticeship, and look at their job history, they generally haven't held anything longer than four years. It is a major commitment that does bring a lot of doubt into their mind.</p> <p>There doesn't seem to be any disincentive in our company. We maintain their salary, pay their fees and they get the tool allowance and sign-up fee. Some of them had a few questions at the start but on the whole [they] were keen and not greatly concerned about going back to study theory.</p> <p>There is a lot of upfront paperwork. Although we assist with this it can be a problem for people who are a bit unsure of how they will cope with the study component. Literacy and numeracy issues can start even before the apprenticeship has begun.</p> <p>Given the workforce that we have sometimes there's a literacy issue for the blue collar guys and it's paperwork and they just want to do their jobs. Some of them don't like being singled out. There's a bit of attention they don't like. Sometimes they get a bit suspicious as well, that we're doing it to try and find out whether they actually know what they know. There's quite a few of those cultural things to deal with when you're dealing with mature age apprentices.</p> <p>We make sure that they are not disadvantaged wage-wise. We don't reduce the existing worker's pay when they take on an apprenticeship. The savings the company makes in payroll tax and WorkCover helps to compensate for the additional costs to the business.</p>

Literacy and numeracy issues can start even before the apprenticeship has begun.

We make sure that they are not disadvantaged wage-wise. We don't reduce the existing worker's pay when they take on an apprenticeship.

Q.2a (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>The reduced pay is a disadvantage.</p> <p>It's the low wage. You're basically just doing a minimum wage.</p> <p>Quite often they are concerned about having been out of school for a long while and that they might not cope with the theory components.</p> <p>Older workers can sometimes have difficulty taking orders from younger people.</p> <p>There can be relocation issues when we need to move the apprentice to other areas in order to get the range of experience they need.</p> <p>Some mature age apprentices have concerns about taking orders from much younger people.</p> <p>Our apprentices need to spend long periods away from home. This is a disincentive for mature age people who have family commitments, school age children etc.</p> <p>They don't always see the long-term gain.</p> <p>We have a set basic wage for mature age workers so they don't have to go back to a junior apprentice wage just because they take up the apprenticeship.</p> <p>Because many of our sites are remote quite a bit of the training needs to happen using distance education. Some workers are put off by this.</p> <p>Many of our best staff are very busy at work and find it difficult to set aside the time to complete the requirements of the apprenticeship – even though we schedule it into their program.</p> <p>We pay above award wages so a reduced salary is not a disincentive</p> <p>The apprentice wage can be a disadvantage.</p>

Q.2b Does your organisation actively seek to hire mature age apprentices?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Most employers do not specifically target mature age apprentices.</p>	<p>It could be better, but it's hard work. We're fairly high in our quality of apprentices because we're looking at a four-year commitment from them, so we screen our apprentices very well. But the biggest setback is the wage. We'll get the apprentices in, or potential apprentices in, we'll mention the wage and they say well I've got a mortgage, how can I live on this particular wage that's being offered? So a lot of them, unless they've got a partner or a wife that's working as well, will turn their nose up and say no, it's not enough money.</p> <p>No – although they are a very important group for us. We make sure our recruitment processes include them rather than target them.</p> <p>No, no, we're not actively seeking. Most of the time everyone just comes in through the door but if it is an adult looking for an apprenticeship we are quite happy because it's just a different kettle of fish than your little young pup.</p> <p>We don't but we do. We're dealing in a skill-shortage area so our problem really here is having the industry understand that the pool of young people and particularly now that they have to stay at school until Year 12 is very, very tight. We spend weeks just looking for one young person.</p> <p>For us it'd be a lot easier to employ mature age apprentices. The majority of ours are chefs so we put on the young kids and then they get to the 18, they get to the fun time in life and everything goes pear shaped, whereas when we get the mature age ones a couple of them have got families, young families, they're motivated, they're driven, so makes it easier for us, we don't have to worry about that X factor.</p> <p>Some mature age people need financial support during their apprenticeship. A HECS-like system, which added to their income during training, and was paid back through the tax system when they achieved the higher income after qualifying, would be great.</p> <p>No – we do not make any distinction in the recruitment process – we look for a genuine desire to work in the industry.</p>

Q.2c What were the reasons behind your organisation’s decision to hire a mature age apprentice? (e.g. there were no suitable candidates for apprenticeships, or you saw advantages in hiring someone who was older than the usual apprentice or someone who was already working?)

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers are generally aware of the need to shift their thinking about apprentices away from the traditional ‘straight from school’ model.</p>	<p>Demonstrated ability, demonstrated hand skills, demonstrated practical skills. They’re already generally above the younger apprentice. They have skill sets: life skills as well as practical skills.</p> <p>I’ve got one girl who was 22 when she came on board with us [group training company] and she said she’d been trying for two years to get an apprenticeship. And every time she gave her age, basically they slid her into the “no” pile. She was never actually told that, but she felt that herself. And she’s been a fantastic apprentice and she currently travels from Hocks Crossing to Thornbury to work. It’s in excess of an hour to travel. It took her two hours the other day because of the accidents that were on the freeway, but it’s an hour, hour-and-a-quarter travel time in peak hour traffic. She was living in Essendon when she first started and I spoke to her about the possibility of moving but she said no; she said, “I’m happy here because I’m learning. I’ve got very experienced people teaching me”. And she’s looking at the final outcome when she finishes: they pay very well.</p> <p>Traditionally, it has been the case that when someone thinks of apprenticeships they think of the kid who’s coming out of school who might be 16, 17, 18. However, that pool of young people is diminishing. And every industry basically does not have a choice other than to look outside of that pool and consider what options exist for labour. It is a skill-shortage area and it has been a concern of ours for quite some time. If we don’t train people up into these qualified trades, then we won’t have an industry down the track, so therefore there is that commitment from us to invest. So we do have to look at alternative sources of labour and that’s why the mature age person is the way to go. One of the options.</p> <p>Mature age workers come to us with existing knowledge. They know when to listen. They are keen and motivated. Because of this they are easier to manage as well.</p> <p>It’s (mature age) definitely seen as an advantage. They have a little bit of extra skill and life skills. And life experiences are important as well.</p> <p>They’re just that little bit more settled. They’ve got through that raging hormone thing. We see it quite often: they’ll be perfect for that first year, it’s all good, it’s great and then they just go off the rails as soon as they hit that 18 and that nightclubbing, just off the rails for about one or two years and if you’re onto them all the time, as my boss, is they finally or eventually come good or they just go totally off the rails.</p> <p>In some instances nobody else was available, so we took a punt and it’s worked out for us. Sometimes there is no other option. Sometimes it’s a suck-it-and-see; that is, we’ve given one a try and it’s worked out well.</p> <p>I call adult workers someone aged between 21 and 25 where there is no funding and then I call anyone 25 and over mature age. That’s the way we discuss it, so hiring an adult aged between 21 and 25, I believe, is absolutely fantastic for this industry because it’s a very service orientated and fast-paced, and for them to have that little bit of maturity will make an enormous difference to people’s workplaces. But because of the wage rate they’re very reluctant and fair enough, and I’ve had my own business, they say and I agree, why would I pay someone an adult wage at 24 say that has the same skills as someone at 15? And what’s the answer to that? Well maturity, all of those things. Well they just look at the bottom line, which is they’re trying to run a business. So I guess we do have some (host) employers that will take over 21 year olds, but they’re not if you look at the industry and how many workplaces there are, it’s not that many.</p>

In some instances nobody else was available, so we took a punt and it’s worked out for us.

Q.2c (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>They are experienced and productive. Their work ethic is stronger and they understand the need to conform [to] what the business needs.</p> <p>For the oil and gas industry and the places that we send our apprentices like offshore facilities such as oil rigs, you need a level of maturity.</p> <p>We've done some special projects that we receive funding from the government for. We've run these special projects. So that's been one avenue. But as a consequence of that, a lot of our members have said how much they appreciate the more mature apprentice. And as a consequence of that we've probably increased our intake of mature age apprentices when we can.</p> <p>There are big advantages in building a team approach. They are more loyal and that means they are prepared to go the extra bit to make things work. They understand the business.</p> <p>It is very important to us to have a multi-skilled workforce. Taking on existing workers as apprentices is one of the ways we are managing this. They have their original skills set (which can be another trade) and the new apprenticeship adds to this. They become very valuable employees</p>

Q.2d What are the risks of hiring as an apprentice a mature age person or existing worker? Q.2d What are the risks of hiring as an apprentice a mature age person or existing worker?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Most employers can identify a number of risks associated with mature age apprentices.</p>	<p>Sometimes they bring a lot of personal baggage with them. Even though they might be through the girlfriend phase, they could be going through divorce, marriage breakdowns, issues with children, child care, or movement of house because of the divorce. That's a lot of the personal baggage they bring.</p> <p>Don't really have a lot of risks apart from a bit of baggage, personal baggage, like they're already married and divorced and two children and that type of thing, and that sometimes affects the way that they work. But no, usually they're always pretty settled. Good, goal-orientated and they've got too many loans to play up.</p> <p>Some of them can be stubborn too. There are situations where they are set in their ways and don't like to change.</p> <p>Possibly pre-existing ideas. Set in their ways.</p> <p>Obviously it costs a little bit more but no, I don't see too many risks in it.</p> <p>Well the risk for us is that they can't get stable employment. And also a mature age person oftentimes think that they know more than the people that are trying to, you know, assist or mentor them because they've got that life skill. So it's really important to get the right personality mix, which we have to work out as well.</p> <p>It's the old story, invest money in training the person, the person either can't cut it because of a lack of ability but mostly it's usually the wages; that is, "I'd like to stay but I can't stay because I'm not making enough money."</p> <p>Mature age apprentices and trainees can have family and health issues which impact on their attendance and work.</p> <p>Once they are qualified, they can more easily move to another employer. It is definitely a risk and a loss to the business after making quite an investment.</p>

Q.2d (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>At the interview we're quite careful to look at people who may have repaired a car as a hobby at home and coming into the workforce; and we explain that it's great that you've done this and you've taken 20 years to renovate the car and the pictures are fantastic. However, when you get into a workshop, you're going to be told what to do and the jobs are going to be repetitive and you're going to be in a particular job that you don't like to do. So we have to make it quite realistic and make sure that they understand that, as well as emphasising the [low] wages . . . They may have done up a car, it might have taken them 20 years, it may look okay but it hasn't been done properly. Their idea might not meet the required standard. So if we take them into a workshop and they say; I've done this for years, and I say; yeah, but you don't do it that way, then there's a resistance in relation to what they're being told. There are the odd ones that fall into that trap as well.</p> <p>A lot of the work is repetitive. Vehicle servicing is the cream to a workshop, but it's very, very repetitive work. A lot of the accident repair work is repetitive because they like to get the smaller accident damage because they can get that car in and out in a week or less. And spray painting: 90 per cent of that is the preparation work; 5 to 10 per cent is the putting the colour on it. People don't always grasp the fact that a lot of it is repetitive.</p> <p>I don't see any risks. We have had some leave for other companies once they were qualified but this happens with young apprentices as well</p> <p>There is no doubt they are an extra cost as an apprentice, and if it doesn't work out it becomes a drain on a small business like ours.</p>
	<p>In our position [as a group training company] sometimes we face a little bit of reluctance from employers taking them on, because traditionally they would be taking on a 17, 18 year-old apprentice as against a mature age person. It's probably more a cultural thing or traditional thing, this reluctance.</p> <p>Sometimes [employers perceive] a potential lack of commitment. They may be at crossroads in their lives or in their career path and think; well I'll take this path [into an apprenticeship], but you'll soon find that three to six months into commencing an apprenticeship or a traineeship, they soon realise it really wasn't for them, whether it was due to a financial situation that they're currently in or other commitments.</p> <p>Mature age workers can have more employment options; for example, they may be poached by another company.</p> <p>They are definitely susceptible to poaching – particularly in our industry. But this is balanced by some loyalty that comes out of how we look after them (and continue to pay them their adult wage) while that are training.</p> <p>There is a risk that because they have been out of school for a while they may not be able to cope with the theory – particularly the maths.</p>

I don't see any risks. We have had some leave for other companies once they were qualified but this happens with young apprentices as well

3. The comparative value of mature age apprentices

The March-April 2010 survey results for this project suggested that employers have a strong sense of mature age apprentices being more 'valuable' than traditional youth apprentices. This was largely validated by the interviews.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- Employers value the higher level of stability and reliability demonstrated by mature age apprentices.
- Employers generally believe mature age apprentices are more immediately productive in the workplace because of their previous work experience and better understanding of issues such as OH&S.
- the higher levels of confidence that mature age apprentices demonstrate in the workplace environment as one of their valuable characteristics. The previous experiences of mature age apprentices generally make them more comfortable in the workplace and this facilitates better communication. They know when to listen, they have an understanding of when it is appropriate to take the initiative and they generally know how to provide feedback.
- Many employers consider that the management and supervision of a mature age apprentice is generally easier and less time consuming.

Q.3a Do you see advantages in hiring mature apprentices over traditional youth apprentices?

It is easier to manage mature age apprentices than kids out of school. Young people need to be pushed whereas mature age people are more motivated and organised.

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers generally see advantages in recruiting mature age persons as apprentices.</p>	<p>The work ethic and life skills are probably the biggest things.</p> <p>Balanced skills.</p> <p>Reliable.</p> <p>I think the only real advantage with a mature age person in the workshop is that from the workshop point of view they are probably a little bit more productive from day one. I'm not saying that the young ones can't do things from day one, but I'm just saying the mature age people are probably a little bit more productive in the way that they go about things.</p> <p>It is easier to manage mature age apprentices than kids out of school. Young people need to be pushed whereas mature age people are more motivated and organised.</p> <p>Yes, because they are mature and stable and usually they're in a relationship also which is a bit of a commitment for them which helps them to keep their commitment to you.</p> <p>The young ones quite often are still deciding what they want to do, whereas the older ones have probably tried a few things already and they know what they want.</p> <p>Definitely. We see advantages in hiring anyone [who] is committed to becoming an apprentice and is prepared to do the four years. Usually with someone that has changed direction, they've usually found their niche and they know that this is what I want to do, so you've got someone good on board. We see positives with mature age apprentices from that point of view but we don't initially single anyone out. You know the best application.</p> <p>More commitment and just more life skills: they know what it's all about, their work ethic is a little bit different.</p> <p>The more commitments they've got, the better workers they are. If they've got a mortgage and a kid they'll rock up every day to work.</p> <p>Maturity makes it easier for us. It costs us a little bit more but it's easier, so in the long run it's probably more efficient for us. Our guys don't have to baby them and one-on-one them, they can stand on their own two feet a little bit earlier. For us it's a bit easier although for businesses just looking at it purely on dollar terms it might cost us a little bit extra. But really you are in front because they're more efficient, they can stand on their feet and go earlier.</p> <p>Yes, but if I can qualify my response by saying that value is primarily in the ability to train up a mature age person generally more quickly than a school leaver, they can absorb more quickly so the time can be cut down. This is a real bee in my bonnet. I mean the industry at large has got to come to grips with the fact that we need people who need to get in, be skilled quickly, be put to work quickly, not on the drip-feed of a four-year apprenticeship, okay? And this is a real bugbear of mine, the fact that with technology today people need to learn far more rapidly and absorb the skills far more rapidly than they have in the past.</p>

Q.3a (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>I don't think you can say one is better than the other. You have to take each individual on their own merits.</p> <p>Well yes and no. Yes, the maturity is there and they are so much easier to deal with. No, they could have some bad habits. The young ones; we just take them fresh and they learn our way. However, weighing it up the maturity tends to pretty much outweigh youth, the way that it's working out at the moment.</p> <p>Some of the 16-year-olds we get in here to interview are very, very mature. And in the main, those people do very, very well because they start to focus on things. And especially if they've had a little bit of experience in the industry, as in work experience or something like that in a workplace, then they're very committed to that. And the same with the older people, if they've had some work experience in the industry, quite often they will be very, very focused and really good apprentices. The oldest apprentice I've got is 42 now and he's in his last year of his apprenticeship.</p> <p>Mature age apprentices have a better work ethic.</p> <p>Youth apprentices do not have the same level of maturity. They are a greater OH&S risk.</p> <p>Mature age apprentices do not need an additional level of management. Young apprentices need more 'hands on' management and support – both personally and about their actual work.</p> <p>Young apprentices sometimes have trouble coping with the construction site environment. Everything is new and they lack confidence.</p> <p>I think mature age apprentices are an attractive employment opportunity, but if you're paying more for them out of your own pocket then it's not worth it. But in general it's really good to find a guy that goes; "Okay, I've tried this, this and this and this is what I want to do." and they come to you and say "I want to be an apprentice" and they'll take a pay cut from a labouring job that they're doing to further themselves. You just go; "Well, that's the one I want." It's a no brainer really.</p>

Young apprentices sometimes have trouble coping with the construction site environment. Everything is new and they lack confidence.

Q.3b What are the attributes of the mature apprentice that are particularly attractive to your organisation?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Life experience and workplace experience mean that mature age apprentices have generally developed more predictable personal characteristics and can be more immediately productive in the workplace, in the view of most employers.</p>	<p>A better work attitude.</p> <p>Stability and maturity.</p> <p>Maturity and communication.</p> <p>Life skills and communication with people.</p> <p>They've got courage and conviction to make this life change.</p> <p>Their ability to be able to listen to a fair amount of logical reasoning on their work performance, in general cases, generally.</p> <p>Basically life experience, they know that that's what they want to do, they're just more mature.</p> <p>Because of all their commitments they're more likely to stick at it.</p> <p>Probably the mature behaviours that they have or should display. We're pretty big on behaviours in our organisation: we look for good teamwork, good safety ethic;, those sort of things.</p> <p>Well they're usually more settled, you usually don't have the big partying. You don't have the Thursday morning hangover because they get paid on Wednesday. They are committed, they know what they want. They're more serious.</p> <p>[They have] maturity and they're motivated; they seem a little bit more dedicated. They don't get into that age thing when they turn 18 and then all of sudden they've got to be out with their friends drinking and carrying on. And we, being in the hospitality industry, need them here Friday and Saturday night, so it's not fun for them.</p> <p>Mature age apprentices are more productive. Young apprentices can be a drain on the business until they settle down and become a bit more mature</p> <p>Sometimes a lot of them are quite grateful and appreciative. You build loyalty with them because you're giving them recognition.</p> <p>They're more mature and can also use a little bit more initiative than the younger ones. They've got the foresight to see something may need to be cleaned up, whereas the young one will stand back and hands in their pocket, look at the mess for a while and doesn't think anything of it. Whereas the mature ones will probably think I'll just go and clean that up, looks a bit ratty, or it could cause an accident. They're just a little bit more worldly.</p> <p>Mature age people may have had a background in retail, so they're halfway there. If they're a 16-year-old, they're going to come face- to-face with a customer and at that age they're going to be like a rabbit in the headlights. They don't know what to do, they may say the wrong thing and it's all blame little Johnny. He doesn't realise how much that is part of his job. Whereas somebody mature age hopefully will have a better understanding of life skills again, and can say "I'll get somebody to help you." It's easy as that for somebody older. For a 16-year- old, they can freeze.</p> <p>They are keen and motivated.</p>

Well they're usually more settled, you usually don't have the big partying

Q.3b (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>It is very easy to get them productive. It is extremely easy to get them productive if the right person is talking to them and helps them in the right direction. But then, that goes the same for younger people as well. If you get the right person training them, they fire up real well.</p> <p>Quite some years ago we had a case where we were looking at whether we could actually introduce adult apprenticeships into our award. And there was a lot of resistance from a number of people, and the union in particular have big issues with this. But we saw it as a need to open up apprenticeships to people outside of that traditional age group, what used to be back then up until 17, 18, 19. And what was fascinating back then is, we also had a big debate about whether the rate of pay should be a different rate of pay. And there were arguments about whether or not being an [older] person meant that they were going to learn quicker. We talk about them being more productive, but their pace of learning, the actual technical side of the trade, we found back then was no different. We debated this and we had lots of witnesses in the witness box who were employers, and we were asking them specifically this same question and they did say, look, in terms of grasping the trade, they're not necessarily learning quicker but what they do bring to the table is that maturity, the life skills. The fact that they have had some life skills, have dealt with customers or they've dealt with sales people means that they're able to adapt and analyse that situation a little bit more effectively and respond in a way that's not going to create an issue in the workplace. Whereas a young person who's very inexperienced is likely to say the wrong thing simply because they've not been exposed to that situation previously.</p> <p>They put more thought into the decisions they make and have a better understanding of the business as a whole.</p> <p>They are already familiar with the industry.</p> <p>They have a passion for the trade and are much more conscious of career opportunities with the company.</p>

4. Limited opportunities to hire mature age apprentices

The March-April 2010 survey results for this project suggests that organisations do not have substantial opportunities to hire mature age apprentices. The interviewees confirmed this matter.

Some key findings from the interview are:

- Most employers believe there is a high level of interest in mature age apprenticeships but often that interest does not translate into applications, largely because of perceptions about a low wage.
- Employers who offer mature age apprenticeships to their existing workers do not have difficulty attracting applicants – although in many cases they maintain salaries during the apprenticeship.
- Some employers note that advertising and promotional material about apprenticeships generally portrays apprentices as young people. As a result it does not indicate the wider range of approaches to apprenticeships that are now available – including mature age apprenticeships.
- Most employers feel that the potential drop in wage compared with what they were earning previously deterred interest in mature age apprenticeships. Many employers indicate that more mature age persons would express interest in an apprenticeship if the government could do more to address this difficulty – not necessarily just through increased subsidies but possibly through a HECS-style system.
- Some employers suggest that apprenticeship models in which all the training is delivered in the workplace would be more attractive to mature age people because they would not have to attend classes with much younger apprentices.
- A number of employers indicate that apprenticeship information and promotions could address mature age workers more specifically by emphasising the value of having their existing skills recognised.

Q4a. For many employers it seems to be more difficult to hire mature age apprentices (either from within or from outside your organisation) as opposed to traditional youth apprentices. Why is it more difficult?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers demonstrate some differences in their capacity to attract applicants for mature age apprenticeships.</p>	<p>Well it all comes down to the W word I suppose, wage.</p> <p>Wage. Wage is the big thing. The employers don't like paying out the extra money in some cases unfortunately.</p> <p>Most of those people at that age have already found their career path before they started apprenticeship.</p> <p>There's not too many around. I suppose they've got to take a pay cut so it's not as attractive for them.</p> <p>I think it's that earning capacity. Big decision for an adult to go from earning and decide okay, I want a career change. How's that going to affect me for the next four years? So it has to do with wage more than anything, I think. But the thing is that earning capacity is there in the construction industry: once you've got your trade it can be very good.</p> <p>We have had a mature age person who was a bank manager. We explained the [apprentice] wages to him. He was on it for a couple of months and came back and said "I can't possibly live on this wage". He wanted to do the trade but it was the fact that the wages were so damn low, so he just said, "I can't survive".</p> <p>We don't have a problem. A lot of mature age people apply.</p> <p>It is harder to identify potential mature age apprentices. The systems focus on youth apprentices.</p> <p>We get a lot of applications across the board – we like to see a spread.</p> <p>We don't find it more difficult. We have plenty of mature age applicants when we are recruiting.</p> <p>No - we like to use existing workers and don't have any problems attracting them to an apprenticeship.</p> <p>Mature age people are queuing up for apprenticeships with us – we don't have any problems attracting them.</p> <p>I think a lack of knowledge. It's very much a mixed bag, I mean you'll go to different states and there are all sorts of rigmaroles and rules that have got to be gone through by employers to put a mature age on. Is it worth the candle? Have I got the resources to fossick through it? The issue of grants, what's available, what's not. It's a very tangled ball of wool for a lot of employers and I think frustration sets in and they say oh look this is all too hard you know I'm going to go back to where we were and just put a kid on and there we go.</p> <p>We don't have a problem – we get plenty of mature age applicants</p> <p>No – in fact there seems to be a bit of a glut of mature age applicants at the moment. I guess probably because of the downturn in industry.</p> <p>Most of them are already working. It depends on the economy: if there's less work around they're sometimes easier to pick up because they've been laid off at other places. It does depend but it can be harder purely because they're either working and just doing what they do and not really looking for it.</p>

But the thing is that earning capacity is there in the construction industry: once you've got your trade it can be very good.

Q4b. What could be done to overcome some of these difficulties?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Most employers feel there is a need to assist mature age apprentices overcome the problem of a reduced wage.</p>	<p>A wage increase, but then the wage is the dog chasing its tail because if the wage goes up too high, the employer doesn't want to employ them because it costs them too much. So that's a vicious circle.</p> <p>Government incentives, which do help. There are some government incentives, but they haven't been adjusted since day one anyway. They haven't even looked at increasing those for the employer. They've always been set as what they are now since day one. Incentives are needed across the board for apprentices, but a little bit more in the adult for the skill shortage areas.</p> <p>More government supplements, I guess, and maybe there needs to be more in the training legislation to do with adults and making it a little bit more attractive than just a minimum wage. If you've got a 30-year-old working hard yakka out there on a minimum wage, they're probably doing twice as much as your tradies at this point. It's the money.</p> <p>I would put up more incentives. I know that the JSAs [Job Services Australia] got a lot of dollars. I think if there was a clear pathway for dollar incentives that went with over 25 year olds or 21 to 25-year-olds it would make it a lot simpler for people to see that there's actually assistance. Because I know that there's assistance but we've got no idea how many dollars are attracted to any person unless you're in that JSA circle.</p> <p>The other thing you need to think about too is the delivery of the training for the mature age people. Do they want to go back into a classroom environment with a 16-year-old kid to understand the basics behind mechanics? Is that the best environment to put them in, or would the environment be better to be a more grown up environment? We've done some in the spare parts area and we found that on-the-job training will suit them better than off-the-job. You need to look at that side of things as well.</p> <p>So it's personalities. The mature age ones complete their on-the-job training well: the underpinning knowledge, the bookwork. A mature age one has not said the dog has eaten my homework or anything like that. Never come across any problems with that.</p> <p>So one size does not fit all, I guess is the message. And there are going to be different needs for different groups and different types of trades I suspect.</p> <p>One of our considerations is that we're going to pay a first year 16 and 17 year old this much and a mature one that's 22, 23, 25, whatever, this much. That is a definite consideration for us too.</p> <p>Look, I think we obviously need a lot more coordination by training authorities both at state and commonwealth level. There needs to be a much clearer set of communications in terms of what's available, what's not, what can be done with mature age apprentices, what can't be done and a consistent communication, a consistent message to employers about the benefits and so forth of hiring mature age and as I say what's available in terms of grants and subsidies and so forth.</p> <p>We deal a lot with labourers and plant operators. I think it's about maybe the way it's pitched and the way it's promoted. It is more about, "Look be recognised for the skills that you have and be a more valued member of the workforce".</p> <p>Apprenticeship Centres should promote mature age apprentices and keep registers of mature age worker who are interested in an apprenticeship.</p>

5. Attractive personal qualities of mature age apprentices

The 2010 survey results for this project indicated that employers' hiring decisions are as much concerned with the personal qualities of the candidate as they are with their professional, work-related qualities. The 2010 survey results further suggest that employers might regard mature age apprentices as possessing more of the required personal qualities than youth apprentices. The interviews strongly validated these earlier findings.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- Employers consider that the existing skills of mature age applicants for apprenticeships are less important than their personal qualities.
- Employers value mature age persons who are committed to their apprenticeship because mature age people see it as part of a career path.
- In making a decision to take on a mature age apprentice, employers believe the right person can be taught the requisite skills but it is not usually possible to change an individual's attitude or motivation.
- Mature age applicants who have strong personal qualities are considered by employers to be more likely to be effective team players, and more business and customer focussed.

Q5a When hiring a mature age apprentice, how important are a mature person's personal qualities (e.g. commitment and motivation) in comparison with their professional qualities (e.g. knowledge of trade)?

I can sum it up in a few words: hire the attitude, teach the skill.

Personal qualities are very important – but it is the same for youth apprentices.

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers regard personal qualities of attitude, aptitude and motivation as more important than existing technical skills – even for mature age persons who already may have some trade skills.</p>	<p>I can sum it up in a few words: hire the attitude, teach the skill. Regardless of the age of the apprentice. That's why it's [a] four-year apprenticeship. We say to that person, that's why it's four years; we'll teach you if you've got the right attitude.</p> <p>Depends on the personality. Honestly, it's the person; it's the merit of the person. It's the person themselves.</p> <p>Well that (personal qualities) weighs heavily on the decision (to hire).</p> <p>The personal attributes are basically what we hire on. Especially for an apprentice or a trainee, we're not looking for what they already know; it's the aptitude and the motivation to learn.</p> <p>We look at them to see how comfortable we feel with the apprentice, no matter how old they are. We have a look at them to see how we feel they would fit in to our organisation.</p> <p>I'd say 95 per cent, because I can teach people how to be electricians. I can't teach them how to be good people.</p> <p>Vital and also you know that usually they're in the trade for good; you're not going to lose them as soon as they're qualified. So after four years of spending time with an apprentice you're not going to lose someone because he's now changed his mind on his career path. So I think when you do have a mature worker you've probably got them for a while in that industry, which is what you're trying to do, is retain them. Not just during the apprenticeship but thereafter.</p> <p>We're not basically hiring them because of their knowledge of a trade, that's why we're putting them on as an apprentice. So their commitment and motivation is basically one of our top priorities. They have a lot of commonsense; they come into it with different life skills, so they've already worked in maybe two or three different workplaces. So they've got that and the skills, well they learn them.</p> <p>They're very important and I have to say most of them have got better qualities in that area than younger people because they're older and more mature. Their personal attributes are more important. We have to look at people as all people do, with good attitude, dress well, punctual, all the normal basic skills that you know all professions really like.</p> <p>Personal qualities are critical – commitment and motivation means that sick leave is rare and genuine.</p> <p>Personal qualities are more important than anything else. Even if they have no relevant skills to begin we can teach them those. But if they don't have motivation and commitment it won't work.</p> <p>Their knowledge of the trade is probably pretty minimal in a lot of cases but the personal qualities, motivation, a commitment to it, and these people are often very, very committed. They're willing to have made a sacrifice in terms of wages. They're working very hard and that motivation and commitment I think are not seen initially at interview but a relatively short time after they enter the workforce.</p> <p>Personal qualities are very important – but it is the same for youth apprentices.</p> <p>They are the same – we need both and we look for both.</p> <p>We don't actually do the recruitment – just manage them through their training – but there is no doubt that mature age apprentices are more motivated and focussed on their career.</p>

Q.5a (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>I had a mature age apprentice with a very dominant personality. So with that dominant personality he was overriding a lot of the instructions from his senior people. That's where he needed counselling. He was very, very dominant. And it took a long time to stop him from dominating. The foreman was not intimidated but was annoyed that he wouldn't listen to instructions.</p> <p>We look for someone who wants to advance their career and has a good idea of how the apprenticeship will do that. We need motivation and commitment.</p> <p>It's a combination. For instance, if we interview people we like them to show that they've got a genuine interest in the trade. So yes, it's a combination of both.</p> <p>But I think by the time they've got to in their 30s or 40s, they normally would know more about a trade than someone leaving school because they've had to drive a nail in or change a light bulb and they've maybe serviced their own car or whatever. So they have a little bit more of an idea or they've watched friends build an extension on a house or laid pavers. It doesn't necessarily mean they've got more skills in a particular trade but perhaps they have a bit more manual dexterity too in handling power tools and things like that.</p>

Q5b Why are their personal attributes important?

it's more their life experiences, they're a bit more streetwise, makes it a bit easier for us.

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers need employees, including apprentices, to have a customer/business focus. This goes beyond the possession of technical skills.</p>	<p>We're in a customer-focused area so unless you've got the right people in that area, it won't work. If you look at the way the workshops are set up now, they've all got glass fronts. So while the customer's sitting in the workshop he can have a cup of coffee and watch the person working on their car. So if that person hasn't met a certain standard, we don't want that person in the workshop.</p> <p>We're not too fussed about their actual knowledge. We'll train them, we'll get them to where they need to be. However, it's more their life experiences, they're a bit more streetwise, makes it a bit easier for us.</p> <p>The person's ability to fit into the team is important. Will they fit into the team? Can he adapt to change? He's still got to do some of the remedial tasks like if he's a first-year apprentice, "What do you mean empty the bin? Me? Empty the bin?" "Well, you're a first year apprentice." Clean it out or adapt to the change. You come into the workforce as a first-year apprentice, you need to do those tasks, whether they seem meaningless or not, they need to be done. And sometimes they're given a menial task, like sweep the floors, to see how they perform those tasks before they move them on to something else.</p> <p>They'll stick with it and that means we're not wasting our time either.</p> <p>Very important – we want people who see it as a career step and who can use their previous experience to show initiative.</p> <p>A good attitude and commitment mean it will work out well for the company and their studies.</p> <p>Loyalty is very important. While there is nothing to stop someone leaving once they have their trade we lose out if they do because of what we have invested in them. If they have loyalty it is good for us both.</p> <p>I think time's a factor, that is we don't have to be giving them pep talks every five minutes, we don't have to keep on jollyng them along and say, "Look 18-year-old, 19-year-old, come on, look, you've really got to get to work on time, look we need you to do this". There's an element of that I think with any young trainee or apprentice. That's generally not an issue with the mature age people.</p> <p>Because that aptitude and motivation to learn then drives everything else. If they're motivated to do it they'll complete the workbooks, they will complete the assignments.</p>

6. The management of mature age apprentices

The March-April 2010 project survey results suggest that the management of mature age employees is different from the management of traditional youth apprentices. This result was partly confirmed by the interviews.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- When first asked, many employers consider that there is not much difference between managing mature age apprentices and traditional youth apprentices.
- However, when asked to detail any differences that do exist they can list a range of areas where they find fewer difficulties with mature age apprentices.

Q6a Is the management of mature age employees different from the management of traditional youth apprentices?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Although many employers indicate at first that there is not a great deal of difference between managing mature age apprentices and traditional youth apprentices, on further reflection, a considerable number consider that mature age apprentices are easier to manage than traditional youth apprentices.</p>	<p>Depends on the workplace, the answer is yes it can be, yes it can be.</p> <p>Depends on the individual.</p> <p>Because he's got whiskers and he looks old, we treat him differently. As a 17-year-old you would have said to him, you should have put on a pair of gloves to do that. But because the guy was mature age and looked his age, we expected him to know that already.</p> <p>We treat mature age and young apprentices exactly the same.</p> <p>No, not at all, really.</p> <p>We hire mainly mature age but the youngest one we hired was a 17-year-old straight from school. As far as managing him was concerned it wasn't really any different to how we did with the mature age one but he was very mature for his age. He'd been involved in a lot of stuff like the Duke of Edinburgh awards and field training player things and he was really an exception to the rule at that age.</p> <p>In a word yes. For the reasons that you don't have to continually reiterate instructions, that the mature age person is more able to come up to you and say Look I don't understand this, can you explain it? Whereas the young school leaver will often go away and probably botch something because he or she has not been prepared to come and ask for some help.</p> <p>They are a little bit because the young apprentices don't really have expectations: they know they're going to get a trade but I think that these days they just look at it as a job. But when I was working it wasn't that it was set in concrete but you did something, and you thought you'd be at it for the rest of your life. But these days, it's just a stepping stone for them. Whereas I think the older they are, I think they're doing it because they want to do it and not just because it's a job. But I think for the kid's today, it's just, "Well it's a job. I'm earning and learning. I'll get a trade out of it but I don't know whether I'll do that after I finish."</p> <p>I think it's slightly different. The young ones are probably used to more of the paperwork side of things, the study and doing assignments and assessments and things like that. Assessing mature age apprentices can be difficult as well because they're not used to that learning environment.</p> <p>I think so – but we have had less experience with traditional youth apprentices because we have concentrated on developing our existing workers.</p> <p>They are definitely easier to manage – they are more focussed and understand what they have committed to.</p> <p>Yes, definitely, definitely. They're easier to talk to so you can say this is where we're at, where we need you to be at, you work it out. Whereas with the younger ones it's a lot of coaxing and mentoring and showing them and one-on-one stuff, whereas the mature age person just picks it up pretty quick.</p>

They are definitely easier to manage – they are more focussed and understand what they have committed to.

Q6b If so, how?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers list a range of areas where they find the management of mature age apprentices different from that of traditional youth apprentices.</p> <p>In every case the comparison favours the mature age apprentice.</p>	<p>The great advantage of a mature age employee is their work ethic. This makes managing them (and their progress with the apprenticeship or traineeship) a lot easier.</p> <p>Mature age apprentices need less supervision.</p> <p>You treat them more as an adult than a child; you don't have to teach them as much about everything. They seem to use initiative a little bit more.</p> <p>There is a huge difference. They use their life experience in making decisions and have a more mature approach to the whole thing. We often use our mature age apprentices as mentors for young apprentices and this has worked very well in a number of cases.</p> <p>I don't think we have to invest as much management time. When they're young you're constantly watching them; whereas you know that the older ones, depending on where they've come from, probably have a lot more commonsense. So you're not having to employ other manpower or as much like one-on-one. You know that they'll sort of be okay.</p> <hr/> <p>Mature age apprentices show up for work – they do the right thing and their heads are in the right place. Managing young apprentices can be painful.</p> <p>For younger guys it's new to them. Often they live at home, or they're living in their own accommodation, they have girlfriend issues etc, etc. The mature workers have probably got past that.</p> <p>An adult apprentice in a lot of cases feels more comfortable to come to us more quickly if a problem arises; because as their confidence is building they will take action and be proactive where young ones will sort of sit back sometimes and they get a bit secretive but they're shy. But some of the adult apprentices will just grin and bear it to sort of keep there and not lose the job, won't even let us know there is a problem to sort out there because they just want to try and resolve it themselves first.</p>

7. Support for the career development of mature age apprentices

The March-April 2010 project survey results suggest that the personal and professional support required by mature age employees is different from the support required by traditional youth apprentices. This result was partly confirmed by the interviews.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- Most employers recognise that mature age apprentices have clearer career goals than young apprentices, although in most cases the induction and support programs used for mature age apprentices are the same as those for young apprentices.
- In a number of companies the standard induction programs are shortened to allow for the existing knowledge and expertise of the mature age apprentice.
- Although employers generally see the extent and nature of the support provided to mature age apprentices as similar to that provided to traditional youth apprentices. But when asked to give examples of the support provided they identify significant differences between the two groups.
- A number of employers note that mature age apprentices are able to see the long-term benefit of having up-to-date skills and the associated increase in job and career security.
- Employers recognise that existing worker apprentices are often more aware of the role an apprenticeship might play as part of their career development, because they have acquired examples and models of career progression from their colleagues.
- Most employers view the mature age apprenticeship as simply one stage in the career of the apprentice and only a particular stage of the organisation's workforce development strategy.
- Most employers believe a continued program of post-trade and vendor-specific training is necessary to sustain the skills base of the workforce.
- This ongoing development program is commonly an informal process during which skill development needs are identified and negotiated with the employee.

Q7a What types of personal and professional support do you give your current apprentices: e.g. mentoring, induction programs, training support?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers with formal induction and mentoring programs tend to use the same programs for mature age apprentices and traditional youth apprentices.</p>	<p>We have induction programs and a buddy system but it is the same for all our apprentices.</p> <p>Look they're basically given everything a normal regular employee gets. We are going through a mentoring program at the moment. The trainee coordinator is pulling them all together so even if they're across different trades we are having a joint forum where they can all come and share their experiences and hear people that are doing similar things to them. It has been really good.</p> <p>When they go offshore or onto our facilities they're actually assigned with a tradesman. They have supervisors and we actually have group training organisation supervisors as well so they get mentoring for that person and pastoral care, obviously.</p> <hr/> <p>Yes we have induction programs and apprentice mentoring but these are the same for all apprentices.</p> <p>We use a team approach to support apprentices – in the first instance they support each other.</p> <p>Our mature age apprentices get the same support as young apprentices. Their training support needs are much the same as our young apprentices. There are occasional problems coping with the theory components but this happens with some kids as well.</p> <p>We adjust our induction program for our existing workers – we look at the gaps and use the program to fill them. This makes for a shorter and more relevant program.</p> <p>Primarily in the training element, that is, employers are prepared to spend a few bob on these people in terms of upping their skills fairly quickly because they can see that they can put these skill to good use far more rapidly than a traditional apprentice.</p> <p>When we sign them on, for instance, our head chef's their mentor so he looks after them and we give them whatever's needed. Being a big club we can support them in any way they need, so if they actually do go off the rails a little bit we've got counselling services, all that sort of stuff to give them support.</p> <p>They get everything. In training, well obviously they're doing their Cert III so they're getting their time to go to their registered training organisation, whichever one we've registered them with. And we have a lot of induction programs, we have a lot of toolbox talks and we have a lot of onsite training like we'll do first aid. And we do a lot of machinery training as well: we'll get the guys and elevated work platforms, bobcat, that type of thing. They get a lot out of it if they're keen and want to do it. And with mentoring well they know that they've got the HUSO. If they've got any problems they know they can come to me as the HR manager. A lot of the younger ones look to the mature ones for a bit of mentoring which works well for us as well.</p> <p>Well we actually as an organisation employ five fully-qualified chefs that have all the attributes that we would like that hopefully they can pass on. They do all of the mentoring; they work with every single one of our apprentices regardless of what age they are. We also use every other service available to us if there's a problem. It's not our policy to counsel people with their personal problems, we go for professional people to do that so we're very serious about how we mentor and how we assist and help people to complete. We do lots of like fast-track programs and as an organisation we look at each person on an individual basis so that way we're not grouping someone that's 35 as someone that's 16. We take a very individual approach.</p> <p>What we offer is much the same for both – but mature age apprentices need less mentoring and sometimes actually make good mentors for younger apprentices.</p>

Q7b In your experience, in what ways are the longer-term career goals of mature age apprentices different from the goals of traditional youth apprentices?

I find with the mature age that they want it and they want it a little bit more quickly now.

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers recognise that mature age apprentices generally have a clear idea about the career they want and the role that the apprenticeship will play in that career.</p>	<p>With kids, they come along, it's just a job, a trade, I'm working, I'm earning money. What I do with it at the end I don't know, whereas with the older ones, well I'm here to get my trade, now I'm going to work. They're probably a little bit more focused on maybe eventually getting out on their own.</p> <p>The younger apprentice probably doesn't see it as a career at this particular stage. They see it as a job. The mature age people would have probably been through that job phase and are looking at a career now.</p> <p>Sometimes, and depending on the person, I find with the mature age that they want it and they want it a little bit more quickly now. They want to step up through the ranks, because they're married, or they've just got married. They've got mortgages so they have to aspire to a higher qualification very quickly or to a higher position within that company more quickly than say your 17, 18 year old person. They want to set themselves up immediately.</p> <p>Mature age apprentices have more set goals. They see the opportunity of moving up to 'Service Manager' roles and other career options in the company. The mature age ones quite often are just looking for stability, making sure the family's supported and keeping food on the table. I don't see them necessarily as wanting to set the world on fire. Just guaranteeing that they're going to have ongoing employment I think is their main motivation whereas the younger ones are probably saying, "Oh I want to do this and I want to do that and I want to be a supervisor one day". They've got all those aspirations and I think the older ones are a bit more realistic about, "I just want to make sure I've got a career and a job".</p> <p>They're much more focused. They've usually done quite a bit of work before and actually know that that's what they want to do.</p> <p>They are thinking about extending their career with the company – looking for promotion and taking on supervisory roles which mean getting their trade qualification as a first step.</p> <p>Mature age apprentices are much more focussed on achieving career goals. They are committed. Young people always think they have time to chop and change.</p> <p>Look, generally they want to stick it out. I mean, there's always I think an element of a school-age apprentice having done their time and saying right, "I've done that, I'm going to go off and do something else entirely different either for 12 months or for the rest of my life". Whereas the person who's committed to say taking up a trades in their mid-twenties or later is far more likely to stick for a longer period. Not to say that they'll be chained to the bench for the next 40 years but I think there is a much longer-term commitment to the job than a school-leaver.</p> <p>Mature age apprentices are more likely to stay with [you] after they are qualified. They have decided on a career and stick with that decision.</p> <p>They are much more aware of and concerned about longer-term career opportunities</p> <p>They've certainly got a clearer path, they're certainly more established but generally we get some fairly young apprentices who know exactly where they're going. You get a lot of apprentices who have no idea.</p>

Q7b (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>Well the mature age apprentices have got a bit of an idea where they want to go. They've got commitments and they know where they want to end up five, 10 years down the track. The youth ones tend to not have that same sort of orientation. A lot of them you talk to are more interested in "I'm going to get my trade, takes me four years, five years to do that, I've done that and I'm off travelling". And sometimes the reason that they're there is because that's what their parents want, it's not actually what they wanted.</p> <p>Satisfaction levels appear to be different. Mature age people seem to go through an entire metamorphosis, as their complete life is turned around when they do this and so in many areas it's a change. Now if they get hold of that baton they run with it.</p>

Q7c Is the personal and professional support required by mature age employees different from the support required by traditional youth apprentices?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers vary in their views about the personal and professional support required by mature age apprentices.</p>	<p>No it is the same the key support areas such as literacy and numeracy are available to everyone</p> <p>No, no, absolutely no. Obviously the mature age may not need as much. They can still run into trouble.</p> <p>Yes it is different, it's actually less because you haven't got the problem of, oh you know: Slept in . . . Had a big night.</p> <p>Look, I don't think so. Having a mentor or a buddy is just as important [for a mature age apprentice]. It can sometimes be forgotten because they're older so it is still a matter of recognising that they'll be going through some difficult times or they'll need someone to ask questions of, whereas they may not come forward and ask themselves because of pride or whatever sometimes.</p> <p>I think sometimes you spend a lot more time with the youth ones because you tend to baby them a lot more. You think the older ones can do it for themselves, especially paperwork. I'm like the old mother here and really I'm just as soft anyway.</p> <p>I would suggest it's probably more at a communication/instructional level than anything else, that is, their motivations are oft-times different.</p> <p>No, they're all the same (youth and mature age apprentices). It's the same support. We have to be really careful that we don't fall into that same trap of making the assumption that just because they're older, they should know [what to do]. So we treat them no different from the younger person who's coming in as a learner, fresh into the trade. If they pick it up quickly, you can read the situation and move them along faster. But we have to come in from that perspective that they don't know, and give them the benefit of the doubt. Because if you do go in there and make the assumption, you have to also bear in mind some of these individuals may feel a bit embarrassed and they won't speak up and say, "Hey, I'm sorry, I don't know," because amongst their peers in an induction, they don't want to appear as if they're silly, particularly if there's younger people in the room as well.</p> <p>No. They're there to learn and we've got to teach them from the ground up. We've got to make sure they are competent in all things, whether they're 16 or 36, because they're in a really professional role where they've got peoples' lives in their hands. If they don't do things in a correct manner they could be endangering themselves and others. And we take it seriously in relation to what we teach them and how we progress them through the qualification.</p>

Q7d If so, how?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>In practice employers note significant differences in the extent and nature of the support provided to mature age apprentices.</p>	<p>I know that most of the field managers would use their own discretion when they're out there and doing their field visits. I know that I do, in regards to a mature age person. Like [mature age apprentices] mixing with 16, 17-year-olds and saying to them that what it's going to feel like to sit next to another person and not know something. I use my discretionary ability when I do a field visit.</p> <p>Some of our kids [youth apprentices] come from so many different backgrounds and there are unfortunately kids who come from broken homes, who have troubled homes, who have all sorts of issues, and they look to the guys [field officers] in an authoritative way, almost a father figure, because these guys do provide them with pastoral services. So sometimes I'd imagine, and I'm thinking of only a few of our kids, where you do have to speak to them in an authoritative way so they understand you mean business when you're talking to them. But you can't necessarily speak to a more mature person in that same manner because your relationship is different. So there are some subtleties. But you have to read the situation, and that is an individual thing because there are some young people who are very mature for their age and you wouldn't speak to them that way. But some kids need that direction, they need that authority.</p>
	<p>The off-the-job training [is different]. A lot of mature age apprentices and employers I've spoken to have been more happy with having the training provider come out to the workplace and do the training for the adults instead of having the mature age sitting in the class of 16, 17-year-olds in a TAFE. That seems to be a popular thing I've noticed. They interact better with the trainer under those circumstances because they haven't got the young kids around them that in some cases might laugh at the question they ask. They interact well with the trainer in a one-on-one situation.</p>

Q7e Does your organisation encourage mature age and existing workers to undertake post-trade and other VET sector options after they have completed their apprenticeship?

We have a leadership development program and make them aware of the opportunities in the company beyond their trade.

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Most employers anticipate a continued program of post-trade and vendor-specific training is necessary to sustain the skills base of their workforce.</p>	<p>Yes. All of the apprentices. Absolutely. [We point them towards] a career path if they can find it. If you're looking at a few motor mechanics in here we tell them that we no longer get our hands dirty, so there are possibilities to get off the tools eventually if you want to.</p> <p>Yes. We have a leadership development program and make them aware of the opportunities in the company beyond their trade.</p> <p>Yes, we do. We give them ongoing training. They'll also have training of any new systems that come into any of our facilities, and we do encourage them to go through the VET sector with regards to the different training packages and depending on which one they're aligned with.</p> <p>Once they have their qualifications, it's up to them to go and chase up to do like a Certificate IV that they have to do. But we do offer a lot of post-trade courses as required by the industry and as required by our company so they get it, they get it endorsed on their licence so it's all good for them as well. So it works two ways.</p> <p>It depends. We've got a bit of a policy with our younger ones that once they've finished the apprenticeship we actually want them to move on. However in saying that we've kept a couple because they're stand-outs but it all depends on the individual. We actively ask them to move on, to experience other businesses and, not only that, so then we can put more on. It frees a way for us to put on more young apprentices and keep the training and positions happening.</p> <p>There's still an enormous lack of knowledge out there, particularly in a small business, as to what can be done and what can't be done and what's available and what's not. These small business guys are just anxious to get the doors open every day, keep the business going, make a profit and survive. Oftentimes these things don't really enter their mind to any great extent unless it's actually put in front of them. Again, I think that RTOs, TAFE colleges and the like need to be much better at getting their message out in terms of what's available and what the benefits are to both employers and employees. They're not very good at that.</p> <p>Yes, we do, we're extremely hot on this because of the industry we're in 90 per cent of apprentices, when they finish their apprenticeship, are put onto a casual contract. You cannot get incentives when someone's a casual worker so I'm not sure what to do about that. I don't know whether people know this but it's free to do a Cert III Frontline Management after someone's done a trade qual. We deliver a trade qualification of commercial cookery. There is not one unit in that qualification that's a management or people skill unit so they come out, having finished a four-year qual, and they've not had any management training at all, and then they're put in to run a kitchen and they're not equipped for it. They do the actual job but they don't have all the other personal qualities that are needed to manage a kitchen, which sometimes has 20 people in it. If that's a mature age person they can handle that a lot better, whereas you know some kids are 19 and they're put in to run a kitchen. So I think it's the perception of this industry and it's all tied up with the wage rate. So they're only looking at the wage rate but not really at the value and the stability that a mature age person would bring.</p> <p>Yes, we do, we've actually got a program that runs called the cadetship program, which is geared at actual management level. So you have site management, for example, and they can go to the foreman level. It's not just apprenticeships; we go to the next level. We go right through to advanced diploma.</p>

Q7e (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>We do a lot of vendor-specific training and a lot of it is online. We have better results with mature age tradesmen as they are more motivated.</p> <p>Yes – but this is the same for all qualified tradespersons. They fit into the organisations on-going training program.</p> <p>Not especially, a lot of the additional training is through our suppliers (vendor specific).</p> <p>No, because once you become a qualified electrician there's not really a lot to go on with in our trade. They can always look at bettering themselves with smaller courses, but if they've done a four-year apprenticeship and they get qualified and they can start making some good money, they're not often going to keep training.</p> <p>Our existing worker apprenticeship and traineeship programs are only part of our overall training strategy. We have a comprehensive range of specialist and generic programs – covering emerging areas of professional expertise and management/personal development (including TAFE diplomas etc).</p> <p>They are more likely to stay on with us if we continue to look after them with specialist training.</p> <p>Look it isn't something that we've focused [on] but it certainly is something that we're working on through a career-mapping exercise that we're doing at the moment through each of the professions and trades. It is about actually to look at what their career options are.</p>

Q7f If so, what types of options are encouraged?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers generally identify an informal process during which skill development needs are identified and negotiated with the employee.</p>	<p>Depending on their trade course, [we encourage] advancement in their particular trade course.</p> <p>If they want to get off the tools and you point them into a management area, like frontline management, and how to operate in the management area, and customer service course.</p> <p>If they want to stay on the tools, there's additional courses like the SRS [supplemental restraint systems] which deal with seatbelt tensioners, air bags and that sort of thing. They're more technical, so they're more [of a] specialist, more specialised in the technical areas. They can really go to a high level of technical experience.</p> <p>We definitely like to keep our tradespeople after they have completed their training. We use an ongoing training program that includes twice yearly discussions with the manager about ongoing training needs – these are then recorded and we try to slot what is recommended by the manager into the individuals training.</p>

Q7g And if so, is this part of a formal approach by your organisation to employees' further learning and career development?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Most employers identify informal rather than formal processes as the basis of their continued skills and development strategy.</p>	<p>I don't know if you class it as formal, but it is the practice. Good practice is it?</p> <p>It depends on what you define as formal. See, for us it's just one of those things we do as a matter of course, so it doesn't feel formal.</p> <p>I don't know if I'd say it was a formal approach but it's just the way it happens. We can get a bit messy here. It's just the way we operate.</p> <p>It's formal and informal. We facilitate it if the guys themselves want to go ahead with it but we don't push it.</p> <p>It depends on the apprentices.</p> <p>For myself, with the paint and panel guys, I talk to the host employers and say to them look, if you want to send the boys or girls, because I've got a number of girls that are spray painters, to colour matching or product training basically for the product they're using, we're happy to assist in that.</p> <p>We encourage the apprentices to do additional stuff. We've just got a young fellow just going into the World Skills competition, well we're paying that, we're paying for that above what the training costs normally are. So we are encouraging all the apprentices that if they want to go places and they do the right thing, well they'll get there, if they're prepared to put in.</p>
	<p>Yes – our promotion system is linked to further training and we provide courses to advanced diploma level</p> <p>Yes – we are guided by the RTO and the requirements of the course.</p>

8. Providing meaningful work for mature age apprentices

The results from an ACCI survey conducted in 2009 indicated that retention rates for apprentices are influenced by the employer's capacity to provide meaningful work. This result was partly confirmed by the interviews for this project.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- Employers vary in their approach to designing meaningful work for mature age apprentices, with some taking deliberate steps and others not.
- Some employers adjust training plans so that full advantage is taken of existing skills and experience.
- Other employers see an advantage in using a standard approach to identify gaps in all apprentices' knowledge and experience and to fill those gaps.
- Some employers are critical of inconsistent approaches by training providers to recognition of prior learning (RPL), which means that it is difficult to plan and customise an effective developmental approach for a mature age apprentice.

Q8a If you have a formal system for organising an apprentice's work so that their work is both meaningful and adds to their skills development, to what extent does this work recognise the existing skills of those apprentices who are mature age or were existing workers?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers vary in the way they adapt their work allocation processes to the needs and experience of mature age apprentices.</p>	<p>We negotiate a training plan that is structured.</p> <p>We are not passengers in the relationship with the training providers. The guys (field officers) actually manage that relationship.</p> <p>With the older ones, show them once and they're off and running, so yes, definitely.</p> <p>It gets back to their competency. We wouldn't give them work that they're not competent to do.</p> <p>From the TAFE or the training provider point of view, the apprentices can have recognition of prior learning. That may be discussed through the training provider. We know what these apprentices should get recognition for and will push the training provider so they get it.</p> <p>One of the big issues with all mature age, both at employment level and further on, is a total lack of uniform RPL. It's really dreadful; I mean every TAFE is different. It's either terribly complex, it puts the applicant very ill at ease because the sorts of things they're being asked vary from one provider to the next. There's often no rhyme or reason. Sometimes it's pick and flick, other times it's lengthy written assessments and appraisal which frankly don't make a lot of sense to mature age people. Again the whole RPL process in Australia I think is something that needs a lot of work to make it work properly. It's a real downer for a lot of people. I actually think it's frightened them off, I mean it is hard to match up the skills that a person's acquired in say retail sales and then try and apply that to a trades operation, but they focus on the wrong things, I mean they should give them more on the other abilities, the communication, the literacy, the numeracy skills.</p>
	<p>We treat all apprentices the same way – although experienced mature age workers will be given more responsible tasks when they are moved to areas in which they already have high levels of experience and skill.</p> <p>We use the same basic system for all apprentices.</p> <p>Our job rotation system treats all apprentices the same way.</p> <p>We don't do any of that. They're out there and they're doing it and the thing is that you know they have 70 something modules in our particular trade that they have to cover. So as an employer we have to rotate them to get them to do a bit of everything otherwise they're not learning their trade. So they might spend a couple of months doing solely roofing and then they'll get into drainage and then hydraulics so we are doing things that help them; they're not ever just sweeping a floor. I can remember years ago you'd get the apprentice sweeping a floor for a year and he was in a mechanical trade. But now it's all about being at work, they're seeing results with what they're working with . . . It depends more on their ability to do the job because they're learning the same skills as that 16 or 17-year-old but it might be all new to them. Just because he's mature mightn't mean that he can do it any better, so they have to go through the process. But they all have to have that whole range of experiences (on the job). The mature ones have just got bit more commonsense.</p> <p>It's not something we actually think about necessarily. Quite a lot of the guys when we talk to them about getting a trade or getting their certificates or whatever they'll say "Oh yeah but I've been doing this for years". Look, you can go through the recognition of prior learning [RPL] route. I think though sometimes it's better to go back to square one and just double-check the prior learning. Recognise it and the experience and those things but I think it's still valuable to go back and go okay well let's make you didn't miss something along the way.</p>

9. The role of government and industry bodies

The 2010 survey results show that employers consider that government and industry bodies could provide some leadership for attracting mature age people or existing workers to apprenticeships. This result was confirmed by the interviews.

Some key findings from the 2010 are:

- Employers are generally aware of initiatives undertaken by government to promote apprenticeships generally – including mature age apprentices – and to encourage employers to take on apprentices.
- Many employers feel that a combination of government and industry bodies working together would be the most effective way of attracting mature age workers to upgrade their skills through an apprenticeship.
- Some employers feel that existing advertising approaches did not target prospective mature age apprentices and make them aware of the opportunities associated with the apprenticeship itself and the longer-term career benefits arising from it.
- Some employers feel that it is important to show mature age apprentices in all apprentice advertising and promotions – not to single them out as a particular cohort.
- Some employers suggest that apprenticeship centres or industry bodies might keep registers of mature age persons who were interested in apprenticeships.

Q9a In your experience is it possible for the state/territory and federal governments (in collaboration with industry and industry bodies) to play a significant role in attracting to apprenticeships mature age people and existing workers?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers are generally aware of initiatives undertaken by government to promote apprenticeships generally (including mature age apprentices) and to encourage employers to take on apprentices.</p>	<p>Yes, but I don't know how they're going to do it. We try to attract young kids into the trade and we just run up against a brick wall all the time. And we're at loggerheads thinking how the hell do we get to this pool of young kids. So yes, we do need support, but how they're going to do it, I don't know.</p> <p>Well, they do that with the support for Australian Apprenticeships, so it's the subsidies that seem to help. That's the Australian Government initiative. It's been going since 2007.</p> <p>I thought they already did that but I guess with all the incentive-based stuff, because I know they have like wage-top-up-type incentives that they get . . . not that it's a lot but yes, they have to, they have to play a role in it.</p> <p>The government has got it right in supporting mature age apprentices – the previous system had them locked out.</p> <p>As far as I'm aware they've already done that with some of the advertising they do and the mentoring program that they have. Certainly, here in Western Australia and I presume Australia-wide, they get all sorts of state awards.</p> <p>[Subsidies are a good idea because] if I had to pay them more as a mature age apprentice to get them on, in reality you do get a better person but you're still getting one person doing the same thing. So I can train a 15 year-old to do the same thing as a 30-year-old. If the 30-year-old costs me twice as much, I probably wouldn't go with a 30-year-old because in the first sort of two years they're not really worth much to you. You know they don't start on the job and all of a sudden they're making the money and they know what they're doing. You spend the first two years training them and then the next two years they start making some money.</p> <p>Yes, I think it's important that government makes some decisions, but they probably need to understand the awards as well because each industry has different and unique issues that go with that industry. Sometimes, they might make a blanket decision but it sometimes might be detrimental to some industries - and one of the biggest issues in hospitality is the award and the pay rates between young apprentices and older apprentices.</p> <p>Very much so, but if you fossick around the website and look what's available it's very disjointed. There seems to be not much in the way of coherent, consistent offerings or communications by state or commonwealth government with industry associations. I mean, industry associations I think by and large will support this because they've got members to answer to and say, Look, you know this is what we're doing etc, etc, but there's always this tension between, I guess you know, promoting jobs for mature age as against school-leavers etc, etc. Nobody seems to know how to tackle this in a way that's going to achieve a reasonable and realistic outcome.</p> <p>Definitely, yes. The money's obviously a big bone of contention. However, the apprenticeships have gone down from four years, at least chefs, to three years. I'm not a big fan of that but it's probably going to make that little light at the end of the tunnel a bit easier for them to see. With three-year apprenticeships I'm not as enthusiastic; I see some of the young ones come out they really need a bit more time. Obviously, we sign them out and you know they've done their time. We've done everything we can but I still think they're a bit immature; whereas the older ones, three years is perfect for them. I'm not sure what else other than dollars (for higher wages) the industry or government can do.</p>

if you fossick around the website and look what's available it's very disjointed

Q9a (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>Well their last announcement certainly has made it far more difficult. We now find it really hard to place mature age workers because you've got a first-year (mature age person) coming in and you have to pay him as fourth-year rate so we can't recover the money. And unfortunately the host employer's not prepared to pay fourth-year rates for a first-year apprentice no matter how old he is. The new wage awards have cut through that and adult apprentices are paid at the adult rate as opposed to apprentice rate and that's made it really, really difficult for us to take them on.</p> <p>It's a hard question because it depends what they see as their role. I know there's a lot of money put in and a lot of infrastructure put in and rightly so. Whether it's actually helped the employers I don't know. The money's there, the subsidies are there. It probably has gone more to the training organisations than the employer, because what happens is you put on an apprentice and you get the subsidy but then you have to go through a group training provider unless you want to do it yourself, which then means resources, which you pay for because of all the administration. When you engage a group training organisation, you then pay them probably pretty much almost what the subsidy is. You're not really seeing the benefit. In terms of attracting them, it's very visible I'm sure out in schools and but how that's going to translate to mature age I don't know.</p> <p>Mature age workers need to be made more aware of the opportunities for apprenticeships and to be able to get some assistance to help them decide if they are the right kind of person to take on an apprenticeship.</p> <p>ABL (Australian Business Limited) already do a very good job keeping us up-to-date but maybe Apprenticeship Centres could do more to provide information to employers about the benefits of mature age apprentices.</p> <p>It would be useful. The more applicants we have the better</p>

Q9b If so, how?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers note a variety of ways in which mature age apprentices can be made more aware of apprenticeship opportunities.</p>	<p>They can attract mature age people through brand advertising, TV advertising. When you ask a lay person or a person in the street to think of an apprentice, they'll think of a 17, 18-year-old, they won't think of a mature age apprentice, because we've been conditioned to that particular view. You need to change that perception. You've got to advertise.</p> <p>I think they (government) probably need to work with industry specific requirements because each industry has a different need.</p> <p>I think we need more financial incentives for mature age apprentices. Adults always have salary issues.</p> <p>There is a lot of advertising about apprenticeships but there needs to be more targeting of existing workers (not just schoolkids) in the ads.</p> <p>I think things are just about right although an increase in the wage subsidy would be welcome and make it easier to increase the number of apprenticeships we can offer to our existing workers – given that we don't reduce their pay.</p> <p>workers, this does not seem to be the case in most businesses so the advertising should try to do something about that.</p>
	<p>The industry body could do more by keeping a register of potential apprentices.</p> <p>Some general advertising or awareness programs in the general community about the opportunities for entering and apprenticeship later in your career and that this does not necessarily mean going back to the wages of a 16-year-old just out of school.</p> <p>There are also a lot of problems recognising skills that have been gained through overseas qualifications and experience. Too much bureaucracy.</p>

There is a lot of advertising about apprenticeships but there needs to be more targeting of existing workers

Q9c. Who do you think might be most effective in attracting to apprenticeships mature age people or existing workers, from the following list: government; Industry bodies; employers? And why?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers generally feel that government and industry bodies working together would be the most effective approach to attracting mature age and existing workers to apprenticeships.</p>	<p>I think the industry bodies really are the ones that will have more effect. Probably because if people basically looking for jobs that are going to be well paid, depends on that industry doesn't it? Like who in their right mind wants to go and do a mechanical trade unless he really, really wants to be a mechanic? So I think it's the industry.</p> <p>I put industry bodies and employers, not so much governments. They can assist but it's really industry bodies and employers. And why? Because they can be more specific to the needs of the industry.</p> <p>I'm going to put my hat in the ring here because I've got a bit of an issue here. I don't have a problem with acknowledging that the government has a role to play, and I think it does have a role to play. However, it cannot act in isolation of organisations that have an industry's interest in mind. And when we talk about promotion of apprenticeships, you just need to look at some of the activities in the last few years by federal and state governments where they've introduced programs; and they talk about, in very broad terms, apprenticeships. But when you start delving down and analysing where those apprenticeships are, they are not your traditional apprenticeships because the use of the word apprenticeship is very broad. In our view, apprenticeship is predominantly your traditional apprenticeships. And this is the area that does need a support because if we cannot fill those traditional roles, then it is going to be of a major impediment to industry down the track. So in my view, it needs to be a collaborative approach between government and industry. And then the question is well how do you define industry? Who do they speak to? There are many out there who will say well we speak on behalf of the industry. My view is one that industry is the organisation that actually represents those employers in the industry. VACC [Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce] is an example of that. We have over 5,500 employers who are members. And these are businesses who employ and invest in training. We invest in the apprenticeships as well and so if you're going to be marketing, you need to be very specific about what that marketing is and what the outcome is supposed to be.</p> <p>Employers are the most effective in attracting mature age people once they are aware of their value.</p> <p>I'd put employers last because they're generally not really across what can be done, [and] what can't be done. And government and industry bodies probably 50/50. I think between a workable government process and a consistent government process and promotion by industry bodies are probably the best bet.</p> <p>Again – if the government could find more money for wage subsidies it could make the apprenticeships more attractive.</p> <p>It'd probably have to be a combination of all. I don't think any one body can have a major impact on it. It has to be a combined driver.</p> <p>I think it's going to be employers. I think government can assist in terms of letting people know that those options are available but in terms of really attracting the people it's going to be employers.</p>

10. The role of training providers

The March-April 2010 survey results indicated that training providers are not considered to be of primary importance by employers in the way in which employers manage their apprentices. Nevertheless, training providers still play an important role in apprenticeships. This result was confirmed by the interviews.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- Employers believe that training providers need to deliver their services more flexibly. The traditional 'off-the-job' approach can work for young apprentices but employers need the training provided in the workplace if they are to fully benefit from the experience of mature age and existing workers.
- Workplace delivery would also make it easier to integrate theory with the practical on-the job training – with the trainer, the apprentice and the apprentice's supervisor talking with each other regularly and in the context of the real work that has to be done.
- Many lecturers and trainers need more up-to-date skills if they are to gain the respect of experienced mature age and existing workers completing an apprenticeship.
- With mature age and existing workers, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is an important part of the process. Some employers note inconsistencies between providers – making it difficult to advise and support prospective applicants.
- A consistent, predictable and effective approach to RPL would shorten the time taken to complete an apprenticeship for many mature age and existing workers. The great benefit would be the achievement of a trade qualification wage in the shortest possible time.
- Provision of post-trade and other specialist training by training providers appears to be inconsistent and piecemeal. It often seems to depend on the particular skills available at the college rather than the full range of advanced skills appropriate for the trade. Training providers could do more to design and promote their services as part of an apprentice's career development and training pathway.

Q10a How could your training provider better assist you with the management of apprentices who are mature age people and/or were existing workers?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers can identify a number of ways in which training providers need to change in order to better support mature age apprentices more effectively.</p>	<p>I think they do okay. Probably communication. We seem to do a lot of communicating though between our RTO.</p> <p>With the mature age apprentice, if they're able to do flexible learning, well it makes it so much easier for us. Whether TAFE come in once a week, once a month, whatever it is, and it might not be TAFE, it could be any provider, whether it's at night, in the day, whatever. That would certainly fit in better with us, especially when we've got conferences or big functions on or whatever. It might be we've got to send our apprentices away and they mostly go on the same day. So we have three or four of them gone, which makes it bit of a challenge for our chef.</p> <p>Our biggest problem, from my point of view, would probably be the lack of real industry experience that the trainers have actually got. If you look at the age of most of the trainers, they have been out of the industry for a bloody long time and have lost the relevance in relation to what the current trade is expecting or is requiring. And I think that's probably that and probably discipline within their institution in relation to their training methods. That's probably our biggest beef. I mean, if we can go into a TAFE classroom and see the kids on their iPod and watching YouTube and they're supposed to be training, we say, Well how come we're paying a training fee and these kids are playing? But it's been let get away with. So that's probably our biggest problem. The trainers that do stomp on that [poor behaviour] get a fair bit of resistance from the apprentices, and they also get a bit of resistance from college management because things don't run so smoothly for college management.</p> <p>The issue for TAFE is the relevance of the training for apprentices. There's two reasons for that: one is they've [the TAFE lecturers] been out of the industry for a long, long time; but the second one is that if they try and get released to go into industry, the college management put up blockers because they're paying the staff and not being in the college and dealing with student contact hours.</p> <p>We have a very good relationship with the RTO. All the theory training is done here at the factory. It means there is no time wasted and it is easy to make sure the theory is connected to the job.</p> <p>We have a good relationship with our TAFE – they have been very good at recognising and giving credit for existing skills and delivered some special gap training when that was the best way to go.</p> <p>Our relationship with the RTO works well. There are some problems from time to time but these are the same for young apprentices and mature age apprentices. The RTO does try to overcome the problems.</p> <p>We have a good relationship with our TAFE. It works well with all our apprentices.</p>

Our relationship with the RTO works well. There are some problems from time to time but these are the same for young apprentices and mature age apprentices.

Q10a (Continued)

Response summaries	Typical examples
	<p>Look, all have a completely different mindset. They've got to get their grey dust coats off and take their rules out of their pockets because they're too used to dealing with youths and I'm talking about trade instructors primarily. I mean, these folks, and bless their cotton socks, it's almost impossible for them to change their style but they're used to 16 and 17-year-old kids coming through and you know, "Son, go over there and do this . . ." etc, etc. It calls for a completely different approach. Can I offer you an instance? The ones that work well at this are the ones who probably hire specialists to provide adult training. Probably somebody who's not necessarily from a very long-term teaching background but perhaps somebody who's been an industry instructor in a big corporation or some such like that Somebody who's able to get the message across to adults is usually better at doing this than the traditional instructor. Kangan Batman TAFE does a reasonably good job with this in terms of their offerings with mature age people.</p> <p>We deal with nine different RTOs and while things mostly work well they can be a bit variable depending on who you are talking to. Most are pretty good with the things we need, like recognition of prior learning and gap training. This is really important for us because of our commitment to existing workers. We need it to work for the worker and for them to see the benefit rather than the problems – like redoing things they already know.</p> <p>Yeah, I suppose there is a channel of people coming through that way [training provider]. Look sometimes the better avenue might be through the labour hire-type companies and those types who are getting the ones who've been laid off and maybe don't have the qualifications to get a job straight away.</p>

Q10b What improvements would you like to see to the way training is offered to mature age or existing worker apprentices – e.g. shortened apprentices; more on-the-job training; more online learning; a greater focus on literacy and numeracy?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers find great variation in approaches between training providers .</p>	<p>If the teachers' energy and time is being spent controlling the younger apprentices, then the mature age apprentices get frustrated because they want to get through their work, and they can't get the teacher's attention because they're controlling all the knuckle-heads in the class.</p> <p>The modules that they're actually delivering aren't in line with the year of the apprenticeships. So they're maybe delivering what a third-year apprentice would know in their first year, being deemed to be competent. When it comes time to doing that in the third year when they're given the job, they haven't got a bloody clue, it's been two years ago since they learned about that. So there doesn't seem to be any time in relation to picking up the units that they should be studying in their first year as against the second year as against the third year. I know that's in the process of being changed, but that's one of the problems we have at the moment.</p> <p>I think it's highly important to have skills training to actually get them into employment because it's the reverse of a 15-year-old. A 15-year-old, you give skills training but they don't have the maturity whereas a mature person will actually be able to take the skills training a lot faster and they've also got the maturity.</p> <p>I think one of the biggest challenges for training providers will be to align their culture with the culture of industry because you have a situation where in our industry it is a fast-paced industry, it's customer-focused, profit margins are small therefore time is money. If you go to a training institute, time doesn't mean anything. There is no sense of urgency, there is no sense of concern for quality first go. These are cultural issues that do need alignment for them to understand from an employer's perspective what apprentices' needs are. But a mature age student is keen to get ahead, because they have made a life choice, a career choice. But if they go to a training institute and you've got your 16-year-olds looking at your porn magazines etc, or on their iPods, and they can't access the teacher, the frustration there is just insurmountable, and it's something that they have to learn to manage. TAFE institutes have to realign their discipline and the speed, because you can't frustrate their initiative to learn and that's what's happening. They go to those environments and their initiative to learn is being pushed down and they're not encouraged. And that's wrong. And sometimes they wonder, Why should I even bother going to TAFE? They do the minimum, because they see it as a waste of time.</p> <p>The boredom [at TAFE] kills them [mature age apprentices]. They [TAFE institutes] need to produce a productive-learning environment.</p> <p>But there's also training providers out there separate from the TAFEs, that actually can and do deliver decent training. They're doing it; a lot of it's on the job, probably because they're a private provider, they're audited twice as much. They're drilled twice as much. They're trying to run a tighter shop. The TAFE system's a bit worse, supported by the government. I think they still are to some degree dinosaurs; they're skeleton basically.</p> <p>For the majority of apprentices, I think you'd have to keep [training] to the traditional TAFEs just because of the massive numbers of apprentices. Some of those private providers can't compete with the TAFEs simply because of the value of the technology required to teach apprentices in some of the traditional trades is beyond their capacity. The apprenticeship is quite intensive in terms of the technology.</p>

The boredom [at TAFE] kills them [mature age apprentices]. They [TAFE institutes] need to produce a productive-learning environment.

Well, a genuine effort to shorten the training period. I think that's critical to get these people trained up as rapidly as we possibly can and get them on a reasonable rate of pay.

We actually have our guys go to two different RTOs and one of them is a more on-the-job training with more online learning and the other one is more regimented. It's more like block training, so they work well with different people, different attitudes. I'm finding that the young ones don't cope much with the online because they just don't have the incentive to do it.

The TAFE is good. They gave advanced standing for some of the generic training like OH&S, which we had already done a lot of.

Yes, I think there needs to be more input from industry about what skills are required and what experience is required, because what the training organisations train sometimes is purely tick-the-box stuff. And it doesn't get to the real depth of knowledge and understanding that probably industry requires.

RTOs need to come to the workplace to provide more on-the-job training than perhaps classroom training, especially for the mature age apprentice, because classroom experience isn't always that rewarding for them. One-on-one is very good for them; and also not too much online stuff for the mature age people because they might be technologically challenged because they've not been computer-trained.

The TAFE is fantastic. Everything is done here in the workplace. They even come late at night and early morning for shift workers. They do everything possible to make it work.

They [TAFE] seems to treat the older and younger apprentices the same. Although there is talk about RPL it doesn't seem to happen much. We are happy with that though - as a lot of our mature age apprentices need refreshing anyway and when they already know something it gives them more confidence to tackle new areas.

My main aversion with TAFE is that they don't give us enough honest, regular feedback. We just get semester results and if you're waiting six months to find out how a person's doing that person can fall through the cracks and then we could have lost them.

Q10c What pathways to higher-level qualifications and/or continuing professional development does your main RTO provide for your mature age and existing worker apprentices?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers note considerable variation in the nature and extent of post-trade offerings by training providers.</p>	<p>No, I don't think they do this.</p> <p>Once they've got their certificate in their trade they can then go on to do their Cert IVs so they do have pathways. Whether they choose to do them or not but they're there for them. As an employer, we don't particularly push it because that would just mean that they would go off and work for themselves then. And you know that's something that they end up having to do after hours; we don't actually allow it unless they take leave to do it or whatever. Our obligation as an employer and our training contract is to give them their four years of training to get their plumbing and then they go off and do their own bit.</p> <p>We really try and push the Cert III program but outside of that we also offer anyone that's been a qualified chef for seven years or more access funding to do a Cert IV program. These are just things that haven't actually been looked at in this industry, all very quick decisions, fast-pace. We as an industry need to actually sit back and look at exactly what is on the table. We do really understand the value of higher quals. But in the same token you can't teach a higher qual to someone that has language and literacy problems so it all goes you know goes back to that entry level.</p> <p>Some of them do. And a lot of the apprentices will ask about additional courses after they finish their apprenticeship. Two of the most common are LP gas training and air conditioning training. And air conditioning training's changed significantly since I was at TAFE because of the changes of the laws in relation to the handling of refrigerant. You have to have a licence to be able to do those jobs. The other one is roadworthy inspections. There is a course to do roadworthy inspections and there never used to be a course for roadworthy inspections. Anybody that was a qualified mechanic could inspect a vehicle and sign the roadworthy form. But that is not the case now They have to have people in there who can do all of the paperwork and keep the paperwork trail alive, but also people who are qualified in doing roadworthy inspections.</p> <p>Well, the thing is that they're dollar-driven, and unless there's a quid in it by way of offering training that's going to be economically viable for them maybe they will think twice about it. I mean, the fact of the matter is that if you look at a TAFE, which has got hundreds of apprentices going through, bums on seats, they're getting funded for those; whereas the other ones, which are mainly, you know, user pays-type arrangements, there's not much in it for them, three or four people versus say 40 people. Again, it's not so much the longer-term stuff, and I'm talking the technical things here. It's short, sharp courses on changing technologies and I'm putting aside basic management and supervisory-type programs, which are available at every training provider in the country. But if you're looking at skills these aren't usually trade skills, these aren't usually long-term They might be a week's course or something on a particular element in a vehicle.</p> <p>They offer Cert IV programs in management</p> <p>No, the RTOs don't have any involvement after completion of the apprenticeship.</p>

Q10d What other pathway options would you like provided?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers believe training providers could offer a more comprehensive range of post-trade options, with the options presented more clearly as contributions to a career development strategy.</p>	<p>The courses that the TAFE run depend on what they have the skills to run. A lot of the institutes don't have the skills and the equipment or the licensing to run air-conditioning. The same in gas. We not only have conventional LP-gas systems on petrol powered vehicles, but we now have diesel gas. And then compressed natural gas is becoming a much bigger area of expertise. And there are currently, I think there is only one, maybe two, TAFE institutes that can run compressed natural gas courses. There is a consortium of three other schools that are getting organised to be able to run it.</p> <p>I think it would be possibly really good to have some kind of funding attached to completion so that they've got something to work towards and even if that was tied up with a higher qual that they could do regardless of whether they're casual. This industry that you're talking to today is a very casual workforce, so it kind of is quite detrimental to what we try and do to help people with long-term careers development. We're fighting this whole casual workforce the whole time and [hospitality] has probably the most casual workforce that there is So we've got a lot of issues that we need to get around because decisions are made very broadly. So we've got to try and work with those decisions that are made to assist.</p>

11. Useful information for employers

The March-April 2010 survey results show that employers see value in an information awareness program for employers, relating to workforce development issues in general, and mature age apprentices in particular. This result was confirmed by the interviews.

Some key findings from the interviews are:

- Among employers, there is inconsistent awareness of existing information about mature age and existing worker apprenticeships. A number of employers note that appropriate information already is available but others are not aware of the information or how to access it.
- Employers would appreciate awareness programs that show them how mature age and existing worker apprenticeships can improve the bottom line, through the potential return to employers (such as increased retention) and the benefits for employers in building a career for existing workers.
- There is a need to provide employers with information about the broader perspective – not just detailed information about subsidies and similar topics. Employers need to be aware of how mature age and existing worker apprenticeships can perform a strategic role in developing the skills of their workforce and preparing their workers for changes in the industry.

11a. What types of information do you think could be included in an awareness program for employers relating to workforce development issues in general and mature age apprentices in particular?

Response summaries	Typical examples
<p>Employers are interested in information related to their bottom line – and the range of factors that affect it.</p>	<p>What’s available to them, to assist them to get through it? And what career paths exist there for them if they become qualified? The career path’s a little bit dependent on the age of the person, but they’re also dependent on the drive and ambition of that person as well. And that goes across all apprentices.</p> <p>I think it needs to be balanced. One of the issues that I’m mindful of is that sometimes, when there are these promotions, they take it from one perspective only, and you know, it is your right as a mature age, for instance, to do X, Y, Z. But we forget that they also have responsibilities. So I think there needs to be that balance. As much as employers have a responsibility, they also have a right and individual employees have a right and responsibility. So that needs to be balanced so that they comprehend it is a learning environment and there are support networks there, but also [that] there are expectations on you as a learner as well, to be fair.</p> <p>We actually are awaiting [communication from] a number of training providers that provide pre-apprenticeship programs. We asked to go in and speak to the people there and some of them are mature age, some of them are younger, and we give them an opportunity to commence an apprenticeship. Some might do it as a hobby, for instance. And some of the TAFEs that we work with - we’ve got one that we sponsor and we had a very good relationship with - they’ll actually promote the fact that we do have a group scheme. So these people who are showing some talent in one of these hobby courses, if they are serious about pursuing a career, then they might encourage them to contact us and send us reps .</p> <p>When you go into websites a lot of the information is there, it tells them what the jobs are, what’s involved, the pathways, the training packages that they’re under, and I believe they can actually find out what the wages are as well. So as far as I can see it’s pretty well all covered, albeit maybe in different places, so maybe a one-stop-shop [could be provided] perhaps for the information.</p> <p>I would like to see some real statistics about differences in retention. The business case for taking on a mature age apprentice and keeping them at a respectable adult wage depends on whether they are loyal and stay at the end. We assume it is the case but it would be good to see some evidence.</p> <p>I think I’d probably like information about any future industry requirements – all the changes – because things change all the time and I guess it just gives us a bit more scope then to know how we facilitate some of our training. And there’s legislation and council stuff that comes out all the time and you’re forever chasing your tail trying to get all these existing ones up to speed.</p>

I think the answer to that from me would be their worth to the stability of the particular person's workplace. So we're also looking at probably doing a program next year where we'd like to take some mature age people and actually with our chefs give them the really good basic skills so that they can walk into an apprenticeship as a first year but with second year skills. So we're hoping that that might be able to make a difference for them and then they won't be able to come back and say well I can have a 16-year-old and pay a 16-year-old to do that. There's other issues, like someone can go and do a \$6,000 course and become what they call a qualified commercial cook, but they can't get a job because they've got no industry experience and no-one will take them, because once they're in there they can't actually . . . they [have] all the know-how but they can't actually work in the kitchen because they haven't had any experience. So they're actually a liability. So we get a lot of parents [who] call us, very upset because they've paid for their child and then, you know, trying to get a job, and they haven't been able to. So there's a couple of little things around now where we can actually take them on as apprentices. So we just work with what we've got.

The fact that it is an option, I mean, a lot of employers don't even understand that the option's available. And I'm talking some fairly basic stuff here. One, that the option's available, the choice is yours whether you want to hire a mix of school-leavers and mature age, what way the training's done, what the wage rates must be, what you need to do, what grants, subsidies and the like are available; those very basic messages need to be got out because a lot of people just don't understand that they can actually do that.

Getting information from the government in a broader perspective would be useful. Getting more people into mature age apprenticeships is great but the problem is at that stage of your life the government's probably more driven towards getting young people coming out of school and into jobs. For the poor people that didn't quite find what they wanted to do straight away after leaving school, I just can't see the government throwing money at that problem, for people to get a chance to have a second go. It'd be nice if that's the way it was, but I think in reality all that would fall between the gaps and it'd be more just young people get a job.

Target employers because their main aim is to reduce their cost and that's what they look at. All they look at is this: is this person costing me the same as a subcontractor we use all the time? I suppose they've got to look at up-skilling, making sure that with the generation that follows, there are sufficient apprentices trained and ready to go. So I suppose getting their participation in the program would be good. But it always and always and always comes down to cost.

Awareness programs that outline the potential return to employers (such as retention) and the benefits in building a career for existing workers

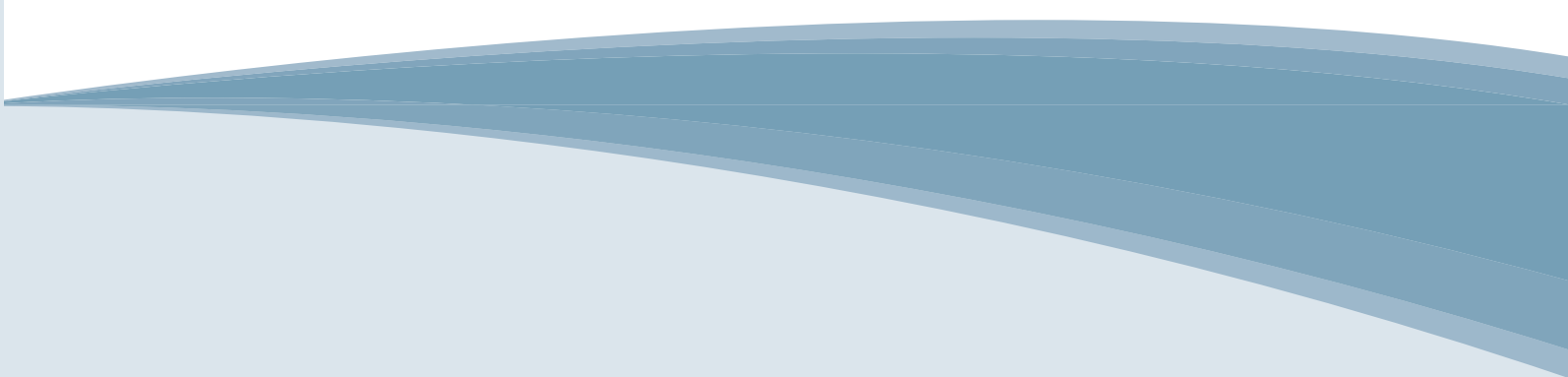
Awareness programs that make sure employers know the advantages of mature age apprentices would be useful.

The first thing most businesses would ask is what's it going to cost and what are the benefits? What do I get out of it? They're the main questions that most businesses will be asking so that'd be up there with you know the information. And then just the normal stuff: what are the rebates etc?

It would be good to have a few 'taster' courses targeting mature age people.

It is important for businesses to realise that the benefits outweigh the costs – they don't necessarily lose money if they work it right – even if they maintain the salary. They need to see the long term view.

I think something that helps an employer understand better how an existing worker apprenticeship can help the bottom line. If you need to be continually upgrading skills then it can be a cost effective way of doing it – and it builds morale as well.

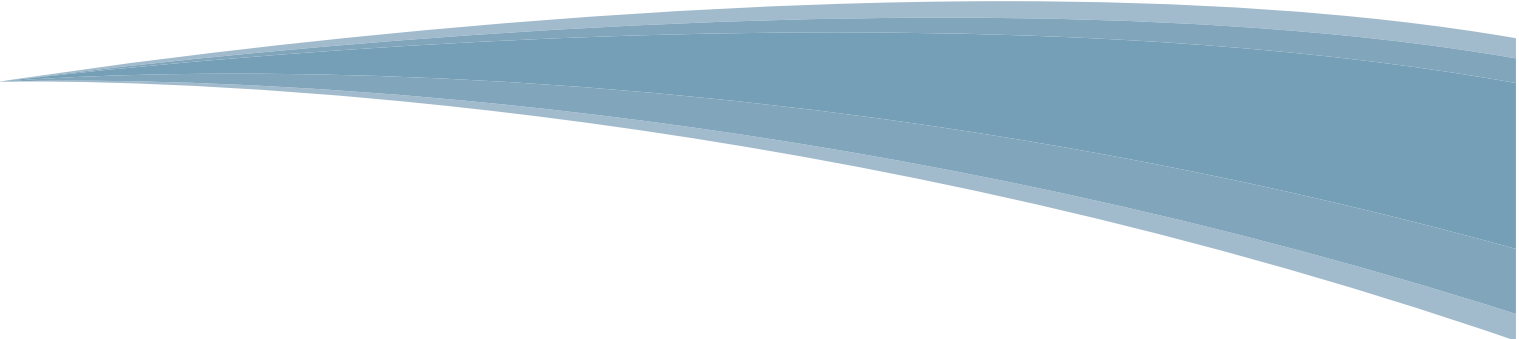


A4

case studies

They See It As Their Future

Findings from the
employer case studies



A4: They see it as their future – summary of case studies

To prepare case studies, field consultations were conducted in six very different contexts, ranging from a bakery in Orange, NSW, and an engineering company in Murray Bridge, South Australia. Each case study provides consistent and compelling evidence of the value of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships.

The six case studies are set out in full in Section B, including a table in each that summarises practical retention strategies. This section is much briefer than the others in this report.

Methods

The case study consultations were designed to probe the dimensions of attraction and retention of apprentices at a level not possible with statistical enquiry. The format of the consultations involved the asking of standardised questions (modelled on the questions used in the employer interviews) and semi-structured questions designed to stimulate individualistic responses that would complement the statistical results from the survey and telephone interviews.

Aim and format of case study consultations

The aim of the case study consultations was to identify attitudes of employers and to provide evidence to complement the data generated by the literature review, the survey and the telephone interviews.

The format of the consultations involved the use of two complementary approaches:

- Asking standardised questions: the exact wording and sequence of questions was determined in advance and all interviewees were asked the same basic questions in the same order.

- Asking semi-structured questions to enable the interviewer to follow threads or themes raised by interviewees. These questions were designed to stimulate individualistic responses, complementing the statistical results from the survey and telephone interviews.

Sampling strategy for the field consultations

The sample of employers consulted for the face-to-face consultations, on-site in different locations, was based on the following criteria:

- The employers are known to ACCI or its network of members as good practice employers in terms of their management of mature age or existing worker apprentices.
- This focus on good practice will enable the optimal identification of effective strategies for the attraction and retention of mature age or existing worker apprentices.
- The employers will be from different industry areas, to appeal to as wide a cross-section of readers of any reports released from this project.

Value of the case studies

The main value of the case studies is in providing rich and in-depth insights about good practice in attracting and retaining mature age and existing worker apprentices. This good practice informed the final stage of this project, to prepare findings and recommendations for informing employers of practical attraction and retention strategies. These strategies are set out in the box below each of the following case studies.

Findings

The six 'good practice' employers selected as case study sites enriched and validated the major findings from the literature review, survey and interviews. In particular, the case studies emphasise:

- The value of employers recognising the skills acquired by their existing workers and promoting to these workers the value of an apprenticeship.
- The mutual benefits for employers (e.g. multi-skilled, flexible, productive, loyal staff) and mature age and existing workers (e.g. improved job satisfaction and career options) of the latter groups undertaking an apprenticeship.
- The strategic advantages for organisations recruiting mature age and existing worker apprentices as part of the overall workforce development plan.
- The effectiveness of workplace training for mature age and existing worker apprentices in preference to off-the-job training with youth apprentices.
- The usefulness of promoting career and study pathways to mature age and existing worker apprentices.

The six case studies now follow.

Section B: Case studies of practical re-engagement and retention strategies

This section sets out the case studies prepared for this project:

B1. It is going to further your career in the long term. Do it.

Roberts Bakery, Orange, NSW
Industry – food/retail

B2. To me it's an investment, and it's good for the company too.

Southern Cross Cleaning (SA)
Industry: commercial cleaning

B3. It's never too late to try to change your life.

Moore Engineering and Murraylands Training and Employment, Murray Bridge, SA
Industry: engineering

B4. It was nice to see that I could match it with the younger guys.

Affordable Wardrobes, Ourimbah NSW
Industry: furniture

B5. They are good, reliable workers.


O'Donnell Griffin, Canberra office, ACT
Industry: electro-technology

B6. I know what I want and where I want to go to.

Xstrata Pty Ltd, Mt Isa, Queensland
industry: mining

B1

It is going to further
your career in the
long term. Do it.



B1. It is going to further your career in the long term. Do it.

Organisation: Roberts Bakery, Orange, NSW

Andrew Buckingham is the owner and manager of Roberts Bakery in Orange NSW. Andrew recognises that a positive, team-based approach to management is a competitive advantage for his business. With over 60 employees including ten apprentices Andrew is using existing worker/ mature age apprenticeships as one of the ways of ensuring the skills of his staff are developing in the same direction as his business.

Recognition of existing worker skills

Of Andrew's ten apprentices, six are mature age/existing worker apprentices. While each of them already had a trade qualification it was some time since those qualifications were gained. In the meantime, the business had changed significantly. Andrew recognised that many of the staff had acquired new skills as the business adjusted to the changing demands of his customers. But he was conscious that these skills were not recognised and that they were not necessarily all of the skills the business needed for the future.

Australian Business Limited (ABL) provides Australian Apprenticeship Centre services to Roberts Bakery and works in partnership with the company. ABL planted the idea of using mature age apprenticeships as a multi-skilling strategy. Andrew already had considerable experience with retail traineeships and traditional youth apprenticeships. He immediately recognised the potential and asked ABL to come in and talk with his workers about the available opportunities. This was an important step in raising the interest of the existing workers in taking on the apprenticeships.

The workers appreciated having an independent view and were well supported by the local ABL office as they weighed up the pros and cons and made their decision to start the apprenticeship. There was no pressure on them to get involved if they weren't interested, but ultimately every one of those who were eligible signed up.

Mutual benefits

The main factors affecting the existing worker's decisions were their interest in acquiring additional skills and increased job security. Not quite so important but also an attraction were the incidental financial benefits such as the sign-up payment and tool allowance. Some of the older workers were concerned about taking on an apprenticeship simply because they hadn't engaged in study for a number of years. In practice it was not so much the study itself that proved to be a problem – it was finding and setting aside the time for the study.

Steve Watson is one of the six existing worker/ mature age apprentices at the bakery. Steve joined the team as Production Manager almost two years ago after 23 years as a qualified baker with a major national bread company. Steve is currently 16 months into his pastry cook apprenticeship and is really enjoying learning the new skills involved. He sees the apprenticeship as contributing to both his professional expertise and longer-term job security. While he has no particular plans at the moment, he recognises that once the apprenticeship is completed he will be in a good position to manage his own business if he should decide to do that - "but not in Orange"- he assures Andrew.

While some employers may express concern about the possibility of losing staff once they have qualified, Andrew is not particularly worried about this. He recognises that his mature age/existing worker apprentices will increase their employment options as a result of the apprenticeships and he is comfortable about it. The increased possibility of losing good staff is balanced by a growing sense of loyalty by the staff to the business and the development of a positive working environment.

Workplace training

Steve and the other five existing worker/ mature age apprentices are particularly fortunate in the way they are supported by TAFE. They do the off-the-job components of the apprenticeship using a combination of distance education and a lot of workplace learning. The TAFE teacher visits the bakery once every month to provide hands-on training and conduct assessments.

The TAFE teacher is outstanding. He goes above the usual level of commitment. He comes to the bakery at 10 or 11 at night to work with the first group of apprentices and is back again at 6am to work with the other half of the apprentices. He has a very skilful background as well – his pastry knowledge is just impeccable.

The level and flexibility of the support being provided by TAFE has positive outcomes for employer Andrew Buckingham and the mature age apprentices. While some adjustments to production schedules were needed, business productivity was not adversely affected. As a result, Andrew has ensured there is no drop in salary as a result of taking up the apprenticeship.

It also means that the traditional 'time served' approach does not apply and apprentice Steve Watson is hopeful he will complete the apprenticeship in less than three years. Steve has this advice for older workers thinking about starting a mature age apprenticeship: "It is going to further your career in the long term. Do it."

It is going to further your career in the long term. Do it.

Strategic advantages

As part of his workforce planning strategy, Andrew Buckingham believes it is useful to have a balance of mature age and traditional youth apprentices. He finds the combination works well. His experience over the years has confirmed that mature age apprentices do not need a great deal of additional management. He notes that young apprentices do need direct hands-on management and support – both personally and professionally – but the combination of youth and maturity make for good teamwork. The mature age apprentices can act as mentors and role models – not just as experienced tradesmen but as professionals adapting to the needs of the business and learning new skills.

Andrew believes the existing worker apprenticeships deliver a variety of benefits for his business. The financial subsidies are welcome and make a difference to the bottom line. The expanded and up-to-date skills base means he is in a better position to respond to changing customer needs and his staff are able to contribute creatively to the development of new products. Even more importantly, staff morale is higher and the combination of young and old apprentices works well – it is helping to build and support a team-based approach to management of the business.

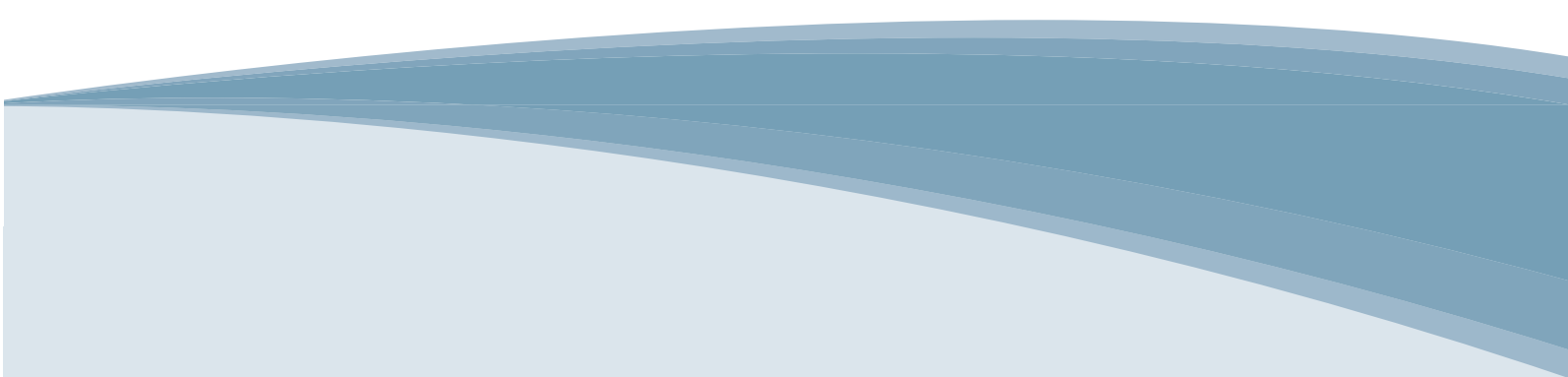
The strength in your staff helps you get through the ups and downs of the business – and we have a very strong team. There are a lot of skills needed in this business and the existing worker apprenticeships make it easy for me. They already know the trade and the business so well.

Practical strategies

Drawing on the Roberts Bakery case study, some practical strategies for engaging and retaining mature age and existing workers as apprentices are set out in the box below.

BOX 01: Practical engagement and retention strategies for employers of mature age and existing worker apprentices

- Formally recognise the skills of existing workers. Often, existing staff acquire new skills as a business adjusts to new demands. By formally recognising these skills all parties potentially benefit.
- Provide information for staff about the benefits of apprenticeships. These benefits can range from improved job security and greater job satisfaction to increased job variety and enhanced prospects for promotion.
- Seek training providers who can provide training on the job. Such on-the-job training will acknowledge the work-skills acquired by mature age and existing workers and is often superior to asking them to attend institution-based training with young apprentices.
- Connect training with overall workforce development. Deliberately and publicly link the apprentice training to the development of improved team work and staff morale.



B2

**To me it's an investment,
and it's good for the company too**



B2. To me it's an investment, and it's good for the company too

Organisation: Southern Cross Cleaning (SA)

Southern Cross Cleaning (SA) is a successful cleaning company based in Adelaide, South Australia. It began operations in 1980 and has cleaning contracts for clients such as the defence forces, government departments and local schools as well as commercial and industry buildings. The company employs in excess of 700 highly-trained cleaners, supervisors, and clerical and management staff. Now the company is looking at expanding nationally.

Performance management systems are introduced at all client sites to monitor quality. Additionally, sites are audited regularly to maintain high standards and any customer complaints are dealt with immediately and efficiently.

Multiple benefits of training

Managing Director Brandon Petty is committed to the success of the cleaning industry and was recently elected South Australian vice president of the Building Service Contractors' Association of Australia. He believes strongly in the value of training for his own company and the industry:

Training is the most important area for us to succeed in because it is a competitive industry.

Training is important and is ongoing. We've never had a site where we put cleaners in, trained them and gone away and left them. We're continuously coming back, checking them, working with the clients, because if we don't and the cleaning standard drops we're out the door.

Most of the company's cleaners are mature age, in the age bracket 40-55 and all are encouraged to undertake an apprenticeship, a Certificate III in Asset Maintenance (Cleaning Operations).

We explain to them why we would like them to do it and then generally they go ahead. They do it, they complete it and everybody's happier for it.

Once they start the apprenticeship, the company monitors their progress and rewards those who demonstrate skills and commitment.

They join the company with no real formal training, and then they undertake the apprenticeship and if they show the desire we move them up the ladder. They might become a supervisor at the site they're working at. Then the next step could be to area management.

Formal skill recognition

A current staff member who generally fits this profile is Darryl Milne, who recently joined the company, was soon promoted to supervisor level because of his performance on the job and is now enjoying the apprenticeship. He supervises a small team who clean an inner-city public school in Adelaide.

I've been working inside the industry for 20 plus years. I've never had any formal recognition of my skills so the reason for me to do the apprenticeship is to have my skills recognised and receive a qualification that I can show other employers if needs be, and to improve on my skills as well.

Darryl also likes passing skills on to others.

Another reason I wanted to do the apprenticeship was to gain the skills and to be able to pass it on to my other staff; to have current, relevant information to be able to pass on.

He appreciates the way the registered training organisation Insync is transferring so much information to him.

They are very eager to pass on their information and I feel I can apply a lot of the information to my current role and improve on methods which will also increase productivity and increase the overall look of the school.

Darryl has a long-standing commitment to learning.

I'm always open to learning. I've done a lot of different courses over all the different industries I've been in: I've done working at heights and operating elevated work platforms in the mining industry and I've done a Certificate II in Warehousing.

But for me, cleaning is something I enjoy, I take a lot of pride in and I'd love to advance myself within this company, and take it as far as I can go, even if it's the role to go and train other people on different locations.

When invited by Southern Cross Cleaning, he grabbed the chance to commence the apprenticeship.

When I started with the company, the chance to do the apprenticeship was presented to me. I jumped at the chance just to have that piece of paper as something to show to others that yes, I formally have done the job and have the skills.

To me it's an investment, and it's good for the company too that someone has this qualification.

Pathways for promotion

Brandon Petty values highly the attitudes that mature age people like Darryl Milne bring to his company.

He could quite possibly be somebody who moves up the ladder again if he wants to, and I think he does from what I know of him. From what's been told to me by his area manager, he is one of those guys whom we would probably earmark down the line for some promotion.

The company has a clear promotion pathway for its employees, says Brandon.

The first step from a cleaner to a site supervisor is not a major step, but moving from site supervisor level through to an area manager level is a reasonable jump.

To help staff take the step up to area manager, the company has supported a number of staff to undertake the Certificate IV Frontline Management.

The company also identifies existing workers for promotion.

If we have a position available as a supervisor or a manager we will look within. When I say we earmark, we will look at someone like Darryl who didn't start as a supervisor but we very quickly worked out that he'd probably be good material for one. He's now on the apprenticeship course. He's at a primary school and he has a couple of people under him but the next move might be to a bigger site if he's prepared to move. It might be to an area manager position.

Another reason I wanted to do the apprenticeship was to gain the skills and to be able to pass it on to my other staff; to have current, relevant information to be able to pass on.

Client promotion

Brandon is positive about mature age workers in general.

They have a good attitude about work and they're reliable so in a way yes, we would prefer them [to younger staff]. I think if you were to speak to any of our managers and ask them who gives them the least hassles they would probably say the 40 upwards age group.

He also informs potential clients that his staff are either completing or have completed the apprenticeship.

When we're tendering for a job we let the client know that it is our policy to, where possible, have our staff undertake the apprenticeship. Some of our clients hold us to it and that's not a problem for us because we want them to do the apprenticeship anyway.

Practical strategies

Drawing on the Southern Cross Cleaning (SA) case study, some practical strategies for engaging and retaining mature age and existing workers as apprentices are set out in the box below.

BOX 02: Practical engagement and retention strategies for employers of mature age and existing worker apprentices

- Promote the value of training. Encourage staff to consider the immediate benefits of training, such as the company retaining satisfied clients leading to more secure employment.
- Link training to productivity. Foster the understanding that improved skills increases productivity which leads to sustainable business and jobs.
- Provide pathways. Reward staff members who use their apprenticeship training to improve work performance, for example by providing pathways for promotion.
- Publicly promote apprenticeships. Inform clients that the mature age staff members are undertaking apprentices to demonstrate to all parties, including those staff, the company's commitment to learning and continuous improvement.



B3

**It's never too late
to try to change your life**



B3 It's never too late to try to change your life

Organisations: Moore Engineering and Murraylands Training and Employment, Murray Bridge, South Australia

In the fast-growing regional centre of Murray Bridge approximately 75kms from Adelaide, the partnership between a group training provider, Murraylands Training and Employment, and a successful local business, Moore Engineering, is delivering benefits for multiple parties. This includes the employer, Quentin Moore, who needs more multi-skilled staff as well as mature-age people willing to undertake an apprenticeship, such as James Nolan.

Quentin Moore, the Managing Director of Moore Engineering, said he values the services provided by Murraylands:

We go to them for direction in wages and changes to rules and all those types of things. With discipline, John [Meulen-Graaf] comes in and helps. He doesn't have to discipline adult apprentices; it's always the younger ones. Communication between us is occurring all the time.

Multi-skilled staff

Moore Engineering needs staff to be multi-skilled because of the diversity of tasks across its different businesses, from truck and trailer repairs to welding fabrication and plant hire. As an example of a regular activity requiring many skills, the company builds around one state-of-the art fire truck a week for fire services and mining companies across the nation.

James Nolan is a mature age apprentice hosted by Moore Engineering and supported by Murraylands Training and Employment, and he thrives on the opportunity to become multi-skilled. As a youth he completed an apprenticeship in diesel mechanics and is delighted as a mature age person to have the opportunity of obtaining a second apprenticeship in automotive electrical.

It's given me new skills and obviously new jobs, so there's more variety: I get to handle B-doubles and all the other trucks.

James's group employer is Monica Meulen-Graaf, the CEO of Murraylands Training and Employment. Monica said, "When James is not doing the mechanical side of things that he's trained in already, if there's a truck that needs some auto electrics work done on it, he can pop over and do that, under supervision."

Flexible workforce

James was an existing worker at Moore Mechanical when he approached the company and asked if he could start a second apprenticeship. Host employer Quentin Moore agreed to James's request and appreciates that James can now switch between trades:

James is a qualified diesel mechanic. We had lot of trouble finding an auto electrician to do exactly what we want to do and to fit into our environment. We put in an auto electrician for a little while but when there wasn't work for them there was nothing else for them to do. They couldn't work on the trucks which was the reason why we've now enrolled James as apprentice auto electrician.

James is going back through for a second apprenticeship and that has worked out so well for us. We just didn't have enough work for an auto electrician full-time.

Quentin found that James took some time to show that he could succeed with automotive electrics.

We were unsure. He was originally a tractor mechanic who came from up in the Lameroo direction and we didn't know whether he was going to take to trucks. Trucks and tractors are totally different things, so he's adapted to trucks to start off with and now he's adapted to also doing the auto electrical work.

For these sorts of reasons, Quentin is happy to pay James above the award rate.

Support for a life change

Monica Meulen-Graaf is proud of the focus her group training organisation places on pastoral care with mature age people like James:

Mature age apprentices have to cut and scrimp and save to do it, to achieve the dream that they want, so sometimes they've been demoralised. They need help to restore self-assurance and value in themselves and recreate their dreams. Here at Murraylands we extend a huge amount of pastoral care because the decision they've made in making this life change, commitment needs to be applauded and that's what we do and we support. We're right there for them all the way through.

Mature age apprentices like James need determination to succeed, says Monica:

If they don't have drive and determination, the fire in the belly, they won't be able to cope with the hurdles. The challenges of an apprenticeship hit the mature age people more emotionally, physically, mentally and economically than kids leaving school because the kids leaving school are normally still in a home situation, looked after by parents. The parents will even put some petrol in their car for them.

Monica adds that the rewards for people like James are significant:

He knows he's locked in for another four years now and he's getting ready to put a deposit on a house here in Murray Bridge, instead of renting. He's growing in himself too.

Delayed benefits

Quentin Moore appreciates that mature age apprentices like James need to contend with a lower wage, but he believes these apprentices understand the benefits of completing the apprenticeship.

Most of them do know what they're getting themselves into, that they're going to have a low wage, they're going to tie themselves up for three or four years. They know all those things before they start. They know they're going to be on that low wage for a short period of time and then they'll be on a lot better wage and they'll get more security.

After finishing his second apprenticeship James wants to continue ". . . to become multi-skilled and add more value to the organisation". The advice he would give to other mature age people considering an apprentice is:

There's nothing to lose, give it a go, you don't know till you try. And it's never too late to try to change your life or add to what you've already got.

Options after completion

Quentin Moore is pleased that ". . . all our apprentices normally stay after they finish their training". And one reason is that their ongoing learning is supported by the company.

we extend a huge amount of pastoral care because the decision they've made in making this life change, commitment needs to be applauded and that's what we do and we support.

We've put them through courses just to further their knowledge. We keep an eye on them. If major truck companies in Adelaide have an information night or put on courses, we try to get the lads involved there as much as we can.

Quentin values mature age apprentices like James because they want to learn and they take pride in their work.

This place could be twice the size without any trouble if we could get the workers. A lot of people are out of work. The ones that are out of work don't want to work, that's the bottom line.

Workshop Supervisor Travis Moore believes that “. . . mature age apprentices are pretty well motivated when they start”, and if “the facilities are right and they can see training and room to move”, then they'll stay for the duration of their apprenticeship and beyond.

Monica Meulen-Graaf views apprentice James Nolan as an example of a mature age existing worker who has had a “mid-life epiphany”:

Some people we've recruited as mature age apprentices have had a mid-life epiphany and they want to take on and complete a respected trade and further themselves. Opportunities are opening up here all the time.

It was mooted in an article I read recently that Murray Bridge is the fastest-growing town in regional Australia, so there'll be more opportunities for mature age workers because the businesses are growing so much.

Practical strategies

Drawing on the Moore Engineering/ Murraylands Training and Employment case study, some practical strategies for engaging and retaining mature age and existing workers as apprentices are set out in the box below.

BOX 03: Practical engagement and retention strategies for employers of mature age and existing worker apprentices

- Highlight multi-skilling. Point out to mature age and existing workers the benefits of adding an apprenticeship to their previous skills, such as becoming multi-skilled and versatile, and able to maintain interesting work by switching between roles.
- Acknowledge determination. For many mature age and existing workers, starting an apprenticeship requires courage and determination which deserves both commendation and support.
- Promote future benefits. Give examples to mature age and existing worker apprentices of how they completion of the apprenticeship will create opportunities for higher wages, increased job opportunities and improved job security.
- Provide options post-trade. Continue to foster their learning after their completion of the apprenticeship, for example by promoting vendor training or other courses.



B4

**It was nice to see
I could match it with the
younger guys**



B4. It was nice to see I could match it with the younger guys

Organisation: Affordable Wardrobes, Ourimbah NSW

Brad Goldie demonstrates the value of mature age and existing worker apprenticeships. Brad works for Affordable Wardrobes, a small to medium enterprise in Ourimbah on the NSW Central Coast. Brad has worked for Affordable Wardrobes for 11 years. Virtually straight out of school, he started at the bottom in the factory. At that time he was just pleased to have a job related to the building industry and didn't really think about qualifications.

I started at the bottom with just general factory duties. I had always hoped I might get a qualification at some stage but I didn't really think about an apprenticeship at the time.

Rewards of learning

Over the years, Brad developed a significant set of skills and three years ago the owners of the business asked him if he would like to get a qualification. He opted for an apprenticeship in joinery and hasn't looked back. Brad has just completed his apprenticeship through the Furnishing Industry Association of Australia (FIAA). Brad was an outstanding apprentice and was awarded Apprentice of the Year in the *Central Coast Advocate's* 2009 Business Awards.

Contrary to the experience of some other mature age apprentices, Brad was not deterred because of the number of years since he had left school.

I wasn't really worried about starting or about managing the theory side. I was actually a bit excited to be taking on something I had wanted to do.

Brad found the experience of the apprenticeship very rewarding.

The questions and activities involved in the training extended further than we get to do here in the factory – it was good learning new things.

If I had any problems the trainer would just work through them with me at our regular sessions here at the factory.

I know a lot more than when I started. We had to complete projects that were a bit out of our depth and using skills we wouldn't normally use in the workplace.

He is very pleased with the outcome.

It's good to have a qualification behind the experience. I have something to back up that experience.

Increased loyalty and commitment

Brad's achievement was assisted by the very positive and supportive approach of his employer, Affordable Wardrobes, and the workplace delivery model used by the Furnishing Industry Association of Australia as the Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Affordable Wardrobes is a small to medium-sized enterprise with 25 employees. In its 12 years of operation the company has expanded from wardrobes to kitchens and a range of more customised home products. The company has three apprentices, two mature age and one traditional youth apprentice.

Sue Taylor coordinates the company's apprenticeship program and she is very supportive of the mature age/existing worker model.

I think the mature age apprenticeship is really good. Normal apprentices straight out of school are just not mature enough.

The advantages to Sue are very clear.

Mature age apprentices are already skilled even though they may not have qualifications. They are already familiar with the industry. We already know them and they are loyal employees.

There are also fewer occupational health and safety worries with mature age apprentices.

With the equipment that we use we have got to have reliability. There is a lot less to worry about with mature age.

The company does not feel vulnerable to losing staff as a result of them being more qualified.

It does give them the flexibility and more options when they finish – so we are a bit vulnerable with their leaving but this doesn't worry us – we have a good team.

Tim and Pam Stephenson are the owners of Affordable Wardrobes. They reward loyalty and commitment by maintaining the salary of the apprentice. They also transfer the mature age apprentice subsidy to them on top of their salary.

Workplace training

The apprenticeships do involve some small disadvantage to the company because the apprentices are given time for their training and time to complete their paperwork. However, this does not have a significant effect on productivity. The disadvantage is minimised because all the training is workplace based, with the apprentices doing some of the theory work in their own time using materials provided by the Furnishing Industry Association of Australia.

Sue also notes that for a small business the payroll tax and WorkCover concessions associated with apprentices do help to make the apprenticeships viable for the company overall.

As indicated earlier, an important part of the success of apprenticeships at Affordable Wardrobes are the workplace training services provided by the Furnishing Industry Association of Australia. The trainer adapts to the needs of the workplace and starts the regular training sessions at 7am – minimising any impact on productivity. There is a sense of teamwork associated with the on-site training that reflects and is reflected in the working environment.

They help each other on the theory component – it helps to build morale and teamwork.

the payroll tax and WorkCover concessions associated with apprentices do help to make the apprenticeships viable for the company overall.

Martin Lewis, the CEO of the Furnishing Industry Association of Australia, believes the mature age apprenticeship model delivers advantages for the apprentice and the business. It boosts the apprentice's self esteem due to the skill recognition and because they are acquiring new skills over and above their usual day-to-day work. The business benefits from the lower risk to the expected return on the investment in the apprenticeship.

Theory and practice combined

Brad Goldie's experience emphasises how important it is not to lose the potential skills development that can occur through mature age apprenticeships. It is an example of a critical pathway for skills development and skills recognition. While the traditional apprenticeship model has workplace skills and off-the-job theory components developed in tandem, an equally effective pathway (and possibly more effective pathway for many people) is the development of on-the job skills. These are reinforced by theory and gap training where appropriate, provided as part of a mature age apprenticeship. As Brad's experience shows, nothing needs to be 'off-the-job'.

Brad does not see his learning and skills acquisition stopping here. He is already contemplating where to head next and has expressed an interest in the glazing aspects of the business – an excellent set of complementary skills – valuable to the business and to Brad. A mature age apprenticeship is consistent with an understanding that there is a need for continuous learning throughout a career. The concept that achieving a qualification will set you up for life is not really relevant in current workplaces.

Perhaps Brad should have the final word – a comment made when accepting his Apprentice of the Year Award:

It was nice to see that I could match it with the younger guys.

Practical strategies

Drawing on the Affordable Wardrobes' case study, some practical strategies for engaging and retaining mature age and existing workers as apprentices are set out in the box below.

BOX 04: Practical engagement and retention strategies for employers of mature age and existing worker apprentices

- Promote learning. Encourage staff to enjoy the satisfaction that comes from learning and applying new skills.
- Reward loyalty. Where possible acknowledge the loyalty that staff may demonstrate in appreciation of the opportunity to gain a qualification.
- Foster team-work. Encourage the trainer to link the on-the-job training to the development of improved team work.
- Value ongoing learning. Challenge the concept that one qualification is all that is needed in the workforce and encourage continuous learning.



B5

**They are good,
reliable workers**



B5. They are good, reliable workers

Organisation: O'Donnell Griffin, Canberra office, ACT

The electro-technology industry affects almost every aspect of daily life. The industry includes installation, servicing, repair and maintenance of electrical and electronic equipment for industrial, commercial and domestic purposes. It comprises communications, distribution and transmission, electrical generation and computer data and communications cabling systems and new developments in sustainable and renewable energy systems.

O'Donnell Griffin is an electro-technology company and is part of the Norfolk Group of Companies. Norfolk is a major international provider of integrated building and engineering services and within the group, O'Donnell Griffin, provides electrical engineering and contracting services in all capitals and many regional centres of Australia. Over many years the company has played an integral role in developing infrastructure for government and private industry.

The Canberra office of O'Donnell Griffin (ODG) provides a full range of electrical and electrical engineering services to the region. In 2009, with one of its major clients, ODG secured a \$19.4 million tender for the delivery of electrical services at the Multi-user Terminal of Canberra Airport.

Attracting apprentices

Len Saint is a systems coordinator for ODG Canberra and has a dual set of responsibilities – for the OH&S systems that support the ACT operation and for the employment, support and monitoring of apprentices, qualified tradesmen and trade assistants and associated administrative requirements. Len's background makes him well qualified for this role – he has his line-worker trade and for ten years managed Canberra's street lighting system.

Perhaps because of his background, but more likely because of the current shortage, Len has a particular interest in line-worker apprenticeships. Line-workers construct and maintain the overhead electrical distribution lines and work on street lighting and communication systems and there is currently a significant shortage of qualified tradespersons.

ODG Canberra has electrical and line-worker apprentices and they include traditional youth apprentices as well as mature age and existing worker apprentices. They have no trouble attracting apprentices – including mature age apprentices. Young apprentices are taken on through the group training company but existing worker apprentices are ODG employees.

Value of existing workers

Mature age existing worker apprenticeships are an important business strategy used by ODG Canberra to enhance their capacity to meet the requirements of its clients and overcome some of the problems that arise from the shortage of skills – particularly in the line-worker field. By having an existing electrician undertake a line-worker apprenticeship, ODG is able to supply an experienced, reliable tradesperson able to start work, under supervision, on overhead electrical distribution lines. There are benefits for the worker as well since the skills they have are formally recognised and lead to a reduced time for completion of the line-worker apprenticeship.

Len notes that not every electrician is suited to being a line-worker. Selection for a line-worker apprenticeship is made easier because “you already know them and know their work”.

I don't have to take skill levels into account because I know their current skills and I know they can learn new skills.

This enables Len to focus on the characteristics that are needed for working in a small team in potentially dangerous situations.

I know they are good, reliable workers. I know they can work in a close team. I know they have the capacity to complete the course and become a top notch line-worker.

Len also values the higher levels of maturity and commitment that come from existing worker and mature age apprentices.

We have had not one single problem with our mature age apprentices.

They are generally a lot more confident about what they can do and there is much less chance of them going off the rails – they have commitments, they have families.

With Len's dual role in the company he also sees the value of maturity when it comes to occupational health and safety issues.

It is clear that the 'old head' is generally more able to identify dangerous situations than a 'young head'. They are more considered and don't have the 'bullet proof' approach of youth.

Apprentices' motivation

When asked about the motivation of existing workers taking on apprenticeships, Len refers to a number of factors. Most see it as an opportunity to build their career, improve their employability in more difficult times and gain a considerable increase in their salary. As a specialist provider of electrical and electrical engineering services, qualified tradesmen and women are at the core of ODG's business. Having a trade is a desirable first step in gaining the operational experience that leads to more senior supervisory and management roles. This is an available promotional pathway at ODG.

They absolutely see the apprenticeship as part of both a career and a training pathway. They see it as their future – with a certificate that enables them to move interstate to more senior roles site supervisor, estimator, manager.

There are very few disincentives for an existing worker taking on an apprenticeship at ODG. The company's Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) sets the pay for tradesmen and women and for trades assistants and these rates are maintained throughout the apprenticeship. However, the salary and conditions of a new apprentice, whether mature age or not, are also set through the EBA and hence a mature age apprentice from outside the company would most likely face a reduction in pay - depending on their previous employment.

I know they are good, reliable workers. I know they can work in a close team. I know they have the capacity to complete the course and become a top notch line-worker.

Assistance for learning

Some prospective apprentices express concern about their capacity to cope with the theory and more particularly the maths involved in the bookwork.

They are cautious about having been out of school for a long while and possibly having difficulties.

This issue is dealt with in a number of ways including an aptitude test for prospective apprentices from outside ODG run by the registered training organisation (RTO), but more importantly by the level of support provided by ODG and the RTO during the apprenticeship itself. “We move heaven and earth to make sure it works,” Len said. In addition, fellow workers are also very supportive of the mature age apprentices – providing help and support in the field as well as with some of the more challenging parts of the theory. Overall, the ‘theory work’ has not been a significant impediment for either the company or the mature age apprentices.

Len believes that more could be done to support mature age workers and the companies that employ them. In particular, and in spite of the fact that ODG Canberra has no difficulty attracting mature age apprentices, Len is concerned that the potential drop in salary means a new mature age apprentice who has been in employment somewhere else (a truck driver for example) and has family commitments really has no option.

You can lose really good candidates for mature age apprenticeships because of the dollars.

Len suggests a salary subsidy arrangement that operated something like the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) could help to solve this problem. The salary would be subsidised by a loan to be repaid through the tax system once the trade qualification was completed and the higher salary was being earned.

It’s not reinventing the wheel – the concept is already there in HECS and it would make a real difference in dealing with skills needs.

Overall, it is clear existing worker and mature age apprenticeships are filling an important need at O’Donnell Griffin Canberra.

At the end of the day, the existing worker apprenticeships really work for ODG. We have plenty of electricians but fewer line-workers. Our client wants qualified line-workers. The existing worker apprenticeships enable us to meet the client requirements even while there are shortages of qualified line-workers.

Practical strategies

Drawing on the O’Donnell Griffin case study, some practical strategies for engaging and retaining mature age and existing workers as apprentices are set out in the box below.

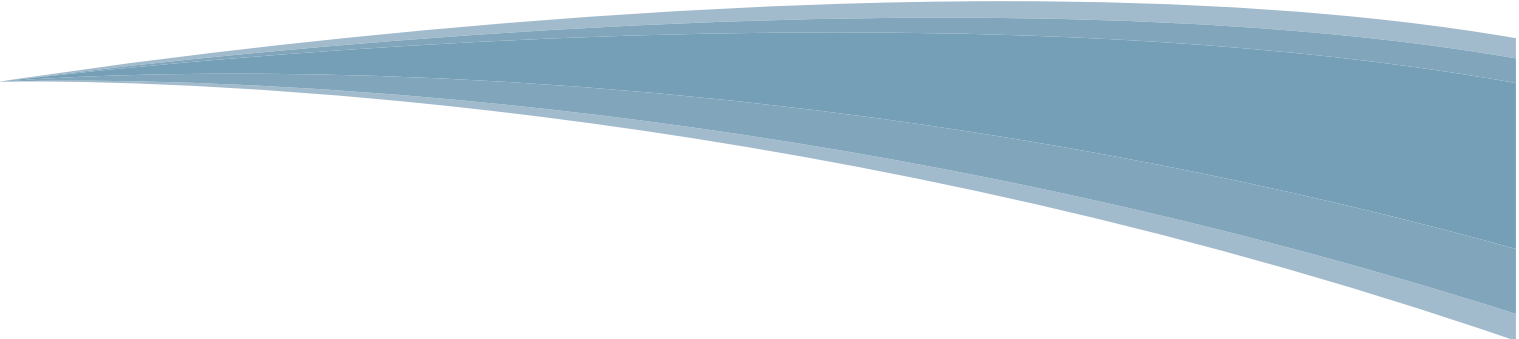
BOX 05: Practical engagement and retention strategies for employers of mature age and existing worker apprentices

- Know your existing workers. Get to know the capabilities of your existing workers to judge which ones are suited to different types of apprenticeships and to provide that advice to the workers.
- Acknowledge attributes. Publicly express the value you place on mature age workers who demonstrate characteristics such as reliability, confidence, commonsense and an ability to work in a team.
- Promote career and training pathways. Appreciate that many existing workers are motivated by the potential to increase their employability and career options.
- Provide multiple sources of learning support. Look to the training provider as well as other staff to support mature age apprentices with their learning.



B6

**I know what I want and
where I want to go**



B6. I know what I want and where I want to go

Organisation: Xstrata Mt Isa Mines, Queensland

Xstrata is a global diversified mining group. Xstrata operates two separate mining and processing streams, copper and zinc-lead-silver, at its Xstrata Mount Isa Mines operations. Xstrata Copper is the fourth largest global copper producer and Xstrata Zinc is one of the world's largest producers of zinc.

Xstrata recognised some years ago the need to train its own apprentices in order to prepare for the future of the business in a time of general skill shortages and an ageing workforce. With an eye to those future needs, Xstrata established an enterprise vocational and trade based training facility, the Xstrata Skills Centre, in May 2006.

Xstrata Mount Isa Mines currently employs approximately 240 apprentices with 80 of those apprentices above the age of 25. It also has an in-house sponsored apprenticeship program for existing workers and approximately 10% of the apprentices at Mount Isa are participating in that program. On average, the Centre caters for an intake of between 50 and 80 new apprentices each year.

The Centre is not a registered training organisation (RTO) but has a partnership arrangement with Mount Isa TAFE which has responsibility for all assessment and quality assurance processes. In addition to its role with apprentices, the Centre makes a significant contribution to the workforce development strategy of the company by running enterprise specific training for specialist technical areas and refresher training for existing qualified tradespersons.

Attributes of existing workers

“There is a lot of interest in the program from existing workers and since its inception, there has never been a shortage of suitable applicants,” said Clynton Munns – Acting Superintendent Xstrata Skills Centre.

All relevant departments of Xstrata Mount Isa Mines are asked to nominate existing workers who could potentially benefit from undertaking an apprenticeship.

The nominees are interviewed comprising of a face to face interview and aptitude test. From here, nominees are shortlisted with a final selection taking place following a second round of interviews.

Clynton noted that completing a mature aged apprenticeship is a good starting point for promotion within Xstrata.

A number of our mature-aged apprentices going on to more senior supervisory and leadership roles within Xstrata.

Options opened up

Brad Power is a sponsored existing worker and mature age apprentice. He is 25 years of age and is now completing the first year of a diesel fitting apprenticeship. Brad spent five years in the Australian Army as a transport driver before moving to Mount Isa where he worked for two years in the industrial cleaning area (high pressure water blasting).

Brad accepted the offer of an existing worker apprenticeship because it opened up so many options – an increase in wage, increased job security and better career opportunities in the mechanical engineering area.

Brad’s prior army experience included a lot of hands-on learning including minor repairs and servicing to mobile equipment. Brad’s skills are now being consolidated through the formal technical training of the apprenticeship. Brad has found the theory side of the apprenticeship program particularly helpful as it gives him a real understanding of what he is doing and why.

Confidence from experience

Initially, Brad did have some reservations about starting an apprenticeship following a gap of eight years from study.

‘I was not really a very good student at school and it’s a different environment here – we are adults and are treated as ones,’ said Brad.

Brad attributes some of his success in the apprenticeship to the confidence that comes from already having some related practical experience.

I’m doing this apprenticeship because I want to do it. Now that I’m 25 I know what I want and I know where I want to take my career.

Contextualised training

The Xstrata Skills Centre has a close and effective working relationship with Mount Isa TAFE which provides its training and assessment services ‘on-the-job’. This close relationship means that the apprenticeship programs are customised to Xstrata’s particular needs. The training is contextualised to the mining industry and Xstrata’s Mount Isa operations.

The TAFE college also provides an ‘Access 10’ program that supports apprentices with weekly language and numeracy support when needed. Brad is just one of the apprentices who has taken full advantage of the program.

“I find math to be quite strenuous and stressful at times – but the ‘Access 10’ really helps,” said Brad.

“We benefit from having apprentices of varying ages throughout our organization and the synergies they create,” said Clynton.

The mature aged apprentices are very focused on what they want to achieve. They are able to assist the school leavers and provide a steadying influence.

Meanwhile the younger apprentices add some enthusiasm and don’t mind challenging the older apprentices.

Brad accepted the offer of an existing worker apprenticeship because it opened up so many options – an increase in wage, increased job security and better career opportunities in the mechanical engineering area.

Our existing worker sponsorship program is a key strategy in achieving this spread, of building the skills base of the workforce, and fostering a culture of loyalty and commitment.

We encourage people to consider an apprenticeship. We are looking for the sort of people who are interested and motivated – people who have a passion for the trade and who have the drive to succeed.

Practical strategies

Drawing on the Xstrata case study, some practical strategies for engaging and retaining mature age and existing workers as apprentices are set out in the box below.

BOX 06: Practical engagement and retention strategies for employers of mature age and existing worker apprentices

- Value existing knowledge. Encourage existing workers to leverage their existing knowledge by undertaking an apprenticeship that matches some of their current skills.
- Contextualise and customise training. Require your training provider to align the training to the organisation's context and the apprentices' needs.
- Provide entry pathways. Where appropriate encourage interested workers to undertake a pre-vocational program, to gain confidence and to demonstrate commitment.
- Identify motivation. Seek out and reward those existing workers who have a passion and drive to succeed with an apprenticeship.



APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Reference group

The following national representative group provided advice and direction to the researchers:

- Nick Minto, Policy Adviser, NSW Business Chamber
- Darin Ritchie, Education and Training Adviser, Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Hugh Roberts, Employment and Training Adviser, Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory
- Laura Price, Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia
- Mary Hicks, Director Education and Training, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Elizabeth Roberts, Education and Training Policy Advisor, Commerce Queensland
- Jo Powell, Education and Training Adviser, ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Stephen Bolton, National Education and Training Advisor, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Tarnya Cruickshank, Senior Adviser, Education and Training, Business South Australia.

Appendix 2: Interviewees

The researchers, Dr John Mitchell, Graeme Dobbs and John Ward, wish to thank the following people for generously giving their time and being willing to share their knowledge and experience for these important interviews. We also thank the state and territory chambers of commerce and industry and their contacts for recommending interviewees.

1. Alan Hill, Training and Competency Specialist, Woodside Energy Ltd, WA
2. Andrea Leonelli, Corradinin Engineering, Qld
3. Andrew Buckingham, Owner, Roberts Bakery, Bathurst, NSW
4. Anna Blackwell, Training Manager Gorgon Project, Leighton Contractors, WA
5. Brandon Petty, Managing Director, Southern Cross Cleaning, SA
6. Chris Gogerly, Apprenticeship Services Administrator, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, VIC
7. Clynton Munns, Mechanical Team Leader, Xstrata Pty Ltd, Mt Isa, Qld
8. David Reeson, Learning and Development Manager, Bluecare, Townsville, Qld
9. Felicity Martin, Administration and Accounts, Metaltex Australia Pty Ltd, Vic.
10. Frank De Biase, Field Officer Holden and Dealership Sector, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.
11. Heath Blair, Field Officer, School Based Trainees and Motorcycles, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.
12. Heath Wilson, Managing Director, HM Wilson Pty Ltd (electrical), Vic.
13. Ian Fleet, Field Officer, Heavy Vehicle and Regional, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.
14. Ida Butler, HR Manager, Smedley Plumbing, Currajong, Qld
15. Jason Stone, Operations Manager, Port Macquarie Panthers, NSW
16. John Dudok, Technical Training Manager, Canberra Toyota, ACT
17. John Muelen-Graaf, Customer Service Manager, Murraylands Training and Employment, Murray Bridge, SA
18. Kathy Roumeliotis, Administrator Group Scheme, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.
19. Kevin Redfern, Managing Director, Automotive Training Victoria, Vic.
20. Len Saint, Systems Co-ordinator, O'Donnell Griffin, Canberra, ACT
21. Leyla Yilmaz, General Manager Industrial Relations, OHS and Training, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.
22. Michael Van Der Plat, Fleet Maintenance Manager, Action Buses, ACT
23. Michael Wentworth, General Manager, Apprentices Plus (Motor Traders Association), NSW
24. Monica Muelen-Graaf, Chief Executive, Murraylands Training and Employment, Murray Bridge, SA
25. Quentin Moore, Managing Director, Moore Engineering, Murray Bridge, SA
26. Rob Walker, Team Leader, Auto Apprenticeships, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.
27. Robert White, Competency Management Cell, Royal Australian Navy Training, NSW
28. Robyn Ivankovich, Employee Development Manager, Georgiou Group, WA
29. Ron Sturgeon, Field Officer Panel/ Paint and Some Regional in Mechanical Trades, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.

30. Steve Tye Din, Field Officer, Melbourne Metro Mechanical, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic.
31. Sue Taylor, Affordable Wardrobes, Ourimbah, NSW
32. Travis Moore, Workshop Supervisor, Moore Mechanical, Murray Bridge, SA
33. Vanessa Le'Tiolle, Administrator Group Scheme, Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, Vic
34. Wendy Ettridge, Executive Officer, Hospitality Group Training, SA
35. Wendy Tengstrom, General Manager, Group Training, MBA Group Training, ACT
36. Martin Lewis, CEO Furniture Industry Association of Australia, NSW.

Appendix 3: Key references for the literature review

The literature review was undertaken in November-December 2009.

Author	Year	Title	Publisher, Location
Australian Apprenticeships Training Information Service	2009	<i>Construction, Plumbing and Integrated Services Framework Job Pathways</i>	http://www.aatinfo.com.au
Australian Apprenticeships Training Information Service	2009	<i>“The pathway to an Australian Apprenticeship”</i>	http://www.aatinfo.com.au
Mitchell, J.G., Dobbs, G. and Ward, J.	2009b	<i>Worth Their Weight in Gold: Practical Strategies for Engaging and Retaining Disengaged apprentices</i>	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Canberra
Mitchell, J.G., Dobbs, G. and Ward, J.	2009a	<i>ACCI Response to the Australian Apprenticeship Taskforce Discussion Paper</i>	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Canberra
Australian Government	2009	<i>Keep Australia Working</i>	Australian Government , Canberra
Australian Industry Group	2009	<i>Skilling Business in Tough Times</i>	Australian Industry Group, Canberra
Brunello G.	2009	<i>Learning for Jobs – The Effect of Economic Downturns on Apprenticeships and Initial Workplace Training: a Review of the Evidence</i>	OECD, Paris
The Hon Julia Gillard MP	2009	<i>Media release: Government partners with industry to provide additional training places”</i>	http://www.deewr.gov.au
Karmel T. and Misko J.	2009	<i>Apprenticeships and traineeships in the downturn</i>	NCVER, Adelaide
Manufacturing Skills Australia	2009	<i>Environmental Scan</i>	http://www.mskills.com.au/
Skills Australia	2009	<i>Workforce Futures: Towards an Australian Workforce Development Strategy – Overview Paper</i>	Skills Australia, Canberra
Skills Australia	2009	<i>Workforce Futures: Towards an Australian Workforce Development Strategy – What Does the Future Hold?</i>	Skills Australia, Canberra

Skills Australia	2009	<i>Workforce Futures: Towards an Australian Workforce Development Strategy – Powering the Workplace: Realising Australia’s Skill Potential</i>	Skills Australia, Canberra
Australian Government	2008	<i>Skilling Australia for the Future</i>	Australian Government , Canberra
Australian Industry Group	2008	<i>Skilling the Existing Workforce</i>	Australian Industry Group, Canberra
Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council	2008	<i>Identifying Paths to Skill Growth or Skill Recession</i>	DEEWR, Canberra
Ferrier F., Burke G. and Smith C.	2008	<i>Skills Development for an Older Workforce</i>	NCVER, Adelaide
Long M. and Shah C.	2008	<i>Private Returns to Vocational Education and Training Qualifications</i>	NCVER, Adelaide
Mercer (Australia) Pty Ltd	2008	<i>Workplace 2012 – Beyond the Global Financial Crisis</i>	Mercer
National Industry Skills Committee	2008	<i>A Framework for Building the Skills of the Existing Workforce</i>	National Industry Skills Committee, Canberra
National Industry Skills Committee	2008	<i>Employment and Skilling Implications of the Australian Economic Slowdown</i>	National Industry Skills Committee, Canberra
Business Council of Australia	2007	<i>Engaging Our Potential: The Economic and Social Necessity of Increasing Workforce Participation</i>	Business Council of Australia, Melbourne
Dawe S. and Elvins R.	2006	<i>The Mature-aged and skill Development Activities – An Update</i>	NCVER, Adelaide
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Group Training Australia	2005	<i>Group Training: New Ways to Meet Skill and Labour Shortages</i>	Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra
Jones E. et al.	2004	<i>Furthering Success: Education, Training and Employment Transitions for Disadvantaged Older Workers</i>	Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra

ACCI MEMBERS

CHAMBER MEMBERS

ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry
Business SA
Chamber of Commerce & Industry Western Australia (Inc)
Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory
Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland
Employers First™
New South Wales Business Chamber
Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ltd
Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce & Industry

INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

ACCORD
Agribusiness Employers' Federation
Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors' Association
Association of Consulting Engineers Australia (The)
Australian Beverages Council Ltd
Australian Food and Grocery Council
Australian Hotels Association
Australian International Airlines Operations Group
Australian Made Campaign Limited
Australian Mines and Metals Association
Australian Newsagents' Federation
Australian Paint Manufacturers' Federation Inc
Australian Retailers' Association
Bus Industry Confederation
Live Performance Australia
Master Builders Australia Inc.
Master Plumbers' and Mechanical Services Association Australia (The)
National Baking Industry Association
National Electrical and Communications Association
National Fire Industry Association
National Retail Association Ltd
Oil Industry Industrial Association
Pharmacy Guild of Australia
Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association Inc
Printing Industries Association of Australia
Restaurant & Catering Australia
Standards Australia Limited
Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce



It's not about age