

- workshops to encourage Indigenous prisoners and juvenile detainees to undertake pre-release and post-release education and training programmes as well as post-release employment programmes.

The programme is designed to complement initiatives undertaken by school education authorities so as to improve school retention rates and increase the transfer rates of Indigenous students to TAFE and higher education.

The Aboriginal and Islander Career Aspirations Program (AICAP), South Australia

AICAP is a South Australian Government programme that receives significant Commonwealth funding under VEGAS. Similar programmes are funded in some States. AICAP works across the three schooling sectors with students from years 6–2.

The AICAP team consists of AICAP officers, an Aboriginal Education Worker (AEW) and a project officer. The team supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with their education and career pathways and the steps to achieve their goals.

AICAP operates in a number of ways including:

- conducting regional career seminars;
- working with students in schools;
- Aboriginal mentors;
- conducting short career education courses for caregivers, teachers, counsellors and school based staff;
- supporting students through correspondence and personal visits;
- developing promotional materials;
- community consultation and participation; and
- working closely with district education offices and local councils.

Brotherhood of St Laurence School to Work Transitions Project, Victoria

The project was a partnership between the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and two Victorian secondary schools, and was designed to develop a service model which enhances the transition of early school leavers to further education, training or employment. Its objectives were to assist students

to make informed choices about vocational pathways while at school, to help them to access relevant information about the options available for them beyond school, to provide on-going support, and to help them access programmes which could assist them.

Young people received school-based vocational and personal support and counselling, referral and support at the time they left school, help with placement in further education or employment, and continuing follow-up and support. Project officers were located in the schools for three days each week, and in the BSL's employment service for two days each week. The officers contacted the young people while they were still at school and helped to identify a vocational pathway. They worked with the school and families to help each student prepare for their particular pathway. They provided information on appropriate community services, maintained an ongoing relationship with the young person during the period between leaving school and beginning employment or further education, and provided mentor support during the initial stage of this new step.

The project established a bridging process between school and the labour market for early school leavers. The project officers brought a number of advantages to their transition support. They had a good knowledge of the labour market for young people, and links to local employment, education and training opportunities. Their skills and knowledge extended and enhanced resources available in the schools and their role complemented existing teaching staff expertise.

Within the schools involved, the project raised a wider awareness of issues associated with early school leaving, and the transition from school to work or further education. An outcome for the schools was a number of changes such as improved exit procedures, increased links with TAFE, and improved planning and monitoring for students at risk of leaving early. For the young people, a key outcome was that over three-quarters of them went into employment, education or training after leaving school.

The project findings highlighted the importance of comprehensive career advice to provide young people with accurate and timely information. It identified that alternative education and training settings are important destinations for young people leaving school early. The availability of TAFE and community-based learning centres for these young people provided opportunities to continue their education and training beyond secondary school.

