

National Media Release

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The Pause on the Governments' pact to increase parental engagement

Youth Connect's ability to provide parents with the opportunity to come together and discuss the pathway and career choices available to young people, when considering their future beyond school, will cease in December 2014 without ongoing funding from the Australian Government Department of Education.

Research in Australia and overseas has confirmed that parents are the most commonly consulted and influential sources of career information and advice for young people. Yet only 20% of parents have sufficient knowledge of employment/training options to help their teenager make a decision about what to do after leaving school.

At a recent opening address at the Research Conference of the Australian Council for Educational Research on 4th August 2014, Federal Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, agrees that "There's a wealth of research showing that the earlier parents show an interest in a child's education, the more positive the effect on student performance, school attendance and student wellbeing." He continues, "When parents are engaged in their children's education, their children are more likely to attend school and to perform better." We agree with the link Minister Pyne has made regarding parents' early interest in their child's education as this will also support their child to successfully transition from school to work.

Parents As Career Transition Support (PACTS) is aimed at parents of young people aged 10 to 17 years who need to understand the education and further training systems including how to have effective careers conversations with a young person. This will then support their teenager to transition successfully into employment.

PACTS is a parental engagement program that has been successfully providing Parents, Carers, Community Workers and any adult who plays an influential role in a young person's transition, with information, support and tools to better assist young people with their career pathways since 2003. With the increasing youth unemployment rates across the country now exceeding that of the adult population, a program such as PACTS promotes a 'whole community approach' to supporting and encouraging young people to make informed decisions about education, further training and employment.

PACTS supports the aim of the Australian Governments Students First Policy that was announced in August 2013 as part of the election commitments. The focus of this policy is on four key areas that will make a difference to students; teacher quality, school autonomy, *parental engagement* and strengthening the curriculum.

In the last 12 months Youth Connect has trained over 500 trained PACTS Facilitators across Australia, who are actively engaging with and delivering workshops to eager parents, within education and community settings. The interactive workshops are designed to encourage participants to enter into discussions and offer support to their teenagers during their difficult transition towards a career.

Anna, a parent who recently attended a PACTS workshop in NSW and said, "I think that this is a great program which should be made available to more parents; it's very relevant and helpful in supporting parents help guide and encourage their children in thinking about career options."

PACTS workshops empower parents to be aware of the decisions ahead for their teenagers and encourage them to engage in constructive discussions. *PACTS* explores the variety of educational options for secondary school students including state and territory specific High School Certificates, VET in Schools, International Baccalaureate and School-Based Apprenticeships & Traineeships (SBAT). The workshops also discuss the pathways available to youth beyond school into tertiary

education including; community-based programs, TAFE, University, group training and the notorious Gap Year. The workshops also include resources and materials for parents so they can assist their teenagers in finding employment.

PACTS has also been developed to meet the needs of specific parent and family groups such as Disability, Primary School, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Communities with translated materials in Vietnamese, Chinese, Hindi, Dari, Arabic and Nepali.

Youth Connect is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education to deliver the PACTS program until December 2014. At this stage, the Government will not continue to fund this initiative as it claims the funding was a “once off” and designed to provide organisations delivering career and transition programs to just expand initiatives. Ongoing funding for the delivery of the PACTS program will support the Governments focus area of parental engagement as part the Students First policy.

Youth Connect is urging the Government to reconsider this decision and provide funding of \$750,000 as PACTS is the only national program that has responded to parental engagement needs providing support to keep young people engaged in education and have supported transitions into employment. “This is a relatively small investment for the Government that generates big returns in supporting parents and young Australians”, says Daniela Ascone, General Manager at Youth Connect.

Youth Connect is passionate about improving the lives of young people and believe parental support is crucial when discussing the future.

To find out more about PACTS, go to www.youthconnect.com.au

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PACTS Across Australia: the locations of our PACTS Facilitators that are delivering workshops to parents and families.

