

Generation X-pendable:
Young, Rural and Looking for Work

An Examination of Young People's Perceptions of
Employment Opportunities in Rural Areas

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WOOLWORTHS LIMITED

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Executive Summary

There have been significant changes in rural Australia since the 1980s. Many towns have lost population, services and employment opportunities. As well changes in employment and workplace relations such as casualisation and the increase in part-time employment, have added to the pressures facing young people in rural towns seeking employment opportunities. This research examines the perceptions of young people in small rural towns about these employment opportunities.

Young people in four New South Wales towns, Temora, Leeton, Forbes and Eden took part in this study as did many parents and other community representatives.

The findings reveal that, while many young people see the benefits of small town living, the lack of satisfying work leads many to leave for cities seeking employment and further education. Workplace changes have seen a decline in apprenticeship opportunities and a greater use of casual labour. Employers note that the greater costs of employment, compliance issues and administrative requirements make it easier to employ casuals than to train young people. As well a significant constraint on rural young people's employment opportunities is the removal of public sector jobs, a move that has severely destabilised the traditional career paths for many rural young people.

Young people in country towns fall into six identifiable groups –

- those attending school
- those leaving for university / TAFE or other training
- those leaving for work
- those staying for work
- those staying to go to TAFE
- those staying who are unemployed.

Between 75% and 90% of young people plan to leave small towns. However it is important to note that more girls than boys (85% as against 71%) intend leaving and that more girls are motivated to go on to university (62% as against 39%). This appears to reflect the gendered opportunities in the rural employment sector.

Many young people attending school hold down casual jobs in supermarkets, shops or other businesses. Nevertheless there are few full-time positions available for young school leavers.

Young unemployed people note that Centrelink requirements are sometimes arduous given the problems of distance to services, the lack of places to apply for work, literacy problems and the lack of advocates for young people. Many young unemployed people are breached by Centrelink.

TAFE cutbacks have impacted on young people, many of whom are not old enough to drive to the nearest centre for training. The TAFE cutbacks have led to a lack of skilled tradespeople in small towns and a lack of options for young people.

Significant issues highlighted by this report include major problems with public transport resulting in restricted options for young people seeking work outside their town, social problems such as underage drinking and drug taking, and a lack of access to Austudy (Common Youth Allowance) for rural young people seeking higher education opportunities. In fact 53% of parents suggest that changes to Austudy have necessarily restricted their children's access to higher education.

A large majority of parents and young people see no option but for the young person to leave town to seek employment or education. This decision is supported by families despite the significant financial burden it imposes.

As a result of this research, the following recommendations are offered:

Recommendations re employment for rural young people

The following recommendations emerge from this report:

Vision

- Ø A long term vision is needed to address the education to work transition for young people generally and rural young people in particular. Investment in human capital as the basis on which we develop young Australians should be the foundation of such a vision. It would be beneficial if the federal government convened a community consultation with state and local governments, small business representatives, education and health providers and rural community groups. The aim of this consultation would be to develop a vision for young Australians and to provide concrete strategies for future cooperations in the interest of developing this vision for the benefit of rural young people.
- Ø Following this process a policy document should be developed on the youth to work transition period incorporating policies to:
 - Ø make the transition smooth;
 - Ø ensure that young people at risk, particularly in rural areas, are protected;
 - Ø ensure the effects of workplace reform on young people are addressed;
 - Ø ensure that financial constraints are not the sole determinant of young people being denied access to education and training.

Regional Development

- Ø Not all country towns are in decline. There is, however, a need to ensure that a concerted effort is made to ensure that regional development is facilitated. There is a need for Federal and state governments to address the issue of regional development planning and funding by:
- Ø assessing region by region development;
- Ø undertaking community consultations; and
- Ø targeting planning and funding.

Transport

- Ø A key area of disadvantage for young people relates to transport services. Adequate transport infrastructure between towns and large centres needs to be developed by state and local governments to allow young people access to employment, training, sport, and cultural and social activities.
- Ø The introduction of a 'gold pass' scheme for young people aged 15-24 similar to that used by seniors should be evaluated as a way for the federal government to help young people who need to travel to employment interviews and services.

Employment

Government

- Ø There is an urgent need to address the effects of workplace reform on young people particularly those in rural areas. There is a need for The federal government to commission research into the impacts of workplace reforms, including the growth of casualisation on young people's employment opportunities.
- Ø An assessment needs to be undertaken by The federal government of the apprenticeship and traineeship schemes to ensure that barriers to small businesses taking up the programs are addressed and that incentives are provided. Part of this review should include an assessment of the gendered nature of apprenticeships in country towns.
- Ø The lack of skilled staff is an ongoing problem in rural communities. Federal, state and local governments need to explore better ways to work together to provide incentive programs to attract skilled staff to country towns. These might include fringe benefits, tax benefits and other compensations.
- Ø An assessment of the Job Network reforms and Centrelink practices and their impacts on young people is necessary. As part of this assessment the federal government could consider:
 - Ø examining their policies in relation to eligibility requirements and breaching as they relate to young people particularly in country towns;
 - Ø establishing an advocacy service for young people within Centrelink;
 - Ø developing a strategy to assess the number of disadvantaged young people who are not applying for Job Search assistance because of literacy, cultural and other issues;

- Ø assessing the distribution of Job Network agencies in country towns;
- Ø providing additional financial support for Job Network providers in country towns to provide training and development opportunities for young people where limited work opportunities are available.

Business

- Ø Businesses in country towns are aware of the problems associated with outmigration of young people and the lack of skilled staff. It would appear to be in the long term interest of businesses to provide skills training to young people. Businesses should:
- Ø Work with all levels of government to develop a vision on the education to work transition of young people;
- Ø give consideration to the benefits of providing training and apprenticeship opportunities to young people.

Education providers

- Ø The Leeton Links program provides a model of a successful school to work program. The state government could benefit by using this as a model in other small towns.

Education

Government

- Ø One of the barriers for young people accessing higher education is the Austudy / Youth Allowance eligibility criteria. This issue could be addressed through The federal government reassessing the means testing of the Common Youth Allowance as it affects rural young people. Consideration should be given to geographical disadvantage factors as well as the lack of access to education in the local area, the number of children in families, the cost associated with supporting a young people in a city and other associated costs. Access to Austudy / Youth Allowance should be adjusted accordingly.

Business

- Ø Small business should consider providing workplace training.
- Ø Businesses should form close links with the schools in the area and undertake work experience and other collaborations such as those incorporated in the Leeton Links program (addressing young people at school, acting on interview panels for young people applying for work experience etc).

Education providers

- Ø The University of NSW has been very successful in targeting rural young people in their rural medical entry scheme. The Australian Vice Chancellors Committee should establish a review committee to instigate further affirmative schemes for rural young people.
- Ø State government needs to undertake a review of TAFE services in country towns to increase young people's access to a diverse range of programs.
- Ø TAFE should undertake an education needs analysis in country towns.

General support for young people

- Ø greater support for young unemployed people in country towns could be expressed by the federal and state governments in the form of labour market programs, advocacy services, drug and alcohol support services and other health and welfare programs.
- Ø There is a needs for all levels of government (local, state and federal) to provide greater assistance to young people. On a local level, the lack of attention to young people needs to be reassessed and act to provide lifestyle, support and transition services for young people.

Recommendations relating specifically to Woolworths

- Ø Woolworths should implement a strategy in rural communities which emphasises the opportunities for training, development and promotion through the organisation. In particular the strategy would focus on:
 - Ø training opportunities including traineeships and apprenticeships;
 - Ø opportunities to transfer to other store locations; and
 - Ø opportunities for managerial training.
- Ø Woolworths should consider using their strong presence in rural communities to publicise the issues affecting young people in country towns.
- Ø Woolworths should consider a potential role in facilitating the transition of young people from school to work. This could include:
 - Ø extended involvement in work experience placements; and
 - Ø extended traineeship opportunities.
- Ø As a significant employer in rural communities, the working conditions and policies of Woolworths could be seen as a benchmark for other employers of young people in the community. Mindful of this responsibility, Woolworths management should provide models of employment which can be held up as exemplars for other employers of young people in rural communities.

Background to the Research

Major structural changes have occurred across rural Australia over the last two decades. Yet these changes have not been uniform. Many coastal regions, particularly along the eastern seaboard, have experienced population growth as a result of an expanding tourism and retiree market. In inland Australia where communities are still reliant on agriculture as a significant industrial base structural decline is increasing.

Deteriorating terms of trade in many agricultural industries coupled with globalisation and deregulation of agricultural industries have resulted in major social, economic and environmental changes in these inland communities. Population decline and out-migration of young people in particular has resulted in an aging population base. Rural poverty is increasing as agriculture retracts and increasing environmental awareness has focused national attention on problems such as salinity, water quality and the health of rivers in inland Australia.

An influential factor in the employment opportunities in is the cut back of government services such as post offices, court houses, schools and hospitals. Many non-government services such as banks have followed suit. Communities have not only lost the services but also their significant employment base. While much research has focused on rural decline, population out-migration and aging, little attention has been paid to the changing employment circumstances of young people in small country towns. Graham and Jennings (1998) note the need for more research on unemployment and unemployment policy in regional Australia. In particular, Speiring and Soehr (1996) note that youth unemployment is one of the key challenges for Australia. Wynn, Stokes and Stafford (1998) note that there is limited research on the outcomes for young people in rural areas. With this in mind this research addresses the following aim:

to examine young people's perceptions of employment opportunities in rural areas.

The research objectives are:

- to document how rural young people's access to employment has been affected by social and economic changes;
- to determine what young people mean when they talk about rural employment opportunities;
- to understand young people's perceptions of employment (short or long term, part-time or full-time options);

- to determine rural young people's perceptions of the adequacy of rural employment opportunities;
- to examine the perceptions of rural young people of employment opportunities following the establishment of new industries / businesses; and
- to examine the perceptions of rural young people of employment opportunities following the withdrawal of industries / businesses.



2. Summary of the Literature

2.1 Rural Communities

For the purpose of this research 'rural' is defined as all areas outside capital cities and major regional centres (Wyn, Stokes and Stafford, 1998).

Globalisation has impacted disproportionately on small inland rural communities. The restructuring of agriculture has seen many farms disappear as larger holdings emerge. Since the 1950s farm numbers have declined from over 200 000 to approximately 115 000 (Garnaut and Lim-Applegate, 1998). In fact, 16% of farm families left the industry between 1991 and 1996 (Garnaut and Lim-Applegate, 1998) and predictions are that the number of farm families will reduce to 70 000 over the next decade (Vanclay and Lawrence, 1995). Many farm families have left the countryside and between 1986 and 1996 16% of jobs in agriculture, forestry and fishing disappeared from inland and remote communities (ABARE, 1999). However, the decline in farm fortunes is not uniform with 30% of farms producing 70% of returns (ABARE, 1999). This suggests that while a minority of farmers are doing well, a large section of the farm community is in a financially precarious state facing an uncertain future.

Smaller communities have lost services and jobs and the added expectations of travel and cost of accessing services have impacted on small town residents and their quality of life. At the same time the traditional cross-subsidisation of services from urban to rural communities has been phased out and there is an increasing expectation that rural communities will meet their own needs (Haslam-McKenzie, 1999).

The resultant social, economic and environmental problems emerging in inland rural communities are well documented. Salt (1999) notes the population drift from rural towns to regional 'sponge' cities and the coastal regions with hundreds of inland communities losing population over the last two decades. While the entire Australian population is aging, evidence suggests that this aging is not uniform. Birrell (2000) predicts that by 2026 18% of capital city populations will be over 65 compared to 26% of rural community populations.

Vinson's (1999) study of social disadvantage in NSW and Victoria found that an overwhelming majority of disadvantaged areas are in rural locations. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Report (HREOC, 1999), *Bush Talks* classified this rural social disadvantage as human

rights abuses.

Rural people suffer higher morbidity and mortality rates, and rural suicide particularly among young males has increased alarmingly (Alston, 2000), and yet health and mental health services in many communities are inadequate or reduced. A National Farmers Federation study indicates a shortage of over 500 medical practitioners in rural communities (Harrison, 1997):

It is little wonder that commentators, politicians and bureaucrats note an increasing divide between rural and urban people. Speaking in 1999, the Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the National Party, John Anderson noted that the sense of alienation in rural Australia is deep and palpable (Anderson, 1999).

However this evidence of disadvantage masks the lifestyle advantages that accompany rural living. In conducting this study it was constantly impressed upon us that a strong sense of community is a valuable factor of rural living. Many people told us of the extraordinary value of living in small communities where everyone knows everyone else, where people generally look out for each other, where community members work together in a number of areas, where the environment is open and easy and where there is little traffic or pollution. This study seeks to discover the perceptions of young people in small, close-knit communities where indicators suggest disadvantage may hamper their life chances.

2.2 Employment

The decline in full-time employment as mode of engagement in the workforce is a remarkable feature of economic and social change in Australia in recent years. When both men and women are considered together, full time employment as a share of the working age population fell abruptly and continuously to be about 20 per cent lower in 1998 than in 1973. The reasons for this decline are far from clear, but it is obviously linked in part to the rapid growth in part-time employment. While the share of the working age population in full-time jobs has fallen, the share in part-time jobs has risen even more rapidly, being about three times the 1973 level in 1998 (Sheehan & Tegart, 1998):

Another feature of labour market trends in recent years is the 'precariousness' of employment. It is widely perceived that the employment status of many employees has become more tenuous and less secure over recent years. Casual employees are defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as wage and salary earners without entitlements to either paid annual leave or paid sick leave. The incidence of casual employment so defined has increased substantially, with the rate for men more than doubling between 1985 and 1997. By 1997, just on one quarter of all employees, and nearly 30 per cent of all female employees, were employed on a casual basis (Sheehan & Tegart, 1998):

For those in work the trend is to more casualised labour replacing full-time positions. 'Precarious employment has become more prevalent' (Murtough and Waite, 2000: 1).

The national unemployment rate in February 2001 was 6.8% up from 6.4% in December 2000. Rates are uniformly higher in rural than urban areas. For metropolitan Australia the December

rate was 5.7% and for non-metropolitan Australia 7.1% (Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business website). Rates of unemployment may in fact be higher than officially recorded figures because as Lackney (1998) suggests, many people become disillusioned and give up looking for work.

Of particular concern is the national unemployment rate for young people which stands at 24.6% although this varies by state and region. Unemployment among young people is typically long-term although there are significant regional disparities (Coventry and Bertone (1998). Teenage employment accounts for 7% of total employment and much of this is part-time or casual as a result of a large fall in the demand for younger workers (Daly, Nguyen-Hong, Eldridge, Gabbitas and McCalman, 1998).

Cheers (1998) notes that rural unemployment is higher and more prolonged; job opportunities are limited, poorly paid and many are seasonal. In some rural areas it is up to 40% (DPIE and CRSR, 1997) while in some Aboriginal communities it is as high as 95% (Wyn, Stokes and Stafford, 1998). Rural youth unemployment is characterised by low skill levels and insecure arrangements. There are limited opportunities for training and skills development and public transport restricts access.

While these figures reflect the changing workforce participation what is also important to note is the changing nature of work. Technological change and a globalised marketplace have resulted in a reduction of unskilled positions. Changes in the job market along with workplace reform have led to major adjustments in the relations between workers and the workplace. There is an increase in overwork with more people working long hours. At the same time there is an increase in the underemployed with the largest increase in employment opportunities in recent times being in part-time work. Casualisation has also increased with many people in insecure employment, on contract or on-call. Practices of contracting and 'outsourcing' have reduced the number of full-time jobs.

Job creation has not proceeded at a level to meet demand for work and long term unemployment has become a chronic problem (Uniting Community Services Australia, 1997). At the same time spending on labour market programs has been severely pared back (Uniting Community Services Australia, 1997) and a major restructuring and privatising of Job Network has led to a mushrooming of the number of private providers tasked with providing support to the unemployed.

2.3 Young people

It is arguable that the decline of full-time jobs for young people has been matched by a growth in the number of full-time students. However this fails to acknowledge that there are critical groups who suffer particular disadvantage as a result of the decline in full-time jobs for youth. Of young people aged 15 - 19 years, 14.5% are not in full-time work or in education and are therefore not making a successful transition from school to work (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 1999):

The workplace is demanding increased skills and training. For many rural young people the lack of educational opportunities means they have to leave home to access skills (Wyn, Stokes and Stafford, 1998) or miss out.

Population figures delineate a noticeable drop in the numbers of rural young people in the 15-24 year age bracket suggesting that this is the age group that are moving to capital cities to access appropriate training.

Table 2.1 Population figures for Temora, Leeton and Forbes*

	Temora			Leeton			Forbes		
	M	F	Tot.	M	F	Tot.	M	F	Tot.
Total Population	2,887	3,027	5,914	5,669	5,332	11,031	5,095	5,043	10,138
15 years and over	2,140	2,279	4,419	4,203	3,996	8,199	3,830	3,838	7,668
Australian born	2,709	2,810	5,519	5,078	4,796	9,874	4,782	4,686	9,468
Age by sex									
10 –14	264	249	513	609	484	1,093	434	438	872
15 –19	181	190	371	602	431	1,033	462	359	821
20 – 24	144	123	267	364	329	693	270	287	557

Source: ABS 1996 Census of Population and Households

* Specific figures for Eden could not be isolated from those aggregated for Bega Shire

Quixley (1992) notes that young people leave for higher education, work, to experience independence, to escape difficult circumstances or to broaden their horizons. Whereas traditionally leaving was optional, it has now become almost mandatory. Quixley further suggests that those who stay are subject to family and community pressure as a result of a lack of understanding of the ramifications of high level youth unemployment.

Prior to entering the workforce, rural young people appear to suffer disadvantage in relation to schooling with the 1999 Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Inquiry into Rural And Remote Education reporting on a number of areas of concern. While the National Goals for Schooling in Australia (ratified by all education ministers in 1999) specifies a goal of access to year 12 for all students across the country, access is divided along geographical lines. The education inquiry noted that some rural schools have retention rates of one-sixth the urban rate (HREOC, 2000).

The inquiry also noted that rural performance falls behind that of urban young people, that costs are greater, that subject choice is restricted, that education delivery and resource provision is restricted, that rural schools have great difficulty attracting staff and that access to information technology is restricted by telecommunication deficiencies.

Meanwhile post-school or tertiary access is also lower for rural students. Despite the fact that they represent approximately 28% of the population rural students participation in tertiary studies declined from 18.7% in 1992 to 17.4% in 1997 (DEETYA, 1999) at a time when tertiary student numbers rose by 25% (Geesche Jacobsen writing in the Sydney Morning Herald, 25/3/99).

Table 2.2 Type of Educational Institution Attending (Full-time/Part-time)

	Temora			Leeton			Forbes		
	M	F	Tot.	M	F	Tot.	M	F	Tot.
Secondary:									
Government	172	215	387	452	287	739	234	245	479
Catholic	38	45	83	253	225	478	250	226	476
Other Non Gov't	0	3	3	5	3	8	6	4	10
<i>Total</i>	<i>210</i>	<i>263</i>	<i>473</i>	<i>710</i>	<i>515</i>	<i>1225</i>	<i>490</i>	<i>475</i>	<i>965</i>
TAFE:									
Full-time	4	19	23	50	39	89	16	19	35
Part-time	56	56	112	103	103	206	117	99	216
Not stated	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	4	4
<i>Total</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>135</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>298</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>255</i>
University or Other Tertiary Institutions:									
Full-time	4	9	13	7	9	16	4	6	10
Part-time	15	35	50	51	40	91	28	37	65
Not stated	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>75</i>
Other:									
Full-time	3	0	3	0	4	4	3	3	6
Part-time	3	4	7	7	13	20	8	12	20
Not stated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>26</i>
Not attending	2,074	2,098	4,172	3,822	3,683	7,505	3,583	3,536	7,119
Not stated	88	108	196	222	221	443	187	205	392
Overseas visitor	11	32	43	0	4	4	11	12	23
Total	2,890	3,025	5,915	5,697	5,331	11,028	5,094	5,042	10,136

Source: 1996 Census of Population and Housing

Employment is a major area of self-definition (Frone, 1999). Yet for young people changes in workplace requirements and workplace conditions have impacted harshly. Young people in the 15-19 year age bracket, who leave school with few skills, are at particular risk. Positions traditionally held by young people and used as training points have been phased out. This has resulted in full-time employment for this group declining by 54% since the early 1980s (Uniting Community Services Australia, 1997). Coventry and Bertone (1998) noted that 350 000 full-time teenage jobs have been lost in Australia since the 1980s. While there is a significant amount of part-time work for this age group, the bulk of it is undertaken by full-time school students.

A 1998 report *Australia's Youth: Reality and Risk* suggested that young people are going backwards in employment, education and training. The report noted that

only 17% of those aged 15-19 have full-time jobs – half the percentage of a decade ago; incomes of part-time teenage workers fell 30% in 13 years; full-time wages for teenagers fell to \$290 as average weekly earnings rose to \$660; the number of teenage workers getting in-house training has halved; there has been a fall from 30% to 20% in the proportion of young people at TAFE; the traineeship system, meant for youth, has been co-opted by adults (quoted in Coventry and Bertone, 1998: 271).

While these issues are of particular concern in the rural context it is noteworthy that for the majority of rural young people the rural lifestyle links them in unique ways to intergenerational relationships and communities (Quixley, 1993). They have a strong sense of connectedness to community and most enjoy the rural lifestyle while growing up (Bourke, 1997). Given this, this study seeks to examine how it is for young people in rural country towns at the beginning of a new millenium where globalisation and workplace changes have dramatically altered the relationship between young people and work.

3. Methodology

In seeking to examine young people's perceptions of employment opportunities in rural areas four towns were selected for further study:

Leeton (population 10520)

Forbes (population 9664)

Temora (population 5655)

Eden in the Bega Valley (population 3200)

(population figures are based on 1996 census statistics)

Town Information

Temora is a small town in the South West of NSW approximately eighty kilometres from the regional city of Wagga Wagga. Its employment base is agriculture. It is experiencing steady population decline.

Forbes is located in the Central West of NSW approximately 130 kms from Orange. It has a declining population base, is reliant on agriculture and also has an abattoir and a company producing pet food called Petchef.

Leeton is experiencing a level of growth and prosperity. It is located in the lush Riverina area of NSW approximately 40 kms from the booming regional city of Griffith and has several value added industries including the rice mill, Ricegrowers Association office, Rockdale Feedlot, Berri fruit juice factory, Celair factory and a pasta plant. The Letona cannery closed in recent times.

Eden is located on the lower south coast of NSW. It is three and a half hours from Canberra and six hours from Sydney and Melbourne by car. The closest small town is Merimbula (17kms) and the nearest regional centre of Bega is approximately 40 kms away. In 1998 the tuna cannery closed. In recent times several industries have been restructured including the forestry industry where the Regional Forest Agreement has been formalised, the fishing industry which has been through a period of regulatory change and the dairy industry which has been deregulated. The population has experienced a decline following the industry upheaval in recent times. Tourism is an integral part of the town's economy. A Regional Adjustment package formulated by the federal government has provided approximately \$3.5million to the town.

These towns were chosen because they represented a variety of factors important to the study. They have population bases ranging from 3200 up to nearly 11000. Temora, Forbes and Leeton are inland towns where agriculture is a dominant industry. Leeton hosts a number of value-adding additional industries while Forbes hosts an abattoir. Temora appears reliant on primary industry. The coastal town of Eden was chosen as it also has a heavy primary industry base through fishing, dairying and forestry while the closure of the tuna cannery in 1998 represented a major employment loss to the town which also draws heavily on tourism.

Each of the towns has a small population base and each has a noticeable population ‘dip’ in the 20-24 year age bracket suggesting that out-migration of young people is a factor.

With this in mind the research team sought the opinions and responses of young people in the 15-19 year age group, their parents and other significant community members to assess their perceptions about employment for young people.

The following methods were used to gain information from townspeople.

	Focus groups	In-depth interviews	Surveys
Temora	7	7	220
Leeton	7	7	140
Forbes	9	6	660
Eden		7	240

3.1 Qualitative data

- Focus groups were conducted at the schools with young people from years 10 and 11, with young TAFE students, with groups of unemployed young people and with town business people.
- In-depth interviews were held with school principals and career advisers, mayors and/ or senior council staff, job network providers and centrelink representatives, youth workers and representatives of other relevant bodies in the towns.
- Additional secondary data was gathered from council offices, libraries and other bodies in the town.

3.2 Quantitative data

- Surveys were distributed to years 11 and 12 in the high schools, to parents of those young people through the schools and to young people through TAFE and the employment agencies.

4. Research Findings

4.1 Qualitative data – Key Issues

4.1.1 Small town culture

Living in a small town means different things to different people. For young people it can be comforting and safe, but it can also be a ‘gold fish bowl’ with little youth based activity other than sport. There are also gender differences in the way young people view their town with more young girls than boys looking to leave and seek higher education.

There are also differing perspectives amongst older people. One professional person noted:

it is a fantastic environment to bring up kids ... I've got a much better lifestyle [than I had in the city].

However there were other professionals interviewed who had alternative views:

This is a traditional community. We find it a very 1970s community. It's a very, very sexist community and the opportunities for girls are not as great as the opportunities for boys ... girls aspire more to leave town.

Violence is widespread in the community. There's always fights in the pubs on Friday and Saturday nights. They spill out into the streets and they are public. It's not just men it's women as well.

Girls in one town noted that what jobs are available are ‘mostly for boys’:

A significant difference in generational links was evident between the inland towns and the coastal town of Eden. In inland towns, generational links were evident through intergenerational family and community ties. This was less evident in Eden where many of the older generation were in-migrating retirees with no family ties to the younger people of the town. In some cases this created tension between the groups, and a level of distrust and fear on the part of older people about drug taking and other antisocial behaviours, that was not as evident in other towns.

4.1.2. The importance of industry

It is evident that those towns with industries other than agriculture are more able to provide an employment base and a consequent reason for young people to remain in the town.

Leeton is a life choice now whereas in other small towns that's not a possibility. So that obviously does a lot for the town as well if they can keep their young people (Key informant interview)

The larger population of Leeton may reflect a greater capacity to draw industry. Attracting industry and businesses to small towns is critical to their futures.

4.1.3 Work practices

It was very evident that traditional workplace practices are changing. Many businesses rely on casual employees during busy times and full-time positions are progressively being replaced by casualised labour.

We were alerted to work practices such as 'the cattle call' at the Forbes abattoir where workers are allegedly chosen from those lined up at 6.30am in the morning depending on the company's requirements for the day.

Most community representatives felt that fewer apprenticeships are being offered because of the requirements associated with such positions. Traineeships were offered in all towns usually for one year, sometimes leading to ongoing employment. These were not always allocated to young people.

It would appear that full-time unskilled positions and entry level positions traditionally taken by young people are less available because of cost, administrative requirements and the practice of casualising labour.

4.1.4 Austudy / Youth Allowance

Access to Austudy / Youth Allowance for young people was raised by all groups as a area of concern. For country students and young job seekers there is a particular disadvantage associated with a lack of access to funds. Students who must live away from home in order to take up higher education or work opportunities, and who are ineligible for full benefits, require a significant economic commitment from families and / or a commitment to undertake work along with studies.

The means testing of Youth Allowance may also restrict access to benefits for many unemployed young people during their period of job searching.

[Austudy] is just so bloody hard [to get] (Business person)

Youth Allowance is there to assist them, it's not really there to live off!

(Job Network employee)

They should make it easier to get because if your parents are only just above the limit you can't get it ... a lot of people are saying I can't get Austudy because my parents are earning too much and it's not as though they are earning a lot. (School girl)

Cruel and hard to get for some people ... it seems very easy for some people administering the paper work to find a glitch in the paperwork and it is a complicated set of paperwork that has to be filled out by the parents ... it's very easy for Centrelink to say 'sorry you don't apply' ... makes life very tough [especially when] parents have other children as well.. (Careers adviser)

4.1.5 Issues for business people in small country towns

Focus groups with business people in each of the towns revealed that small businesses and industries experience a number of difficulties associated with operating in a country town. These include:

- attracting skilled staff
- coping with Occupational Health and Safety regulations
- workers' compensation issues
- adapting to GST implications
- providing apprenticeships and traineeships
- transport and infrastructure problems.

Some business people in the towns noted that they are taking on casuals in preference to apprentices because of a need to remain profitable. A number of factors were noted including:

- the cost of training to the business
- variable staffing needs inconsistent with trainee/ apprentice commitments
- the need for supervision of trainees/apprentices
- legal and other requirements.

Employment opportunities are pretty slim for kids you don't need as many people in your business...

Problems with red tape and OH&S and regulations. The oncosts are pretty hard to justify ... the cost of doing business is pretty dear ... as far as employment is concerned it is a tough game

... both state and federal government is driving small business out of the arena ... this is what's stopping business from employing people. Until they get those things right and get back to basics we are banging our heads against the wall

...businesses that whinge all the time that they can't get tradesmen but a lot of them won't put apprentices on ... but to put an apprentice on you need a qualified tradesman to start as a supervisor ... it's a government thing a lot of incentives have been stopped.

At the same time there is a certain wariness about young people and their ability to work successfully

Maturity and attitude is a lot to do with it...they expect to leave school and then have this career. There is no transition period, they want to start at the top right away ... you can't expect young people to work in the one job for more than five years

I really think that the government is doing itself a disfavour by giving out so much ... they should be encouraged more to work because at the moment you can get a handout real easy and they go 'why bother?'

I'm not going to throw dickheads in there ... you wouldn't feed half of them for what I want them to do

A lot of them coming out ... they're flat reading and writing

While there are a variety of skilled jobs unfilled in all the towns visited, unskilled work is limited. What is available is often shift work that may be difficult, repetitive and tedious work:

Employers note that the important factors they look for when employing young people are family background, reputation of the young person and their family, presentation and work ethic.

Good people are snapped up pretty quick ... you either rob them from somewhere else ... or you run with what you've got.

Often they prefer to appoint a young person following a period of work experience to test their work skills. Several noted that they prefer to appoint married women because they are

reliable, stable, have experience, the right attitude and goals. They're not looking at leaving town like the young ones.

4.1.6. Young people in country towns

Young people in country towns are not an homogenous group. Distinct groups include the following:

- those attending school
- those leaving for university / TAFE or other training
- those leaving for work
- those staying for work
- those staying to go to TAFE
- those staying who are unemployed

4.1.7 Issues for young people

The issues for young people are very much determined by their status in the town and by their reason for going or staying.

1. Status

Status is broadly defined to include socio-economic standing, reputation and family background. In each town visited there appeared to be a distinct difference between young people with secure family background and/or higher socio-economic status and those with dysfunctional family backgrounds and/or lower status. In some towns there is a name for the lowest level group such as 'the gullies' or 'unemployables'. The young people so defined have few options and little prospects of finding work even though their status may not be of their own making.

Asked to define what this term meant in one town, school students responded:

A derro usually on the dole. Their parents are on the dole and spend all money on grog and cigarettes and pot. The kids grow up and steal things. There are a couple at school. We don't talk to them. They have their own friends. They don't take pride in anything. They don't have a work ethic. They talk about stupid things. They look dirty, they are dirty!

The pervasiveness of such distinctions was brought home to us when we asked a group of young unemployed people in one town to discuss their status. One young girl responded fatalistically

We are a breeding ground for the gullies.

Another noted

If you have family or relatives who are known for bad things then you're going to be permanently marked.

2. To leave or not to leave?

Decline impacted on the young people in schools in various ways. Forbes High School for example had gone from 850 students in 1978 to 480 in 2000. This impacts on infrastructure, staffing numbers and peer group friendships.

Focus groups were conducted in a number of high schools, in TAFE colleges and with unemployed young people in the towns visited. Over 90% of school and TAFE group members suggested they would leave town. The largest group of young people are those currently in school who will leave. Many suggested that their small town upbringing was valued but that they were eager to leave:

I know it's a bit of a bombhole but it's just good!

This is a sheltered environment. It's pretty safe.

We are brought up with the fact that you are going to move out as soon as possible. Because you are going to get a job somewhere and it's not going to happen in Temora. City people are ignorant of what happens out here and don't care.

This is my home. I love living here. [But] you don't want to be a check-out chick all your life.

I reckon this town is a place for old people really. So slow nothing much happens.

You know you have to do it [leave].

It's like the next step – you leave school you go away.

3. Finding work

In all towns visited the overwhelming number of jobs available to young people are part-time or casual positions in supermarkets, shops or food outlets. In most cases these positions are held by full-time school students who work out of school hours. If they are from upper status groups the students find it possible to pick up such positions if they are persistent and hard working. They do admit it is very much a case of who you know and who you are and how long your family has been in town. This access to part-time work makes them critical of unemployed young people who find it difficult to obtain work.

It's there if you want it. If you don't want it there's nothing anyone can do to make you change

Those from the lower groups are aware of the distinctions

They discriminate. They treat you like dirt. Some kids get jobs because of who they are.

However most young people make a clear distinction between the part-time jobs filled by school students and the 'real' jobs that they must consider on leaving school.

It's shocking – you have to wait for someone to get fired or die.

I find jobs are easy to come by but career occupations and stuff like that are hard to come by.

School students working part-time report that they are working for something to do, for independence, for the money to ease the burden on parents, to save for their eventual moving away and to purchase items such as a car for transport to work and study.

4. Ideal Job

Young people have clear ideas about what a career job means to them. It is something they enjoy doing, for which they are paid enough to support themselves, where they gain respect and where they can progress.

I'd rather do something I enjoy and get crappy pay than something I hate with good pay.

There are few such opportunities available to young people in the towns visited. Yet young people see themselves responsible if they cannot find work.

If you can't find something here then you're not trying hard enough.

5. Job Network / Centrelink

The towns visited had multiple job network providers. For young people this raises issues such as needing to register with all in case the scarce jobs are only listed in one agency and subsequently following the reporting requirements for each agency. Young people speak highly of some agencies and this often depends on a particular worker. In many cases young people feel that job network is not a great deal of help but this may relate as much to the lack of jobs as to the lack of assistance.

I reckon they are a waste of time going to them ... you are better off going around and asking for a job.

Centrelink is not viewed favourably by most young people with practices such as keeping a dole diary and breaching viewed as insensitive and ignorant of country circumstances.

I lost money. If you don't hand the form in you don't get no money. I think I didn't hand the form in on time. I might have been a day late. I didn't know what I had done.

Because of the minimal number of places offering employment in country towns the employers quickly tire of young people asking for forms to be filled on a weekly basis. Additionally we were told of examples where young people have been breached for failing to keep an appointment on a certain date when there is no public transport to the regional centre listed other than a daily bus requiring overnight accommodation and return bus fare for the appointment. For young people

living in poor circumstances this is an impossible cost. Appeals for equity and justice sometimes fall on deaf ears and, unless an advocate such as a youth worker intervenes, the young people are left in a precarious financial state.

*No-one wants to give you a job. You're wasting their time. A lot of them don't sign. You go back and [Centrelink would] say we can't pay you unless you have it signed. You are the one stuck in the middle. A couple of times you come close to abusing someone. **It plays with your head, that's what it does. It's a constant.** Everytime you want to get paid you go through that sort of stuff. If you can't get to an interview they halve your money.*

They were treating me like a second class citizen. They didn't want to listen to what I had to say... They're not taking notice unless you have that adult or qualified person representing you.

For young people stuck in the system of unemployment and strict accountability requirements the effort sometimes becomes too great. One of the more serious anecdotes reported to us was that many young people in the marginal groups are no longer receiving benefits because of the problems with red tape, because they cannot understand the forms or processes and because they have no advocates. These young people rely on handouts from relatives or others in the community.

6. Transport

One of the most significant issues affecting young people is the lack of public transport available to young people to allow them to attend activities such as TAFE or Centrelink. With cutbacks in the TAFE sector many courses are not readily available to young people. For example apprentices may have to travel from Forbes to Orange or Parkes, from Leeton to Griffith or Wagga, from Temora to Wagga and from Eden to Moruya and in all towns some may have to travel to capital cities.

While there may be one bus a day to these centres in no cases were we made aware that the times were suitable for apprentices travelling to and from TAFE. This creates quite extraordinary pressures on the young people, their families and their employers. We were told of two young apprentices killed on the road near Forbes while travelling for TAFE training in the course of twelve months.

For parents with under driving age children the travel requirement means that a parent must give up a day to drive their child. In each town we were made aware of the issues this creates for the parent in terms of time off work or simply filling in time in a distant town.

Employers were also disgruntled by the requirements as it meant the young person was away from town for one or more days a week instead of just down the road at TAFE for a couple of hours.

The lack of regular daily transport for example between Temora and Wagga (80 kms), Leeton and Griffith, Forbes and Orange, Eden and Moruya restricts the ability of young people to access employment opportunities in the larger regional centres. Lack of public transport is one of the major constraints for young people accessing education, training, work and a varied social life.

7. Social problems

As a result of the limited opportunities available to them young people in all the towns visited noted that there is significant underage drinking, drug use is widespread and vandalism is a problem.

Additionally in all towns teenage pregnancies and youth suicides are a major concern.

On Friday night there's a lot of kids our age drunk

Every Friday night some underage drinker is spewing their guts up in the gutter ... I saw a couple of Year 6 the other night running down the street drunk!

Drug takers are getting younger and younger – some are as young as 12.

Despite the social problems young people report problems accessing services for help.

Being in a small community a lot of people are afraid to approach the local doctor or the nurse because everyone knows everyone

[we want services to be] more accessible and less intimidating because you don't want to go and get counselling about an issue like pregnancy from a person who knows your mother and father.

4.1.8 Issues for School Principals and Career Advisers

In the towns surveyed high school principals and career advisers were interviewed. They note that retention rates from year 10 to year 12 are approximately 80-90%.

1. *Preparing young people to leave*

The schools work hard to equip the young people for the future noting that the great majority will leave the town.

It's not as if there's a total brain drain. You could call it a brain waste but not a brain drain.

The greater need for girls to gain higher education because of a lack of options was noted. Several pointed out that the need to move away from their small community and family is difficult for some, consequently a few put off leaving or are ill-equipped to move.

The fear of the big smoke is a big stumbling block plus the cost

2. *Those who stay*

School staff estimate up to 90% will leave those who stay tend to be the middle and lower academic ability group. Of these the ones who will have greatest difficulty getting employment will be the lower socio-economic group and those from dysfunctional family backgrounds. School staff note that most of the students from Year 9 onwards will have part-time employment yet full-time jobs for school leavers are rare.

Opportunities for self-fulfilment that is what a career means. In this town for people to have that ... they would have had training, probably tertiary training outside the town

To gain jobs in the community who you are and who you know is vital. At the same time the decline in apprenticeships is a cause for concern among high school staff.

Traineeships and particularly apprenticeships are being scaled down ... mostly to do with on-costs and requirements, legal requirements ... a lot of problems like not being able to offer work at the end of the apprenticeship.

3. Staffing

Attracting qualified staff to schools in small towns is often difficult. Additionally lack of transport restricts excursions. The Department of Education guidelines limiting the use of casual teachers to replace staff taking students away plus the higher cost of petrol was causing some schools to cancel cultural and other activities.

4. Social Issues

Underage drinking, drug taking and suicide are all issues of concern for school staff.

It's going to take a death, someone dying [from alcohol] to make the town wake up

[suicide occurs among] young people on farms with no future except looking down the barrel of banks resuming properties, seeing their families disintegrate, lack of training opportunities, no money to access whatever else might be out there

4.1.9 Issues for Centrelink / Job Network staff

Staff in Job Network agencies and Centrelink offices in each town were interviewed to assess the way they viewed young people and their access to employment. All felt there are limited jobs available to young people. What is available is usually part-time, casual, insecure and low paid. Some note that long-term unemployed people were moving into the communities to take advantage of cheap rent adding to the problem of unemployment for young people.

1. Dealing with young people

Dealing with young people seeking jobs is difficult for Centrelink / Job Network staff as young people are often rejected by potential employers.

We need to boost their morale. They do get very depressed. Rejection is hard – not even getting an interview!

For some long term unemployed a sense of alienation from society is dominant.

They're angry with society ... a little paranoia on their part that the world hates them. They start to drift around and have no fixed address

Our homeless rate is higher than [regional centre]. These are people not being supported by their parents but still live in the town but not necessarily on the street

Kids have to move out [of home] to escape abuse

There are still lots of people within the Aboriginal communities who don't get any benefits at all [because of literacy problems and shame at about filling out forms]. It's a hidden issue.

2. Work changes

There are few full-time positions available and this makes placing young people difficult.

A lot of our work is more casual as opposed to full-time apart from the traineeships.

Some felt that some employers are able to employ and lay off staff as the need dictates leading to difficulties for young people seeking to maintain an ongoing income.

They think they've got a job and then three weeks later they're off it again and then they have to go through the whole rigmarole of reapplying for benefits.

There's nowhere in town that would take on a group of school leavers.

3. Social Issues

Workers made us aware of the alcohol and drug problem in their towns. Others referred to acts of vandalism and gambling.

4. Job Network

There is some cooperation between agencies in all towns. There is also extensive competition.

All of those services are just in a mess because you've got ten thousand different people contracted to provide all different services ... they're all competitors and nobody wants to refer to this one and that one because they're a competitor and they'll lose the number. It's a joke.

Limited resourcing of the agencies makes it difficult to achieve their mission.

All of the staff here work across a number of areas. More resources would be good so you could feel you're doing things properly.

4.1.10 Issues for Council employees

Councils provide traineeships for young people although some council staff admit that the exodus of young people leads to a limited focus on those remaining. They note the lack of skilled tradespeople in all towns but at the same time recognise the problems associated with putting on an apprentice. The restructuring of TAFE has led to restrictions in access to training leading to reluctance on the part of employers to make the investment.

We have got to stop the rationalisation of TAFE ... regional development is about developing all the region not just the regional centres.

Antisocial behaviours, suicide, underage drinking and drug use are recognised as serious issues in all towns.

Nurses at the hospital are often scared at night-time – there's been a number of attacks.

In the town of Leeton a program called Leeton Links has been developed by a collaboration of Council, businesses and the schools. This program is providing great success in linking school students to potential employers. Students have to apply to be part of the program, are selected, prepare an application and present for interview.

It's an absolutely astonishing program involving the community, the business community in particular, and the schools. I have never seen anything like it anywhere I've taught before. It's an astonishing program that delivers genuine outcomes. High school principal

This program provides a model that may be used in other towns.

4.2 Quantitative findings

Surveys were distributed to school students in years 11 and 12 in high schools and to TAFE students and young unemployed in the towns visited. Additionally surveys were distributed to parents of the school students.

4.2.1 Young people

- Ø 85% of the 273 young people who responded are aged 16 or 17;
- Ø 53% are girls and 47% boys;
- Ø 90% are school students;
- Ø 72% live with both parents; 20% with their mother only, 4% with their father only; 3% with other family and 1% with no family;
- Ø 51% wish to complete university studies;
- Ø 67% hold part-time or casual positions of whom 80% work less than 15 hours per week for which most are paid between \$7 and \$10 per hour;
- Ø 78% intend to leave town on completion of studies, 70% of these for further study and 22% for work.
- Ø Significantly more girls (85%) than boys (71%) intend to leave town.
- Ø Of those intending to stay, 47% are remaining for work.
- Ø Significantly more girls (62%) than boys (39%) intend to go to university.
- Ø Of those leaving, less than a quarter expect to receive Youth Allowance to assist with studies.
- Ø 35% expect to receive some level of support from parents and 65% expect to support themselves with work and some parental support.

The following table outlines some of the significant attitudes of the young people.

<i>Attitude statement</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
There are jobs available for young people who want to work	59%	8%	33%
It is harder for girls to get a full-time job	24%	33%	43%
It is harder for boys to get a full-time job	15%	32%	53%
If you can't find a job it is your own fault	21%	8%	71%
Your level of education helps you get a job	85%	5%	10%
Family background is important to getting a job	41%	14%	45%
Your own reputation helps you get a job	81%	11%	8%
Who you know helps get you a job	75%	12%	13%
School has prepared me for the workplace	49%	17%	34%
There should be more jobs available for youth	90%	7%	3%
Employment agencies help find young people jobs	59%	29%	12%
I can find a job that gives me a career here	26%	23%	51%
I can find full-time work here	36%	25%	39%
There are more jobs here now than five years ago	26%	55%	19%
Work experience has helped me get work	35%	26%	39%
It is harder for younger people to get work here than in the cities	64%	25%	11%
Young people have to leave to find work	59%	18%	23%
Young people should be prepared to take whatever work is available	54%	15%	31%
Work for the dole is a good initiative for young people	38%	20%	42%
Underage drinking is a problem in this town	61%	13%	26%
Drugs are a problem in this town	55%	24%	21%
Vandalism is a problem in this town	51%	25%	24%
Public transport makes it easy for me to get a job	6%	19%	75%
There is a lot of support for young people here	18%	34%	48%
I like living in a small town	45%	15%	40%

Asked to rate a list of the aspects of satisfying work the following received the highest ratings.

1. Doing a job I like
2. Pay
3. Enough money to live on
4. Job security
5. A job where people respect me
6. Opportunities for promotion
7. A career structure

56% noted that jobs providing these elements were not offered in their communities, yet 62% noted they would be prepared to work in a job that didn't offer these elements to gain experience.

4.2.2 Parents

- Ø 134 parents responded to the survey
- Ø 69% of these are aged 40-49
- Ø 84% are female
- Ø 50% of respondents hold professional or small business positions
- Ø 80% are working, 43% in full-time work
- Ø 90% live with their partner and children
- Ø 27% have incomes of less than \$30 000, 29% from \$30 000 - \$50 000
- Ø 69% receive Family Allowance and / or the Family Allowance Supplement
- Ø 48% feel their children will not be eligible for Youth Allowance
- Ø 93% feel that their children will be partly or totally funded by family income on leaving
- Ø 52% feel that financial constraints will affect their children's access to tertiary study
- Ø 94% feel their children will leave town, 85% for further study and 15% for work

The following table outlines some of the significant attitudes of the parents.

<i>Attitude statement</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
There are jobs available for young people who want to work	50%	6%	44%
It is harder for girls to get a full-time job	29%	31%	40%
It is harder for boys to get a full-time job	31%	33%	36%
If young people can't find a job it is their own fault	9%	6%	85%
Young people's level of education helps get a job	87%	3%	10%
Family background is important to getting a job	78%	8%	14%
Young people's reputation helps them get a job	88%	3%	9%
Who you know helps get you a job	86%	6%	8%
School prepares young people for the workplace	54%	6%	40%
There should be more jobs available for youth	94%	2%	4%
Young people can find a job that gives them a career here	21%	9%	70%
Employment agencies help young people find jobs	45%	26%	29%
Young people can find full-time work here	37%	7%	56%
There are more jobs here now than five years ago	21%	27%	52%
Work experience helps young people get work	83%	10%	7%
It is harder for younger people to get work here than in the cities	81%	10%	9%
Young people have to leave to find work	82%	6%	12%
Young people should be prepared to take whatever work is available	54%	9%	37%
Work for the dole is a good initiative for young people	80%	5%	15%
Underage drinking is a problem in this town	82%	13%	5%
Drugs are a problem in this town	80%	17%	3%
Vandalism is a problem in this town	82%	6%	12%
Public transport makes it easy for young people to get a job	4%	6%	90%
There is a lot of support for young people here	18%	20%	62%
I like living in a small town	87%	2%	11%
I expect my children to find work here	17%	24%	69%
I expect that my children will have to leave town	87%	9%	4%
I encourage my children to remain in education	95%	2%	3%

4.2.3 Young people and their parents – some comparisons

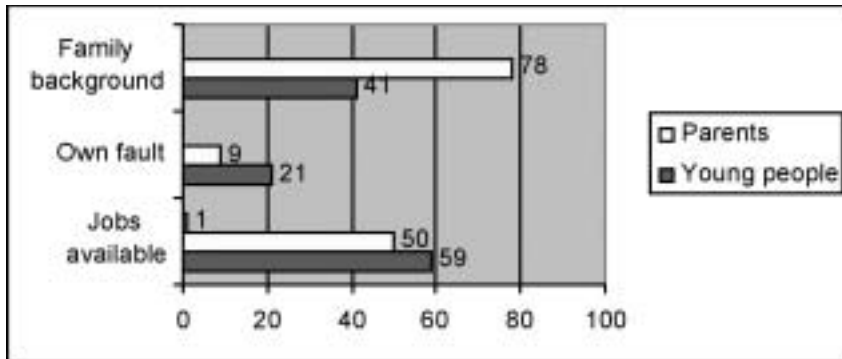
Asked to rate the factors that would most assist with employment prospects for young people the following were given the highest ratings.

<i>Rating</i>	<i>Young people</i>	<i>Parents</i>
1	Work experience	Access to secure employment
2	More training	More training
3	Access to secure employment	TAFE courses available in town
4	Access to Austudy / Youth Allowance	Work experience
5	Financial support to relocate	Financial support to relocate
6	TAFE courses available in town	Access to Austudy / Youth Allowance

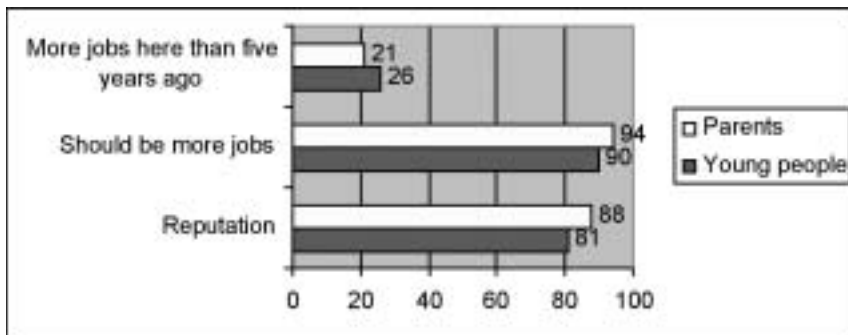
While there is a difference in emphasis, the issues are common for each group.

Comparison of attitudes – young people and parents

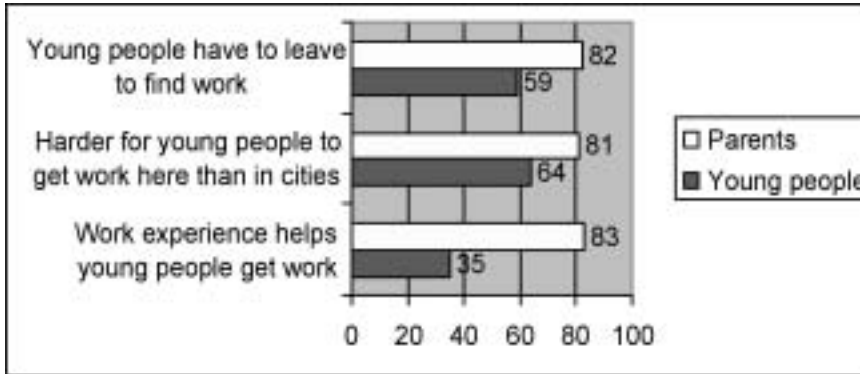
Parents are much more likely to view family background as a significant factor in employability. Young people are more likely to blame themselves if they cannot find work and are more likely to indicate that there are jobs available for those who want to work



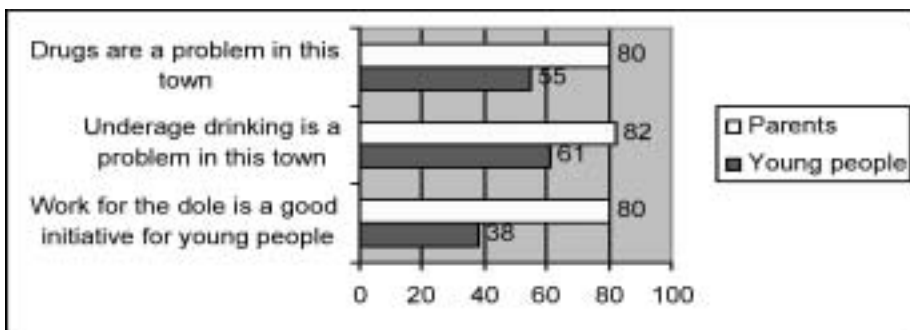
Parents and young people hold similar views about the fact that there are fewer jobs than five years ago, there should be more jobs for young people and that reputation is a critical factor in gaining employment.



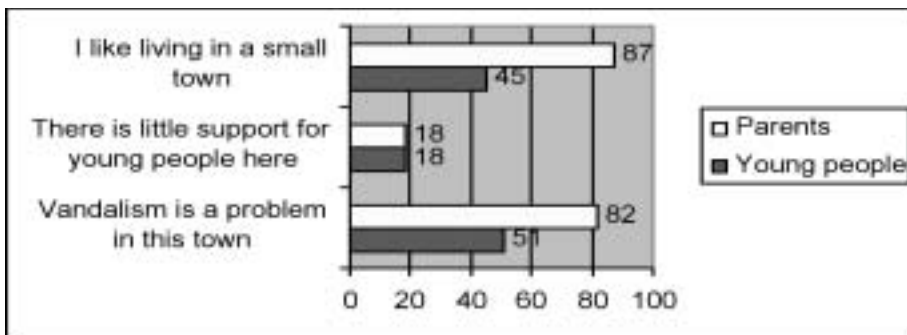
Parents are more likely to see the need for young people to leave to find work, are more likely to agree that it is harder for them to find work in the country and are more confident that work experience will assist young people to find work.



Parents are far more likely to view drugs and underage drinking as a problem and are much more supportive of work for the dole for young people than young people are themselves.



Of note is that parents are significantly more likely to enjoy living in a small town. In fact less than half of the young people enjoy the experience. Only 18% of young people and parents feel there is support for young people in country towns. Parents are more likely to view vandalism as a problem.



4.3 Findings specifically relating to Woolworths

- ∅ The opportunities for casual work at Woolworths are well known in rural communities. The provision of employment opportunities for young people is seen by young people and parents as a bonus to family income. There appears to be widespread community acceptance and support of Woolworths stores and the opportunities they provide e.g. there was general agreement that the opening of Woolworths was a good thing for Temora, creating lots of jobs for young people.

... the supermarkets have got the opportunity to take on some of the younger kids in that sort of area (Business person).

It is good with Woolworths. They seem to be employing a lot of young people... mainly for a wage in the 15 to 17 age group. If they are a good worker they will still take them on. ...I think Woolworths, the supermarkets, are the best employment for young people (Jobs Network official).

When Woolworths opened there were heaps of jobs (School student).

- ∅ Woolworths is perceived as an employer offering primarily casual positions. The opportunities provided by Woolworths for young people to transfer to other stores when going away to study are viewed positively but are not widely known.
- ∅ The formal employment policies of Woolworths are not fully understood by the young people interviewed.
- ∅ The opportunities for a management career path through Woolworths are largely unknown.
- ∅ Many young Woolworths employees perceive their place of employment as a good place to work:

The working conditions here are good most of the time. Everyone has their moment but usually it's a happy place to work. If you want time off they will usually let you have it. They are flexible."

I think it's really good. I think you get better opportunities if you work here, if you work the hours; and you've got to prove that you are reliable. I like it, I'm going all right.

It's like a big family ... I don't know why, you can just walk in and say hello to about 30 different people.

It's not too bad to work there, they all treat you like pretty equal. They don't favour males or females or anything like that.

- ∅ Some young people were not completely happy with the perceived working conditions at Woolworths. Comments made to the research team include:
 - (i) Age Related Issues

Tends to be younger kids who take the Woolies jobs. (Woolworths employee).

You have trouble getting a job if you are over 18. They have got to pay you more so they hire the younger kids. (Young unemployed person)

Or when you get to 18 they cut back your hours. (Young unemployed person).

A boy of 15 and nine months will get 20 hours a week; University students aged 18 to 21 only get 12 hours. It is quite a significant change. (Woolworths employee)

Woolies do have jobs but all the shops like to put on young people because they don't have to pay them so much." (Unemployed person)

(ii) Inconsistent hours of work

...get 15 hours one week, then 12 and sometimes I get four hours or none. (Woolworths employee)

You get limited hours, I didn't get any this week. It changes each week. (Woolworths employee)



5. Key Issues

5.1 Young people

The key factors that affect the perceptions of young people in country towns about employment opportunities are the size of the town, the industry diversity, the status of young people, work opportunities and, for the majority, the need to leave town.

Size of town is a key factor in the opportunities provided for young people. In this study the town of Leeton with over 10 000 offers the greatest range of jobs. Additionally where there is less reliance on agriculture and a diversity of industry, further opportunities exist.

There are recognisable groups of young people in country towns who are seriously disadvantaged in their quest for work opportunities. These are young people from marginalised groups who struggle for work opportunities. The perception of their status creates barriers in the community, and many become disillusioned and alienated and subject to long-term unemployment.

The exodus of young people after high school because of the need to seek education and training opportunities creates a gap in the 15-24 year age profile of many country towns. Additionally the need for young people to leave creates financial pressures for families and young people that are not readily acknowledged. The result is that young people from the country are seriously disadvantaged in their efforts to access education, training and employment.

5.2 Work opportunities

The changes in workplace conditions and the breakdown in the traditional areas of work for young people has made it difficult for young people to gain work that leads to a meaningful career in the country. The loss of apprenticeship opportunities and the withdrawal of TAFE training opportunities have led to a loss of recognised career paths in country towns. The resultant lack of skilled tradesmen is but one of the results of this breakdown in training opportunities.

At the same time the casualisation of unskilled work in country towns has led to full-time positions traditionally filled by young people disappearing. An unforeseen result of this casualisation is that young people are disadvantaged in their access to benefits when they are in and out of casual work leaving them in a precarious financial state. Often they may be more secure if they reject the work.

Some work practices appear to place young people in physical danger. The unskilled work at the abattoir, on the fishing boats and in the mill are all regarded as dangerous for inexperienced workers by community members.

While there is some attempt to create traineeships in all the towns, overall the opportunities available to young people in country towns are limited, insecure and lack a career development focus.

5.3 Support for young people

Both parents and young people felt that the support available to young people in country towns is limited. Facilities are rarely developed with young people in mind. An exception noted in this study is the skate park in Leeton. For the most part young people are limited to roaming the streets, parks and public space areas of the towns. All stakeholders note the high prevalence of underage drinking, drug use and vandalism in the towns.

A lack of transport facilities that would allow young people to gain easier access to employment opportunities, services and social activities is also evident.

The reshaping of the Common Youth Allowance (still often referred to as Austudy or Youth Allowance by many country people) and the means testing of young people's entitlements against their parents incomes until age 25 creates a serious disadvantage for many young people. 52% of parents note that the new arrangements impose a financial constraint on the family that may restrict their children's access to further education and training. Youth Allowance is reduced against quite modest parental income levels. When the burden of supporting a young person to live away from home in a city is added to education costs, many family budgets are unable to accommodate this cost. Figures revealing the decline in access to tertiary education among rural young people reflect the reality that Common Youth Allowance means testing is a significant barrier for rural young people.

The reduction of TAFE offerings in the country towns visited is another cause for concern. Rural young people have less access to training in their home towns than they did even five years ago. The regionalisation of TAFE has created hardship for many young people, and as we found in Forbes, has caused the tragic deaths of young people travelling long distances for training. Lack of TAFE training has also reduced the incentives for tradesmen to provide apprenticeships.

The new Job Network providers are offering training and job placement opportunities. However there is also some confusion for young people who feel the need to register at each agency. Agencies are competitors for scarce resources and job placements in country towns.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations re employment for rural young people

The following recommendations emerge from this report:

Vision

- Ø A long term vision is needed to address the education to work transition for young people generally and rural young people in particular. Investment in human capital as the basis on which we develop young Australians should be the foundation of such a vision. It would be beneficial if the federal government convened a community consultation with state and local governments, small business representatives, education and health providers and rural community groups. The aim of this consultation would be to develop a vision for young Australians and to provide concrete strategies for future cooperations in the interest of developing this vision for the benefit of rural young people.
- Ø Following this process a policy document should be developed on the youth to work transition period incorporating policies to:
 - Ø make the transition smooth;
 - Ø ensure that young people at risk, particularly in rural areas, are protected;
 - Ø ensure the effects of workplace reform on young people are addressed;
 - Ø ensure that financial constraints are not the sole determinant of young people being denied access to education and training.

Regional Development

- Ø Not all country towns are in decline. There is, however, a need to ensure that a concerted effort is made to ensure that regional development is facilitated. There is a need for Federal and state governments to address the issue of regional development planning and funding by:
 - Ø assessing region by region development;
 - Ø undertaking community consultations; and
 - Ø targeting planning and funding.

Transport

- Ø A key area of disadvantage for young people relates to transport services. Adequate transport infrastructure between towns and large centres needs to be developed by state and local governments to allow young people access to employment, training, sport, and cultural and social activities.
- Ø The introduction of a ‘gold pass’ scheme for young people aged 15-24 similar to that used by seniors should be evaluated as a way for the federal government to help young people who need to travel to employment interviews and services.

Employment

Government

- Ø There is an urgent need to address the effects of workplace reform on young people particularly those in rural areas. There is a need for The federal government to commission research into the impacts of workplace reforms, including the growth of casualisation on young people’s employment opportunities.
- Ø An assessment needs to be undertaken by The federal government of the apprenticeship and traineeship schemes to ensure that barriers to small businesses taking up the programs are addressed and that incentives are provided. Part of this review should include an assessment of the gendered nature of apprenticeships in country towns.
- Ø The lack of skilled staff is an ongoing problem in rural communities. Federal, state and local governments need to explore better ways to work together to provide incentive programs to attract skilled staff to country towns. These might include fringe benefits, tax benefits and other compensations.
- Ø An assessment of the Job Network reforms and Centrelink practices and their impacts on young people is necessary. As part of this assessment the federal government could consider:
 - Ø examining their policies in relation to eligibility requirements and breaching as they relate to young people particularly in country towns;
 - Ø establishing an advocacy service for young people within Centrelink;
 - Ø developing a strategy to assess the number of disadvantaged young people who are not applying for Job Search assistance because of literacy, cultural and other issues;
 - Ø assessing the distribution of Job Network agencies in country towns;
 - Ø providing additional financial support for Job Network providers in country towns to provide training and development opportunities for young people where limited work opportunities are available.

Business

- Ø Businesses in country towns are aware of the problems associated with outmigration of young people and the lack of skilled staff. It would appear to be in the long term interest of businesses to provide skills training to young people. Businesses should:

- Ø Work with all levels of government to develop a vision on the education to work transition of young people;
- Ø give consideration to the benefits of providing training and apprenticeship opportunities to young people.

Education providers

- Ø The Leeton Links program provides a model of a successful school to work program. The state government could benefit by using this as a model in other small towns.

Education

Government

- Ø One of the barriers for young people accessing higher education is the Austudy / Youth Allowance eligibility criteria. This issue could be addressed through The federal government reassessing the means testing of the Common Youth Allowance as it affects rural young people. Consideration should be given to geographical disadvantage factors as well as the lack of access to education in the local area, the number of children in families, the cost associated with supporting a young people in a city and other associated costs. Access to Austudy / Youth Allowance should be adjusted accordingly.

Business

- Ø Small business should consider providing workplace training.
- Ø Businesses should form close links with the schools in the area and undertake work experience and other collaborations such as those incorporated in the Leeton Links program (addressing young people at school, acting on interview panels for young people applying for work experience etc).

Education providers

- Ø The University of NSW has been very successful in targeting rural young people in their rural medical entry scheme. The Australian Vice Chancellors Committee should establish a review committee to instigate further affirmative schemes for rural young people.
- Ø State government needs to undertake a review of TAFE services in country towns to increase young people's access to a diverse range of programs.
- Ø TAFE should undertake an education needs analysis in country towns.

General support for young people

- Ø greater support for young unemployed people in country towns could be expressed by the federal and state governments in the form of labour market programs, advocacy services, drug and alcohol support services and other health and welfare programs.
- Ø There is a needs for all levels of government (local, state and federal) to provide greater assistance to young people. On a local level, the lack of attention to young people needs to be reassessed and act to provide lifestyle, support and transition services for young people.

6.2 Recommendations relating specifically to Woolworths

- ∅ Woolworths should implement a strategy in rural communities which emphasises the opportunities for training, development and promotion through the organisation. In particular the strategy would focus on:
 - ∅ training opportunities including traineeships and apprenticeships;
 - ∅ opportunities to transfer to other store locations; and
 - ∅ opportunities for managerial training.
- ∅ Woolworths should consider using their strong presence in rural communities to publicise the issues affecting young people in country towns.
- ∅ Woolworths should consider a potential role in facilitating the transition of young people from school to work. This could include:
 - ∅ extended involvement in work experience placements; and
 - ∅ ~~extended~~ **traineeship** opportunities.
 - ∅ As a significant employee in rural communities, the working conditions and policies of Woolworths could be seen as a benchmark for other employers of young people in the community. Mindful of this responsibility, Woolworths management should provide models of employment which can be held up as exemplars for other employers of young people in rural communities.



Transport

One of the critical issues for young people in small rural towns is the lack of public transport available to get them from their community to the nearest regional centres. Young people in the country towns surveyed cannot get a bus that would allow them to access employment. Most of the towns surveyed have one bus a day but no service that would allow young people to travel to work in the morning and return at night. School buses provide access but are not convenient for work purposes. The lack of suitable public transport also restricts access to TAFE, Centrelink offices and job interviews in regional centres. We were told of the deaths of two young people driving themselves from Forbes to Orange for TAFE in one twelve month period. Lack of public transport not only restricts young people's access to work, training and social activities, it places them in serious danger.

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DRUNK AT 8

Children found drunk at Temora

Community shocked by revelation

Cootamundra and Temora's populations to halve: Report

By SHANNON EURELL

COOTAMUNDRA and Temora could lose almost half their populations in the next 15 years, according to a report on population projections in the South West released yesterday.

The report, which was prepared by the office of regional commissioner, indicates NSW's major regional cities will become even larger in the next future, while many smaller country towns will decline dramatically.

The document, prepared for the NSW Premier's Department, predicts many areas of NSW will lose up to 50 per cent of their population in the next 15 years.

According to figures compiled in the report Cootamundra's population is predicted to be 6421 by 2026, a decline of 5641 since 1991, or 44 per cent.

Temora will also experience a

decline, according to the report, with the population expected to drop from 4350 in 1991 to 3204 in 2026, a 41 per cent decrease.

Commissioner Major Paul Dempster said the figures were "alarming by definition".

"I suggest the figures are a reflection of population trends I believe exist from within the towns but a lot of State Government jobs in the early 90s," he said.

"In fact, in the last 12 months some businesses have been reporting difficulty in getting skilled staff to fill positions.

"I think it's very disappointing these figures have been bandied about without any strategic consultation."

Conservative Broadbent said beyond not see Cootamundra's population dropping by such a degree.

"I believe we have hit the prop-

erage decline, perhaps even increased with there being a bit of change recently which was very positive for the town," he said.

According to the Egmont Wagga will continue to experience a steady increase from 57,641 today to 63,925 in 2016. Griffith will record a slight decline to 22,984 while Albury will also continue to grow, from 43,521 to 46,273 in the next 15 years.

The report also indicates Cootamundra, Lurie and Lurie will all continue to experience population growth, while Dubbo, Gungahlin, Hay, Holbrook, Lockhart, Narandah, Renaldene and Urua will decline.

Country Labor politician Tony Kelly said the report may be positive as it will help identify areas needing assistance.

"We shouldn't be afraid or back away from infrastructure in the future of

regional communities," Mr Kelly said.

"Political leaders must stand up and face these challenges. It's not a time to bury our heads in the sand.

"Everyone knows while some country centres are growing, others are struggling. That's a fact.

He said some money to invest in 2001, the New South Wales Local Government has worked hard to encourage investment and jobs in regional and rural NSW.

"It has created 24,000 jobs and set up programs to specifically help those smaller towns and ensure their long-term viability," the Central West Democrat said.

"This is direct assistance from the NSW Government, more than 610 regional towns that \$5.2 billion into the regional economy.

"Make no mistake, this means jobs."

Mr Kelly said 679 new jobs had been created in country towns and 523 jobs relocated from Sydney, including 481 agriculture jobs which had been spread between Wagga, Lurie and Temora.

Meanwhile, controversial academic Dr Gordon Firth, who sparked an angry reaction when he said people living in small country towns should move to larger centres, said visit details Park today and Tootina tomorrow.

Dr Firth accepted an invitation from Minister for Lachlan Ian Armstrong to visit the Lachlan electorate and will also visit Cootamundra, Lake Cargelligo, West Wyalong and Junee.

Mr Armstrong said the Dutton University students who the controversial views he expressed at the Country Towns Conference at Renaldene were accompanied by the media.

Life!

Helping rural towns help themselves

Help is at hand for the Riverina's small communities in the form of rural community facilitator Anne Kerr.

Since November last year, Anne has worked at the Rural East Riverina Rural Counselling Service at Cootamundra on a 'grassroots' level. She liaises with government representatives, small businesses, progressive associations and other organisations in the Temora, Junee, Narandah, Cootamundra areas to help improve services for residents.

Anne's work has resulted in a number of positive changes, including the counselling service gaining \$20,000 in funding for a vital business mentoring program. Consultants are employed to conduct public meetings, small business meetings, training and provide one-on-one advice to business people in such towns, including Narandah, Cootamundra, Murrumbidgee, Cootamundra, Murrumbidgee and Junee.

"People who live in country towns, they choose to live there," Anne said.

"I think they are truly realistic about life in a country

town," she said. "The problem of living in country towns should be highlighted."

Anne said people tended to be attracted to living in small communities because they enjoyed the lifestyle and found the standard of living more affordable.

"We added that to provide the communities should have a good relationship with local government and required leaders with vision, as well as not relying on their immediate source of income and seeking enterprises outside that area."

"Communities that are engaged and motivated to get things moving, get things to happen," she said.

"The towns that I work in have a lot of positives going for them."

"In other towns there are a lot of creative, innovative people working in business and as part of the community."

Anne is also working with consultants to develop business plans for the district.

Her position is funded by Federal, State and Local government, as well as community donations.

KELLY MUFFESTERS



Anne Kerr is helping rural communities. Photo: Iain Kerr

Appendix 1 : Town Profiles

Temora

The Shire of Temora is located at the north-eastern end of the Riverina region of New South Wales 460 km south-west of Sydney and 88 kilometres from Wagga Wagga, the largest rural inland city in New South Wales. The Temora Local Government Area covers a total of 2803 square kilometres or approximately 0.35 per cent of the total land area of New South Wales.

Temora was home to more than 20,000 people during the roaring gold rushes of the 1880's and is centrally located in the rich sheep-wheat belt of southern eastern New South Wales. As the gold declined, Temora continued as the service centre for a developing wheat growing district, although one mine, the paragon Gold Mine at Gidginbung, continued in production until it closed in 1996.

Temora has a mixed farming background and solid agricultural base. In the heart of the grain growing area of New South Wales, Temora is a strong pastoral area producing wool, beef, lamb and cereal crops. The agricultural prosperity of the district is reflected in the huge wheat sub-terminal on the Old Cootamundra Road and the Agricultural Research Station.

Agriculture plays a major role in the Temora community with a number of machinery dealerships catering for local and interstate farmers. Temora also has a number of transport and distribution operators who support the agricultural industry, providing a large network of trucking services and access to rail transportation.

From pre-school age to HSC level Temora's children are well catered for with two public primary schools in Temora as well as a high school and St. Anne's Central School offering a Catholic based education from Kindergarten to year 10. At tertiary level, Temora has a TAFE College which is part of the larger Riverina network and offers a good range of courses.

Temora's unemployment level at March 1998 was 9.6%.

Leeton

Located 560km west of Sydney, Leeton is situated in the Murrumbidgee area in the Riverina region of southern New South Wales. The area is the heartland of one of the richest food producing areas in Australia and has extensive value-adding industries that enhance the food producing capacity of the area.

Walter Burly Griffin , the designer of Canberra, drew up the plans for Leeton in 1914 using his favourite circular street design. The town was named after C.A. Lee, Minister for Public Works, when the irrigation scheme was opened in 1912. Situated 30 km off the Newell Highway, Leeton is the administrative centre of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, a productive rural area recognised for its orchards and rice fields. The town owes its existence to the MIA which initially concentrated on fruit growing. The first rice mill opened in 1951 and Leeton is now the headquarters for Australia's rice industry.

Leeton is situated in the Murrumbidgee area in the Riverina region of southern New South Wales. The town is 560 kms from Sydney, 130 kms from Wagga Wagga and 60 kms from Griffith. The area is the heartland of one of the richest food producing areas of Australia and has extensive value adding industries that enhance the food producing capacity of the area.

The Leeton website notes that Leeton is currently enjoying a boom in economic development which manifests itself in :

- sales of industrial, residential and commercial land
- major industries and businesses relocating to the area
- increase in building and development applications
- lower levels of unemployment (2% below state average)
- and population growth.

The economic growth is attributed to local planning and development of the Leeton Regional Strategy which identifies the economic drivers of economic development of the region as agrifood and education.

Leeton is a major centre for the production of irrigated agriculture in NSW. In particular the MIA produces 44% of all rice grown in NSW; 56% of all citrus grown in NSW and 34.2% of all grapes grown in NSW. The production strengths of the region are significant, and these strengths form the foundation of significant processing operations including the Leeton Rice Mills, Rockdale Feedlot, National Foods, Allgold Foods and Berri Ltd.

The community is serviced by Leeton High School, St. Francis De Sales Regional College and Yanco Agricultural High School. St. Francis De Sales is a Catholic High School which caters for boarders and Yanco Agricultural High School is also a regional High School that caters for boarders but is focussed on an agricultural background. The primary school needs of the community are more than adequately covered with two state public schools, one Catholic primary school and Gralee Special School located within Leeton.

Forbes

Forbes is the centre of a prosperous farming district. Gold was discovered in the area in the 1860s creating a rush and a tent town of 30,000 hopeful miners. After the first influx, the population stabilised at around 35,000 people. Forbes boomed in the 1880s and 1890s when wealth from the diggings resulted in the grand Victorian buildings that remain today.

On the Newell Highway, 370 kms west of Sydney, Forbes Shire is located within the Central Western Slopes and Plains region of NSW. Forbes is accessible by rail, road or air, with daily flights to and from Sydney.

Agriculturally, the economy of the district is diverse. Many areas are covered in the Forbes district including wheat, grain and oil seed crops, fruit, vegetables, lucerne, livestock selling complex, dairying, fodder crops and wool.

Manufacturing and processing has a solid base including: abattoirs, concrete and fertiliser production, skins and hide production, pet food and leather processing and export, wool distribution centre and a very large saleyard.

Water for stock, industrial and irrigation use comes from Wyangala Dam (on the Lachlan River) and from major underground water supplies.

There are three primary schools and two high schools within the town of Forbes. Boarding facilities are provided at Red Bend College for students living outside of the town's area.

The 1996 Census revealed that 21.1% of males and 33.7% of females in the 15-19 year age group were unemployed. These unemployment rates are both above the NSW State average of 19.7% for males and 16.9% for females.

Eden

Eden lies on the northern shore of Twofold Bay, 493km south of Sydney and approximately 50kms from the Victorian border. Eden's long history was founded on the whaling industry which flourished from 1818 until the 1930s when the whaling station closed. Today the town is a deepwater port and tourist centre.

Eden's growth was boosted by the discovery of gold at Kiandra, it being the closest port and offering prospectors easiest access. Dairying and timber-getting have been important industries since the early years. In 1968 the Harris-Daishowa woodchip mill was established at Jews Head to process wood from the nearby forests into woodchip for the Japanese market. A commercial fishing fleet was established after World War II and the coastline is a mecca for amateur anglers.

Development of the proposed wharf at Eden is expected to have multiplier effects. The cruise industry is expanding due to the major cruise organisations increasing their fleets. Eden, apart from being the centre of the whale watching industry, is expected to be a prime destination as a major cruise port. Eden would also become a major export centre, not only for timber and fish products, but also for products from other centres within the region. A major wharf offers industries such as light engineering, metal fabrication and value added timber manufacture, a ready point of export. The Navy will also be building a facility in conjunction with the wharf project (Bega Valley website).

The Shire's fishing industry is currently repositing itself following the Heinz cannery closure in 1999. The global decision by the company has already seen new market in the region seeking to take advantage of the array of opportunities the industry offers. Expansion to value adding fish products and the development of a local fish species is commanding much interest from investors.

The raising of beef cattle is a substantial industry with growing prospects in importance due to an increasing demand in Asia for high quality beef products. With a proposed deep water port at Eden making exports easier, plans to expand and diversify production are already being formulated by the Shire's beef industry.

There is one high school in Eden. Tertiary education is available at Universities in Canberra and Wollongong. The latter has already established an outreach campus in Bega which opened for business in March 2000. Technical education is provided at Bega TAFE. Courses including welding, rural studies, tourism, hospitality, business studies and computing are available.



Appendix 2: Young People's Questionnaire

Rural Young People and Employment

This questionnaire has been designed for young people living in country towns. The survey is part of a study being conducted by Associate Professor Margaret Alston, Director, and Ms Jenny Kent, member, of the Centre for Rural Social Research at Charles Sturt University.

The purpose of the research is to understand the employment opportunities available to young people in country towns and to assess the responses of young people to these opportunities.

Survey participants have been sourced through the Department of Education, Job Network agencies and clubs in the selected sample of country towns.

Please assist us to more fully understand the issues relating to employment for young people by completing the questionnaire. As a young person living in a country town, your contribution is invaluable to the success of this project.

Feel free to make any further comments on any relevant issues in the comments section at the end of the questionnaire. You should note that all information will be treated as strictly confidential and no identifying details will be revealed in any research reports or papers that result from this research.

Should you have any queries about the questionnaire or individual questions, please contact Associate Professor Margaret Alston on 02 69332783 or on email at malston@csu.edu.au.

Questionnaire: Young people in country towns

Section 1 Personal Data

Please circle the most appropriate answers

1. What is your age?

14 15 16 17 18 19 older than 19

2. What is your sex?

Male Female

3. What is your current occupation?

School student University student TAFE student Working full-time

Working part-time Unemployed

4. Who do you live with?

Mother Father Both parents Other family No family

5. What is your mother's occupation?

Professional job Farm:er/small business Trade Unskilled

Home duties Unemployed Other (please specify): _____

6. If your mother is in the workforce what hours does she work?

Part-time Full-time Casual

7. What is your father's occupation?

Professional job Farmer/small business Trade Unskilled

Home duties Unemployed Other (please specify): _____

8. If your father is in the workforce what hours does he work?

Part-time Full-time Casual

9. What is your ethnic origin?

Indigenous Anglo Other (please specify): _____

10. What level of education have you reached?

Year 9 Year 10 Year 11 Year 12

TAFE qualification Other (please specify): _____

11. What is the highest level you intend to complete in the future?

Year 10 HSC TAFE qualification University

Other (please specify): _____

22. Do you receive Youth Allowance?

Yes No

23. If yes, how much per fortnight?

24. If yes, have you ever been breached?

Yes No

25. If you have been breached briefly describe why

26. Have you been involved in a work for the dole scheme?

Yes No

27. If yes, briefly describe the project.

28. Have you had to keep a dole diary?

Yes No

29. If yes, briefly describe your experience.

If you are currently unemployed or not looking for work go to section 3.

If you have a job please answer questions 30 – 36.

30. What is your job?

31. How many hours a week do you work?

Less than 5 5 to less than 10 10 to less than 15

15 to less than 20 20 to less than 30 30 to less than 40 40 or more

32. What is your current hourly rate of pay?

Less than \$5 \$5 to less than \$6 \$6 to less than \$7
\$7 to less than \$10 \$10 to less than \$12 \$12 or more an hour

33. Does your work include shifts?

Yes No

If yes

34. Please describe the hours that you work on your shifts

35. Is your job likely to continue for the next 12 months?

Very likely Likely Unlikely Don't know

36. In relation to your current position do you feel:

Unqualified Qualified Over-qualified

Section 3 Planning to Leave Town?

Please circle the most appropriate answer

37. Are you planning to leave town?

Yes No

38. If yes, for what reason?

University TAFE Work To progress in my current job

Other (please specify): _____

39. If no, what is your reason for staying?

Work Apprenticeship Traineeship Going back on the farm or into family business

Family reasons Other (please specify): _____

40. If you are still at school how will you support yourself after leaving school?

Austudy / Youth Allowance Parents Parents plus part-time work

Part-time work Full-time work Other (please specify): _____

Section 4 Services in your Town

Please circle the most appropriate answer

41. The following is a list of services and opportunities that may be available in your town. Please select the most appropriate answer about the adequacy of the service for young people.

Sport	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Apprenticeships</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Traineeships</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>TAFE</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Community support</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Youth club</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Youth workers</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Entertainment</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Health services</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
Job opportunities	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know

Section 5 Attitudes

Please circle the most appropriate answer

42. In this section

SA means 'strongly agree'

A means 'agree'

DK means 'don't know'

D means 'disagree' and

SD means 'strongly disagree'

There are jobs available for young people if they want to work	SA	A	DK	D	SD
It is harder for girls to get a full-time job here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
It is harder for boys to get a full-time job here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
If you can't get a job it is your own fault	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Your level of education helps get you a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Family background is important to getting a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Your own reputation helps you get a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Who you know helps get you a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD

School has prepared me for the workplace	SA	A	DK	D	SD
There should be more jobs available for youth	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Employment agencies helps find young people jobs	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I can find a job that gives me a career here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I can find full-time work here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
There are more jobs here now than five years ago	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Work experience has helped me get work	SA	A	DK	D	SD
It is harder for young people to get work here than in the cities	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people have to leave to find work	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people should be prepared to take whatever work is available	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Work for the dole is a good initiative for young people	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Underage drinking is a problem in this town	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Drugs are a problem in this town	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Vandalism is a problem in this town	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Public transport in this town makes it easy for me to get to a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
There is a lot of support for young people here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I like living in a small town	SA	A	DK	D	SD

Section 6 My Ideal Job

43. Following is a list of some of the components of satisfying work. In thinking about the type of job you would like to have, circle what you believe are the three most important elements to be considered.

Please circle the three most important elements of satisfying work for you

Job security

Holidays

Pay

Workmates

Full-time

Doing a job I like

Working long shifts so I can have more days off

Opportunities for promotion

Uniform provided

Part-time

Close to home

Enough money to live on

A career structure

A job where people respect me

44. Are there jobs in your community that could offer you these elements?

Yes No

45. Would you be happy to work in a job that didn't offer these elements to gain work experience?

Yes No

46. What industry/occupation would you like to work in?

Section 7 Where I Live

47. From the following list circle the three most important factors that make your town an attractive place to live in

Please circle the three most important factors

Good roads

Good sporting facilities

Good recreation and entertainment facilities

Available public transport

Good shopping

Family close by

Friends close by

Access to a variety of jobs

Good communications technology

Good schools

A good range of TAFE courses

Access to university courses

Other training (please specify): _____

Appendix 3: Parent Questionnaire

Rural Young People and Employment

This questionnaire has been designed for parents and guardians of young people living in country towns. The survey is part of a study on the employment opportunities available to young people in country towns being conducted by Associate Professor Margaret Alston, Director, and Ms Jenny Kent, member, of the Centre for Rural Social Research at Charles Sturt University.

This survey of parents and guardians is designed to add depth to our understanding of these issues through additional information on the financial, emotional and social support provided to young people and the pressures on families who are providing that support.

Please assist us to more fully understand the issues by completing the questionnaire. As the parent or guardian of a young person living in a country town, your contribution is invaluable to the success of this project.

Feel free to make any further comments on any relevant issues in the comments section at the end of the questionnaire. You should note that all information will be treated as strictly confidential and no identifying details will be revealed in any research reports or papers that result from this research.

Should you have any queries about the questionnaire or individual questions, please contact Associate Professor Margaret Alston on 02 69332783 or on email at malston@csu.edu.au.

Questionnaire: Parents/ guardians of young people in country towns

Section 1 Personal Data

Please circle the most appropriate answers

1. What is your age?

Less than 30 30 to less than 40 40 to less than 50 50 to less than 60 60 or older

2. What is your sex?

Male Female

3. What is your current occupation?

Professional job Farmer/small business Trade Unskilled

Home duties Unemployed Other (please specify): _____

4. My current status in relation to the paid workforce is:

Full-time work Permanent Part-time work Casual work

Unemployed and looking for work Not looking for work at present

Please specify number of hours worked per week in paid employment: _____

5. Who do you live with?

Partner and children Children Other (please specify): _____

6. If you live with a partner, what is his/her occupation?

Professional job Farmer Trade Unskilled Home duties

Unemployed Other (please specify): _____

7. His/her current status in relation to the paid workforce is:

Full-time work Permanent Part-time work Casual work

Unemployed and looking for work Not looking for work at present

Please specify number of hours worked per week in paid employment: _____

8. How many children do you have?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

9. How many children are still dependent on you?

0 1 2 3 4 5+

10. What is your ethnic origin?

Indigenous Anglo Other (please specify): _____

11. What level of education have you reached?
 Primary School Certificate HSC TAFE qualification
 University degree Other (please specify): _____

12. If you have a partner what level of education has he/she reached?
 Primary School Certificate HSC TAFE qualification
 University degree Other (please specify): _____

13. Your current annual household income is:
 Less than \$10 000 \$10 000 to \$15 000
 \$15 000 to \$20 000 \$20 000 to \$25 000
 \$25 000 to \$30 000 \$30 000 to \$40 000
 \$40 000 to \$50 000 \$50 000 to \$60 000
 \$60 000 to \$100 000 \$100 000 or more

14. Do you receive any of the following benefits?
 Family Allowance Family Allowance supplement Youth Allowance/ Austudy
 Job search Disability Parenting benefit
 Other (please specify): _____

Section 2 Information on financial support for young people
If your child/ children are considering going on to further study please complete this section.

15. I expect my child / children to receive Youth Allowance / Austudy should they go on to further study
 Yes No

16. If no why will they not receive a benefit?

17. If no, they will be supported by:
 Family income Part-time work
 Both family and part-time work Other (please specify): _____

18. Financial considerations may prevent your child / children continuing on to further education
 Yes No

Section 3 Child /Children Planning to Leave Town?

Please circle the most appropriate answer

19. Does your child / children intend to leave your town when they have finished school / training?

Yes No

If yes, for what reason?

University TAFE Work Other (please specify): _____

If no, what is their reason for staying?

Work Apprenticeship Traineeship Working on farm or in family business

Family reasons Other (please specify): _____

Section 4 Services in your town

Please circle the most appropriate answer

20. The following is a list of services and opportunities that may be available in your town. Please select the most appropriate answer about the adequacy of the service for young people.

<i>Sport</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Apprenticeships</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Traineeships</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>TAFE</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Community support</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Youth club</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Youth workers</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Entertainment</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Health services</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know
<i>Job opportunities</i>	Exceptional	Adequate	Not adequate	Not available	Don't know

Section 5 Attitudes

Please circle the most appropriate answer

21. In this section

SA means 'strongly agree'

A means 'agree'

DK means 'don't know'

D means 'disagree' and

SD means 'strongly disagree'

There are jobs available for young people if they want to work	SA	A	DK	D	SD
It is harder for girls to get a full-time job here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
It is harder for boys to get a full-time job here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
If young people can't get a job it is their own fault	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people's level of education helps get them a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Family background is important to getting a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people's reputation helps get them a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Who you know helps get you a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
School prepares young people for the workplace	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I expect my child / children to find work here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I encourage my children to remain in education	SA	A	DK	D	SD
There is a lot of support for young people here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
There should be more jobs available for youth	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people can find a job that gives them a career here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people can find full-time work here	SA	A	DK	D	SD
There are more jobs here now than five years ago	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Work experience helps young people get work	SA	A	DK	D	SD
It is harder for young people to get work here than in the cities	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people have to leave to find work	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Young people should be prepared to take whatever work is available	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Work for the dole is a good initiative for young people	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I expect that my children will have to leave town	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Underage drinking is a problem in this town	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Drugs are a problem in this town	SA	A	DK	D	SD

Vandalism is a problem in this town	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Public transport in this town makes it easy for young people to get to a job	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Employment agencies helps find young people jobs	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Employment agencies help get young people into training	SA	A	DK	D	SD
Employment agencies maintain regular contact with young people	SA	A	DK	D	SD
I like living in a small town	SA	A	DK	D	SD

Section 6 Your Community

Please circle the three most important factors

22. From the following list circle the three most important factors that make your town an attractive place for young people to live in

Good roads

Good sporting facilities

Good recreation and entertainment facilities

Available public transport

Family close by

Friends close by

Access to a variety of jobs

Work experience for young people

Good communications technology

Good schools

A good range of TAFE courses

Access to university courses

Good shopping

Other training (please specify): _____

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