# *Deferring a University Offer in Regional Victoria*

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# Executive summary

This report presents the 2008 results from the longitudinal survey of regional school completers from the 2006 Year 12 cohort, who, when contacted as part of the Victorian *On Track* survey of school leavers in 2007, had deferred a place at university. The high rate of deferral amongst non-metropolitan school completers was the impetus for the current study, which is funded by a selection of non-metropolitan Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) across Victoria.

While annual surveys of school leavers provide a picture of their initial destinations, they do not provide a longer-term view of study and labour market transitions. For the target group of this study – regional students who have deferred a place at university – the longer term perspective is particularly important. Discovering what proportion of this group take up their deferred study (or another course) and understanding the barriers for those who do not are major issues. Describing the circumstances of those who are working or unemployed or not in the labour market are also important avenues of investigation if we are to ensure that the transition from school is a successful one for all young people. This longitudinal study of school completers from regional Victoria, who deferred their place at university, aims to do these things. It tracks the regional deferrers from the 2006 Year 12 cohort, who were first contacted in 2007, for a further two years, with a survey conducted in April/May 2008 and another survey to be conducted in April/May 2009.

The current report, based on the recent 2008 recontact of the cohort, comments on the destinations, activities and views of regional deferrers in their second year out of school, outlining their study and labour market activities since they were first contacted in 2007. This group will then be followed up for a final recontact in 2009.

## Key findings

1. A trend of increasing regional disadvantage is evident in the pattern of rising rates of deferral amongst regional school completers, not just in Victoria but in other Australian states. In 2007, 15.7% of regional Victorian school completers deferred a place at university, two and a half times the rate of deferral found amongst metropolitan students. Moreover, cost-related factors and financial barriers are prominent in the reasons given by these young people for deferring a place at university. These trends formed the impetus for the current longitudinal study of the destinations of regional school completers from the 2006 cohort who deferred a university place in 2007.

2. When contacted in 2008, the regional deferrers in this study displayed a range of mainly positive destination outcomes:

- Approximately seven in ten (69.9%) have taken up a place at university.
- A further 9.3% have entered vocational education and training courses, mainly at Certificate IV level or above.

- A further 3.1% have entered traineeships or apprenticeships.
- In all, over eight in ten (82.3%) are in some form of education or training.
- Of the remaining 17.7% of respondents, most are working (16.3%).
- Only a very small group (1.0%) was unemployed, while an even smaller group (0.5%) may be classed as inactive, that is neither in education or training, nor working, nor seeking work.

3. The study has also provided data which indicate that, of those in education or training, most were satisfied with their study choice and satisfied with the way their school had prepared them for further study.

4. Over half of all university and campus-based VET students (51.9%), however, were working while studying, and nearly half of these were working 11 hours or more per week. A further 13.9% of university students and 14.7% of the campus-based VET students reported that they were seeking work. These data are indicative of the financial pressures faced by many students.

5. Those who were working also showed high levels of satisfaction with aspects of their work, and were also satisfied, though to a lesser extent, with the preparation their school had given them.

6. A general question on the respondents' satisfaction with "life in general" at the time of the survey elicited a positive response from 96.6% of the survey respondents.

7. Despite these mainly positive outcomes, this research suggests that some deferrers in country Victoria are less likely to take up a university place than others. These include those students whose achievement profile is low and those who come from a lower SES background.

8. In addition, financial barriers remain prominent among the reasons given by young people for having not taken up a place in education or training in 2008. Such barriers are cited by approximately two thirds of those respondents not in education or training.

9. It is also important to consider whether the largely positive outcomes reported in this study can be maintained over the longer term. A re-contact of the cohort in 2009 will allow an assessment to be made of the following aspects of the respondents' transitions:

- Whether those students entering courses at university or TAFE have continued in their studies, or, in the case of shorter courses, completed them.
- Whether apprentices are still in training and whether trainees have completed.
- Whether those in less secure destinations, particularly the unemployed, those in part-time work and those who are inactive, have made progress in securing full-time work or a place in education or training.

# Introduction

This report presents the 2008 results from a longitudinal survey of school leavers from the 2006 cohort who, when contacted in 2007, had deferred an offer of a place in university. These school leavers were originally contacted in 2007 as part of the *On Track* survey (Teese, R., Clarke, K. & Polesel, J. (2007) *The On Track Survey 2007. The Destinations of School Leavers in Victoria*, DEECD, Melbourne.. *On Track* is a program of annual surveys of school leavers designed to provide broader measures of the success of schools in securing outcomes for their students. It seeks to provide profiles of post-school transition that take into account the range of academic and vocational pathways that young people enter after leaving school.

The current study is funded by a selection of non-metropolitan Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) across Victoria and is co-ordinated by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). Participating LLENs are listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 Participating Local Learning and Employment Networks**

| |
|---|
| Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN |
| Campaspe Cohuna LLEN |
| Central Grampians LLEN |
| Central Ranges LLEN |
| Gippsland East LLEN |
| Goldfields |
| Goulburn Murray LLEN |
| Highlands |
| NE TRACKS |
| North Central LLEN |
| Northern Mallee LLEN |
| South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN |
| South West LLEN |
| Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN |

The impetus for this survey was the high rate of deferral of university places among school completers from regional Victoria, compared with metropolitan school completers (Teese et al. 2005). Moreover, the rate of deferral has risen steadily since tracking of school completers first began in Victoria in 2004, and the rate of deferral amongst regional young people has grown even more rapidly than that of their metropolitan counterparts, widening the gap between the two groups (see Table 2). In regional Victoria this rate has risen from 6.4% in 2004 to 15.7% in 2007 (author's analysis of *On*

*Track* data). Tracking work carried out in Queensland (e.g. Polesel et al. 2005) also confirms the tendency of non-metropolitan school completers to defer university places at a higher rate and suggests that the phenomenon of higher rates of deferral amongst non-metropolitan school completers may be a widespread occurrence across regional Australia.

Moreover, amongst the reasons given for deferral, cost-related factors and financial barriers are prominent, particularly among regional deferrers. The On Track study highlights the much greater propensity of regional young people to nominate the costs of travel, the costs of study and difficulties supporting themselves as reasons for not taking up tertiary study (Teese et al. 2007).

**Table 2 Growth in deferral rate (metropolitan & non-metropolitan) 2004-2007**

| | Metropolitan | Non-metropolitan |
|---|---|---|
| 2004 | 5.5% | 9.9% |
| 2007 | 6.4% | 15.7% |

The current study had the following aims -

- To recruit 2006 Year 12 completers during the 2007 On Track survey from non-metropolitan Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) for a study of deferment in non-metropolitan Victoria.
- To survey non-metropolitan deferrers in 2008 and 2009 to determine their post-schooling destinations and pathways.
- To analyse data and provide a written report on the destinations and pathways of deferrers in 2008, with data broken out by participating LLEN.
- To analyse data and provide a written report on the destinations and pathways of deferrers in 2009, with data broken out by participating LLEN.

# Deferral study survey sample

The survey was designed to capture the transition experiences over a two year period of regional school completers who had deferred a place at university. In broad terms, the target sample was school completers from the 2006 Year 12 cohort who were located in non-metropolitan Victoria and who had deferred a university offer in 2007. For the purposes of this survey, the sample was defined as consisting of Year 12 school completers, who:

Identified as deferrers when contacted during the 2007 On Track survey
Attended a school located in one of the 14 LLENs participating in the study
Agreed to be recontacted as part of the longitudinal deferral study.

Table 3 presents the designed and achieved sample sizes, broken out by LLEN. The "deferrals" column reports the number of school completers who identified as deferrers when contacted as part of the *On Track* survey in 2007. The next column reports the proportion who were recruited (i.e. who agreed to be recontacted as part of the deferral study in 2008). The "surveyed" column reports the numbers of actual participants in the survey, while the final column reports participation in the survey as a proportion of all possible deferrers, as identified in the "deferrals" column.

**Table 3 Designed and achieved samples for the longitudinal study: 2004 to 2006**

| Organisation | Deferrals | Recruited to study | Surveyed | Surveyed as % of cohort# |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN | 69 | 69 | 62 | 89.9% |
| Campaspe Cohuna LLEN | 31 | 30 | 28 | 90.3% |
| Central Grampians LLEN | 24 | 24 | 20 | 83.3% |
| Central Ranges LLEN | 63 | 60 | 53 | 84.1% |
| Gippsland East LLEN | 68 | 61 | 55 | 80.9% |
| Goldfields | 148 | 137 | 119 | 80.4% |
| Goulburn Murray LLEN | 94 | 90 | 76 | 80.9% |
| Highlands | 126 | 125 | 112 | 88.9% |
| NE TRACKS | 79 | 77 | 73 | 92.4% |
| North Central LLEN | 6 | 6 | 5 | 83.3% |
| Northern Mallee LLEN | 37 | 37 | 32 | 86.5% |
| South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN | 62 | 60 | 56 | 90.3% |
| South West LLEN | 95 | 93 | 90 | 94.7% |
| Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN | 28 | 28 | 25 | 89.3% |
| TOTAL | 930 | 897 | 806 | 86.7% |

# Cohort is defined as 2007 *On Track* respondents identifying as deferrers.

Both the recruitment and participation rates for the study were very high. Of the 930 deferrers identified in 2007, 96.5% agreed to be recontacted (897 recruits). Of this group, 89.9% were contacted and participated in the study in 2008 (806 respondents). Overall, 86.7% of the eligible cohort took place in the survey, with rates of participation varying from 80.4% to 94.7% across individual LLENs.

While these survey participation rates point to a robust and reliable sample for the purposes of this analysis, they should not be taken as an accurate indicator of the dimensions of the phenomenon of early leaving. The numbers above almost certainly underestimate the numbers of deferrers in each LLEN. On Track studies typically survey approximately only 70% of the eligible school completer cohort, suggesting that there are considerably more than 930 deferrers in the 14 participating LLENs above.

# Characteristics of the sample

It is also important to examine the achieved sample in terms of its achievement, gender, and socio-economic status (SES) profiles. Table 4 below compares these characteristics of the survey cohort with those of all deferrers identified in the 2007 On Track survey. In terms of gender, the two groups are identical. The over-representation of female respondents reflects the higher propensity for girls to enter university. In terms of achievement, which is based on a composite measure of General Achievement Test (GAT) scores, the two groups are also very similar, suggesting that the non-metropolitan deferrers in our survey sample have a very similar achievement profile to the broader population of deferrers across Victoria. However, the final factor, socio-economic status (SES), which is based on a SEIFA (socio-economic index for addresses) value based on their home address, shows significant differences between the survey group and the broader population of deferrers, as identified in the 2007 On Track survey. While deferrers in the broader population are more evenly dispersed across the four SES categories, those in the sample are heavily concentrated in the two lowest SES categories, with nearly half (44.8%) of the group in the lowest SES quartile.

**Table 4 Selected characteristics of the survey sample and all deferrers**

| | | Survey sample (%) | All deferrers (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Male | 41.9 | 41.9 |
| | Female | 58.1 | 58.1 |
| | | | |
| **Achievement** | Lowest quartile | 13.8 | 14.7 |
| | Next lowest quartile | 23.0 | 23.2 |
| | Next highest quartile | 37.3 | 32.6 |
| | Highest quartile | 26.0 | 29.5 |
| | | | |
| **Socio-economic status** | Lowest quartile | 44.8 | 25.6 |
| | Next lowest quartile | 37.2 | 25.8 |
| | Next highest quartile | 15.8 | 25.1 |
| | Highest quartile | 2.2 | 23.6 |

These findings suggest that the higher deferral rates evident amongst non-metropolitan students may be influenced by the impact of socio-economic status on the decisions taken by this group of school completers, particularly as this relates to the costs of living away from home, course fees and costs of travel.

## Structure of the report

Chapter 1 addresses the question of whether deferrers have taken up their deferred course, taken up another study or training option, or entered the labour market.

Chapter 2 examines those respondents who have entered university study or vocational education and training, including those in apprenticeships or traineeships.

Chapter 3 looks at those who are not in education or training, and examines their reasons for not taking up their deferred offer (or any other study or training option).

Chapter 4 examines the respondents' satisfaction with their choices and provides some concluding remarks on the main themes and findings of the study thus far.

The Appendix reports detailed destination data broken out by participating LLEN.

# Chapter 1

# Do deferrers take up their offers

This section examines the main destinations of Victorian regional school completers from the 2006 Year 12 cohort, in their second year out of school. It is important to note that young people contacted in the survey were asked detailed questions regarding both their study and their labour market situations. These were used to construct "main" destinations, for example university student or apprentice or full-time worker. These are reported in Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1. However, students may also be in the labour market, usually as part-time workers, but sometimes seeking work. Conversely, it is possible to be neither a student, nor in the labour market, i.e. not working and not seeking work. These more detailed destinations, which illustrate both the labour market and study and training destinations of our respondents, are presented in Table 1.2.

## Main activities in 2008

A summary of the destinations in 2008 of regional deferrers who completed Year 12 in 2006 is presented in Table 1.1.

The first column shows their detailed destinations, with level of VET, apprenticeships, traineeships, and full-time and part-time work reported separately. The second column of percentages collapses these categories. This table shows that 69.9% of the group were now attending university in 2008. A further 9.3% were in a VET program, most (7.2%) at a level of Certificate IV or higher. A further 3.1% were combining employment with training in the form of an apprenticeship (1.2%) or a traineeship (1.9%). In total, 82.3% were in some form of recognised education or training.

**Table 1.1 Main destinations in 2008**

| Detailed destination | N | % | Summary destination | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| University (degree level) | 563 | 69.9 | University (degree level) | 563 | 69.9 |
| VET Cert 4+ | 58 | 7.2 | | | |
| Entry-level VET | 17 | 2.1 | VET total | 75 | 9.3 |
| Apprenticeship | 10 | 1.2 | | | |
| Traineeship | 15 | 1.9 | Apprenticeship/Traineeship | 25 | 3.1 |
| Working full-time | 92 | 11.4 | | | |
| Working part-time | 39 | 4.8 | Employed | 75 | 16.2 |
| Unemployed | 8 | 1.0 | Unemployed | 8 | 1.0 |
| Inactive | 4 | 0.5 | Inactive | 60 | 0.5 |
| Total | 806 | 100.0 | | | 100.0 |

The remaining respondents were not in education or training of any kind. Most were working – 16.2%. Of these, 11.4% were in full-time work and 4.8% were in part-time work. Few were unemployed (1.0%), and a very small group (0.5%) was inactive, i.e. they were not in education or training and were neither working nor looking for work. These destinations are also summarised in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1 Main destinations in 2008**

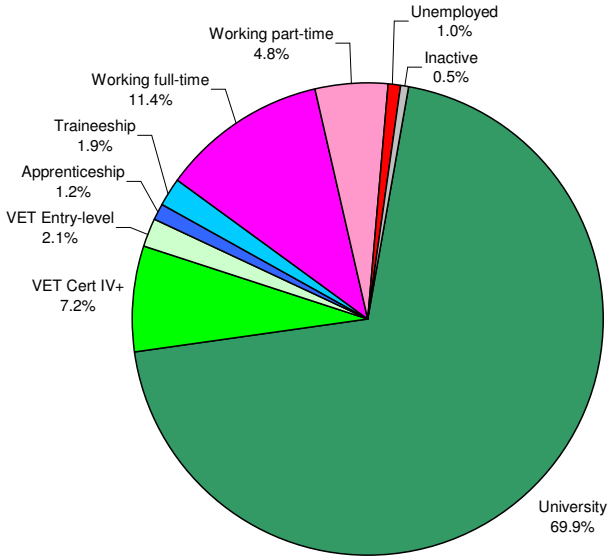



Table 1.2 presents a cross-tabulation of study level and labour market destinations, providing a more nuanced picture than that presented in Table 1.1. For example, while university degree students were previously presented as a single category, it is possible to see now their labour market destinations – working full-time or part-time, unemployed or not in the labour market. This is also the case for young people in other study destinations. This shows that the proportion of young people in the labour market is actually much higher than shown in Table 1.1. For example, the number of part-time workers and the number of young people seeking work is much higher than can be gleaned from the summary destinations, even though most of these are university or VET students, whose labour market status may not constitute their primary activity or focus.

Similarly, the large number of respondents who are not in the labour market is principally made up of university students, who are not working and not seeking work.

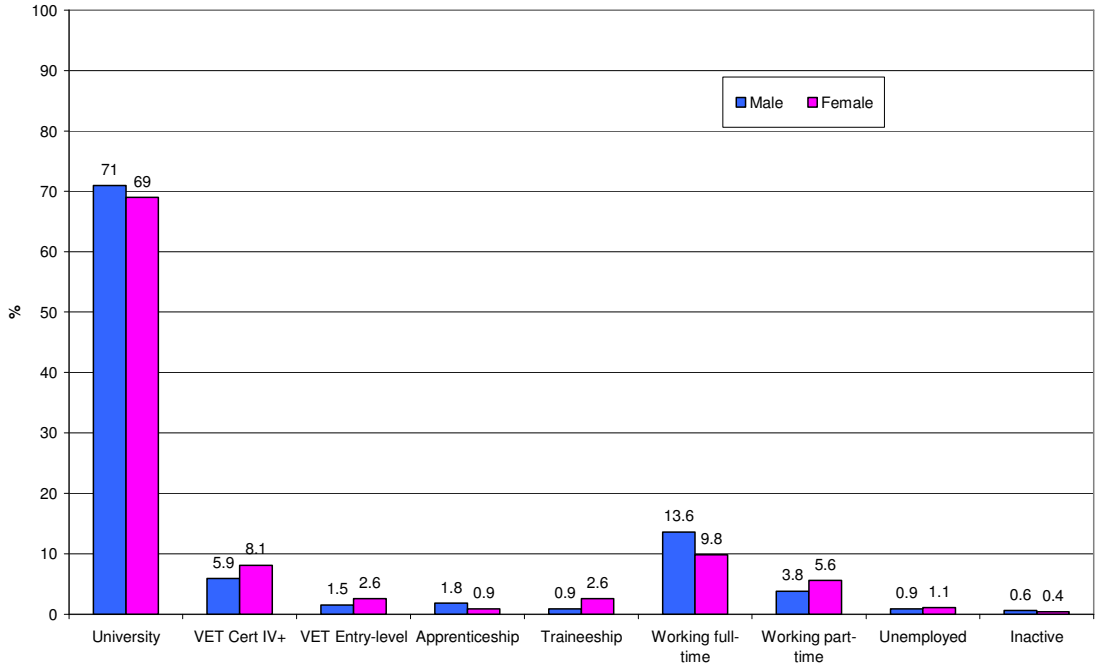
**Table 1.2 Study and labour market destinations**

| | University degree | | VET | | Not in education or training | | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N |
| Not in the labour force | 205 | 36.4 | 13 | 13.0 | 4 | 2.8 | 222 |
| Apprentice/trainee | 0 | 0.0 | 25 | 25.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 25 |
| Working full-time | 11 | 2.0 | 10 | 10.0 | 92 | 64.3 | 113 |
| Working part-time | 269 | 47.7 | 41 | 41.0 | 39 | 27.3 | 349 |
| Unemployed | 78 | 13.9 | 11 | 11.0 | 8 | 5.6 | 97 |
| **Total** | **563** | **100.0** | **100** | **100.0** | **143** | **100.0** | **806** |

# Gender differences

Figure 1.2 shows the main destinations of our group of deferrers, broken out by gender. It shows that gender does not play a major role in determining the outcomes of this group of school leavers. Male and female deferrers are very similar in their outcomes two years out from school. The main differences are that females not in education or training are more likely to be working part-time while their male counterparts are more likely to be working full-time. Also males are slightly more likely to be in university degree-level programs, while females are slightly more likely to be in VET programs.

**Figure 1.2 Main destinations in 2008, by gender**



## Socio-economic status (SES) differences

Socio-economic status, however, plays a more pronounced role in determining the outcomes of this group of school leavers (see Table 1.3). Respondents who made the transition to university in 2008 were more likely to come from the two higher quartiles of socio-economic status, suggesting that the financial implications of university study continue to have an impact on the pathways of regional deferrers two years out of school. Having said this, it has already been noted that the survey sample as a whole is made up predominantly of low SES respondents, with 82.0% of the cohort belonging to the two lower SES categories, reflecting their relatively higher exposure to the factors associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

**Table 1.3 University entry and socio-economic status**

| | Lowest | Next lowest | Next highest | Highest |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| University | 66.8% | 69.0% | 78.7% | 83.3% |
| Not university | 33.2% | 31.0% | 21.3% | 16.7% |

## Achievement differences

Achievement may also be seen to play a role in determining the outcomes of this group of school leavers (see Table 1.4). Respondents who made the transition to university in 2008 were much more likely to come from the two higher quartiles of achievement, compared with those who do not take up a place at university. Respondents in the highest quartile of achievement were more than twice as likely to enter university as those in the lowest quartile of achievement.

**Table 1.4 University entry and achievement**

| | Lowest | Next lowest | Next highest | Highest |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| University | 40.5% | 57.3% | 75.7% | 88.0% |
| Not university | 59.5% | 42.7% | 24.3% | 12.0% |

# Chapter 2

# Taking up study or training

The most likely outcome for a regional deferrer two years out from school is the commencement of the university course they deferred or of another university course. In all, 563 of our 806 deferrers took up a place at university. Of these, most (458) took up the course they had deferred the previous year. A further 105 took up a different university course.

This chapter presents information on those who entered university in 2008, including the courses and universities they entered, and the distances from home of these institutions.

## The Universities

Table 2.1 presents the institutions entered by those respondents taking up a university place in 2008. It shows that the previous year's deferrers entered a very wide range of institutions in regional and metropolitan Victoria, and indeed, interstate. The location of specific campuses is considered later in this chapter.

**Table 2.1 Institutions of respondents entering university in 2008**

| Name of Institution | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| La Trobe University | 123 | 21.8 |
| RMIT University | 80 | 14.2 |
| Deakin University | 76 | 13.5 |
| Monash University | 67 | 11.9 |
| Ballarat University | 50 | 8.9 |
| University of Melbourne | 43 | 7.6 |
| Victoria University | 23 | 4.1 |
| Swinburne University | 21 | 3.7 |
| Charles Sturt University | 21 | 3.7 |
| Australian Catholic University | 19 | 3.4 |
| SA universities | 16 | 2.8 |
| Queensland universities | 10 | 1.8 |
| ACT universities | 3 | 0.5 |
| NSW universities | 2 | 0.4 |
| WA universities | 2 | 0.4 |
| Other | 7 | 1.2 |
| **Total** | **563** | **100.0** |

Courses too vary widely. Table 2.2 below outlines the fields of study of courses entered by university degree-level students. Society and Culture, which includes humanities and law is the largest single field, followed by Health, which includes medicine, nursing and dental studies, amongst other studies.

**Table 2.2 Fields of study of respondents entering university in 2008**

| University courses | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Society & Culture | 123 | 21.8 |
| Health | 114 | 20.2 |
| Natural & Physical Sciences | 83 | 14.7 |
| Management & Commerce | 62 | 11.0 |
| Education | 58 | 10.3 |
| Creative Arts | 47 | 8.3 |
| Engineering & Related | 45 | 8.0 |
| Agricultural, Environmental & Related | 13 | 2.3 |
| Information Technology | 8 | 1.4 |
| Architecture & Building | 6 | 1.1 |
| Food, Hospitality & Personal Services | 4 | 0.7 |
| **Total** | **563** | **100.0** |

# Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training, including apprenticeships and traineeships, was taken up by 12.4% of the deferrers in our study. Most of these were in course-based study in TAFE and private VET providers – 9.3%. Of these, 7.2% were in courses at Certificate IV level, Diploma level or Advanced Diploma level. A further 2.1% were in courses at Certificate I, II or III level. In addition, a small proportion of the respondents entered traineeships (1.9%) and apprenticeships (1.2%).

The institutions entered by VET students, including apprentices and trainees, vary widely (see Table 2.3 below). They include multi-sector institutions such as RMIT and Swinburne, and universities which offer vocational qualifications. The "Other" category at the bottom of the table includes two interstate VET providers and a range of private VET providers, including employers registered as training organisations. The latter usually offer training to apprentices or trainees they have employed.

**Table 2.3 Institutions of respondents entering TAFE/VET courses in 2008**

| Name of Institution | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| RMIT (TAFE Division) | 19 | 19.0 |
| Swinburne (TAFE Division) | 10 | 10.0 |
| Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE | 7 | 7.0 |
| Ballarat University | 4 | 4.0 |
| Box Hill Institute of TAFE | 4 | 4.0 |
| William Angliss Institute of TAFE | 4 | 4.0 |
| Central Gippsland TAFE | 3 | 3.0 |
| Gordon Institute | 3 | 3.0 |
| Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE | 3 | 3.0 |
| South West Institute of TAFE | 3 | 3.0 |
| University Of Ballarat (TAFE Division) | 3 | 3.0 |
| LaTrobe University | 2 | 2.0 |
| East Gippsland Institute | 2 | 2.0 |
| Victoria University (TAFE Division) | 2 | 2.0 |
| Melbourne University | 1 | 1.0 |
| Monash University | 1 | 1.0 |
| RMIT University | 1 | 1.0 |
| Charles Sturt University | 1 | 1.0 |
| Victoria University of Technology (VUT) | 1 | 1.0 |
| Chisholm Institute of TAFE | 1 | 1.0 |
| Holmesglen Institute | 1 | 1.0 |
| Wodonga Institute of TAFE | 1 | 1.0 |
| Other | 23 | 23.0 |
| **Total** | **100** | **100.0** |

The fields of study in which VET students are studying are outlined in Table 2.4. Again, these include the small number of apprentices and trainees in the study. The main fields of study are Creative Arts (23.0%), which includes graphic and design studies, and visual arts and crafts, and Management and Commerce (22.0%), which includes accounting, banking and finance, business and management, sales and marketing, tourism and office studies.

**Table 2.4 Fields of study of respondents entering TAFE/VET courses in 2008**

| VET courses | N | % |
|---|---|---|
| Creative Arts | 23 | 23.0 |
| Management & Commerce | 22 | 22.0 |
| Food, Hospitality & Personal Services | 16 | 16.0 |
| Health | 12 | 12.0 |
| Society & Culture | 11 | 11.0 |
| Engineering & Related | 9 | 9.0 |
| Information Technology | 3 | 3.0 |
| Natural & Physical Sciences | 2 | 2.0 |
| Education | 2 | 2.0 |
| **Total** | **100** | **100.0** |

## Location of study and distance from home

Table 2.5 below lists the actual campuses attended by respondents in the survey. These are broken out by Melbourne metropolitan and regional locations and by university and VET (mainly TAFE) providers[1]. This table shows that the respondents in this study were more likely to attend metropolitan than non-metropolitan providers, both in VET institutions and universities. Amongst those students attending VET institutions, 54.9% were in a Melbourne metropolitan location. A further 2.2% were in interstate VET institutions, including TAFEs. The remaining students (42.9%) were in Victorian regional VET providers.

Amongst those students attending universities, the bias towards Melbourne metropolitan institutions is even stronger, with 58.6% in metropolitan universities. A further 6.4% were attending interstate universities. The remaining group of university students (35.0%) were attending universities in regional Victoria.

This indicates clearly that, for the majority of the survey cohort, taking up a place at university or other tertiary provider means attending a tertiary institution which is not located in regional Victoria, with all the attendant issues relating to moving away from home or travelling significant distances.

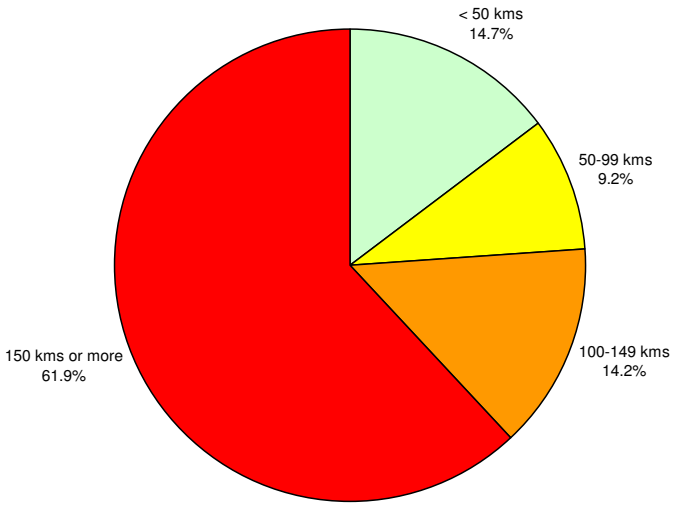
[1] Note that the numbers reported in this table do not align exactly with the number of degree-level and VET students reported in Chapter 1. This is because students in a university may be enrolled in Certificate or Diploma level programs, and conversely, students in a TAFE may be enrolled in degree-level programs.

## Table 2.5 Institutions of respondents by location

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Metropolitan VET** | RMIT TAFE – Melbourne | 19 |
| | Swinburne TAFE - Melbourne | 10 |
| | William Angliss TAFE - Melbourne | 4 |
| | Box Hill TAFE | 3 |
| | Victoria University TAFE - Melbourne | 2 |
| | Homesglen TAFE - Chadstone | 1 |
| | Other VET – Melbourne | 11 |
| | **Total metropolitan VET** | **50 (54.9%)** |
| **Regional VET** | BRIT – Bendigo | 7 |
| | Ballarat TAFE – Ballarat | 4 |
| | Central Gippsland TAFE | 3 |
| | East Gippsland TAFE | 3 |
| | Gordon TAFE – Geelong | 3 |
| | Goulburn Ovens TAFE - Shepparaton | 3 |
| | South West TAFE - Warnambool | 3 |
| | Chisholm Institute - Bass Coast | 2 |
| | Sunraysia TAFE - Mildura | 1 |
| | Wodonga TAFE | 1 |
| | Other VET – regional | 8 |
| | VET Distance | 1 |
| | **Total regional VET** | **39 (42.9%)** |
| **Interstate VET** | **Total interstate VET** | **2 (2.2%)** |
| **TOTAL VET** | | **91 (100%)** |
| | | |
| **Metropolitan university** | RMIT University - Melbourne | 80 |
| | La Trobe University - Bundoora | 63 |
| | Monash University - Melbourne | 60 |
| | Uni of Melbourne - Parkville | 44 |
| | Deakin University - Burwood | 28 |
| | Victoria University - Melbourne | 24 |
| | Swinburne University - Melbourne | 21 |
| | Australian Catholic University - Melbourne | 11 |
| | Other university - Melbourne | 2 |
| | **Total metropolitan university** | **333 (58.6%)** |
| **Regional university** | La Trobe University - Bendigo | 54 |
| | Ballarat University | 53 |
| | Deakin University - Geelong | 35 |
| | Charles Sturt University - Albury | 18 |
| | Deakin University - Warrnambool | 13 |
| | Australian Catholic University - Ballarat | 9 |
| | Monash University - Gippsland | 8 |
| | La Trobe University – Albury/Mildura/Shepparton | 8 |
| | University Distance | 1 |
| | **Total regional university** | **199 (35.0%)** |
| **Interstate university** | **Total interstate university** | **36 (6.4%)** |
| **TOTAL UNIVERSITY** | | **568 (100%)** |

In fact, when the students were asked to estimate the distance of their place of study from their family home, it became clear that the vast majority had taken up study at considerable distances from home (see Figure 2.1). Over six in ten (61.9%) of the respondents were studying at a location 150 kilometres or further from their family home. Over three quarters (76.1%) were at a location 100 kilometres or further from their home. In total, 85.3% were studying in a location at least 50 kilometres away from their home.

**Figure 2.1 Distance of study location from home**




# Working students

Another issue of relevance to this section regards the work status of university and TAFE students. Over half of all the campus-based students in our study (331 respondents or 51.9%) reported that they were working while studying (excluding 25 apprentices and trainees). Given the importance of financial considerations in the take-up and successful continuation of studies, it is useful to consider the hours worked by these students. Table 2.6 below outlines the number of hours worked by TAFE and university students in our study.

The majority of students were working ten or fewer hours per week. However, a large group worked between ten and twenty hours per week, and a smaller but significant group was working 21 hours or more per week. The longer hours worked by nearly half

of the student cohort raise some legitimate concerns regarding the balance of study and work that these students are able to achieve. It is important that these data be reconsidered upon completion of the second survey in 2009, examining the rates of continuation and completion in the light of the workloads of the students.

**Table 2.6 Weekly hours worked by university and TAFE students**

| Hours worked | % |
|---|---|
| 10 hours or less | 50.9% |
| 11-20 hours | 36.6% |
| 21 hours or more | 12.6% |
| Total | 100% |

## Unemployed students

Finally, it should be noted that a significant proportion of students in our study (13.9% of university students and 14.7% of the campus-based VET students – 89 in all) reported that they were seeking work. When added to the 331 respondents who reported that they were working while studying, we can see that work is of considerable importance to the majority of those respondents who actually made a successful transition to tertiary education. This is not surprising given the emphasis deferrers place on cost-related factors in their decision to defer.

# Chapter 3

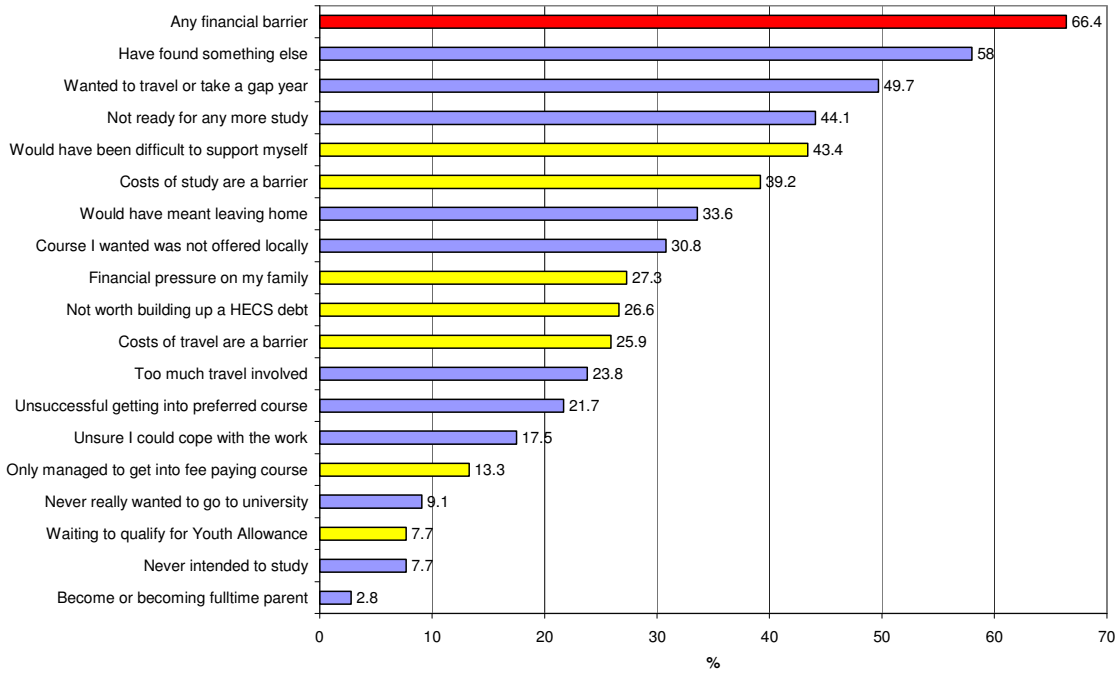
# Not in education or training

The proportion of respondents who were not in education or training when contacted in 2008 was relatively small – approximately 18% (or 143) of our cohort. The survey shows that most of these were employed (11.4% working full-time and 4.8% working part-time), with 1.0% unemployed and 0.5% not in the labour market.

This chapter begins by examining the reasons given by the group as a whole for not taking up education and training, and then goes on to examine the circumstances of sub-groups – those who are working, those who are unemployed and those are not in the labour market.

Overall, the reasons given by these respondents for not taking up their offer of a university place or any other study or training option reveal much about the barriers faced by young people in regional Victoria. The young people were given a range of options to choose from to describe their reasons for not being in education or training. They were allowed to choose multiple options, as the motivations for not studying may be complex and cumulative in effect. Figure 3.1 illustrates the reasons given in percentage terms.

**Figure 3.1 Reasons for not taking up study or training in 2008**



The most common reason for not taking up study or training, given by nearly six in ten of the group, was that they had found something else. Nearly half were planning to travel or taking a gap year, and over four in ten were not yet ready for any more study. The interplay of these reasons suggests a complex and varied mix of motives for not being in study or training. However, the financial and distance-related barriers so evident in the deferrers' thinking when first contacted in 2007 have not disappeared. Although it might be argued that over four in five of the original group of deferrers have taken up a place in tertiary education and have thus overcome these challenges, cost-related barriers remain significant among the reasons given by those who are still not in education or training.

Approximately four in ten report that they could not support themselves and that the costs of study are a barrier. Financial pressure on their family, concern regarding HECS debts and the costs of travel were all nominated by about one quarter of the respondents, and also reflect the continuing importance of financial barriers to the participation of non-metropolitan youth in education and training. Only being able to get into a fee-paying course and the need to qualify for Youth Allowance were also among the financial reasons cited. In all, approximately two-thirds (66.4%) of those not in education or training nominated at least one of these financial barriers as a reason for not being in education or training in 2008.

Other barriers related to regional disadvantage include the fact that study would require them to leave home or that their preferred course was not offered locally – each accounting for over three in ten respondents.

It should also be noted that approximately half (51.7%) of this group of young people have plans to enter study or further training at some time in the future.

## Those working

Of this broader group of 143 respondents not in education or training, most (131) were working. Figure 3.2 below shows the range of occupations in which they were employed. The most common occupational category is sales assistant, accounting for approximately one fifth of this group. This closely followed by labourers and factory and farm workers, also with approximately one fifth of workers, and administration/clerical workers, who make up just under one fifth.

The remaining young people are dispersed across a range of categories. The largest ones are food/hospitality employees, semi-skilled workers, marketing and call centre workers, and child and other personal carers. These categories do not differ substantially from the mainly unskilled occupations usually entered by school leavers who do not undertake further education or training, although the higher proportions of farm workers/labourers may reflect the more rural context of the current cohort.

There are also differences in gender terms, with female respondents more likely to be working in sales, administration and food/hospitality jobs, while male respondents are more likely to be in labouring/factory/farm jobs or trade-related areas.

**Figure 3.2 Occupational categories of respondents not in education or training by gender**

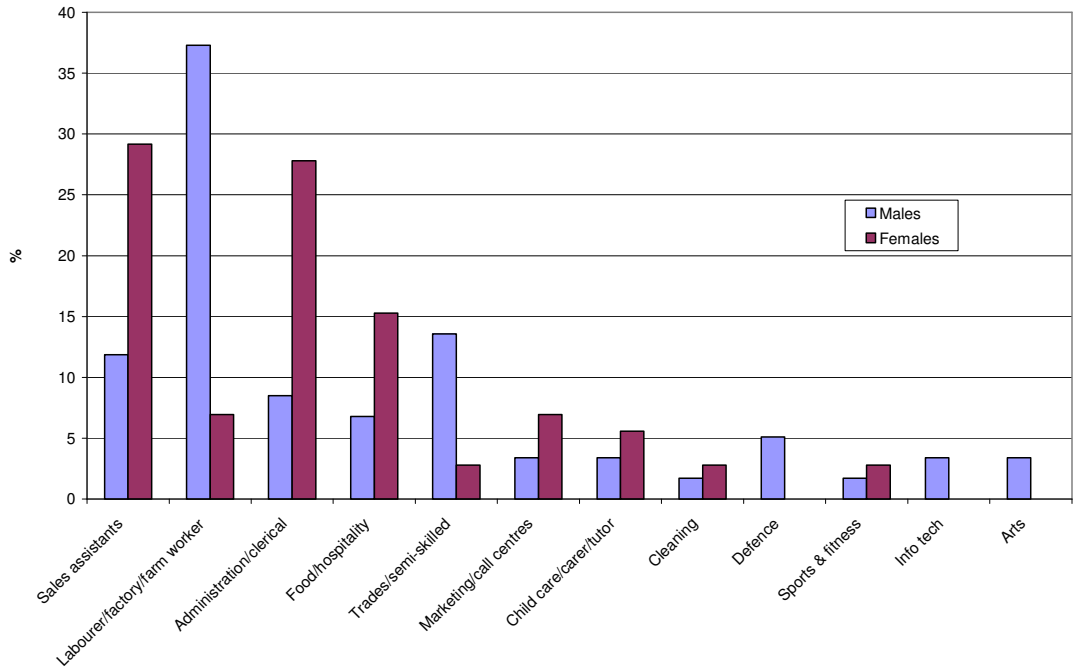



Table 3.1 below shows the weekly hours worked by young people who are not in education or training. It should be noted that 14.5% of respondents in this category were working in more than one job. For this group, their hours in different jobs have been combined. The data show that the majority of these young people may be considered to be working the equivalent of a full-time load. Overall, 70.2% are working at least 35 hours per week. However, there is a strong gender difference in this respect. While nearly four in five young males are working a full-time load, fewer than two-thirds of young females are in the same position.

**Table 3.1 Hours worked per week by respondents not in education or training**

| | Males | Females |
|---|---|---|
| Fewer than 35 hours | 22.1% | 36.2% |
| 35 hours or more | 77.9% | 63.8% |

Other measures of the stability and quality of the employment of these young people were also provided in the survey. For example, nearly six in ten of the respondents (57.3%) indicated that their current job was either a new one or was not the same as the one they were doing when first surveyed in 2007. In addition, nearly one quarter of these respondents had worked in two or more jobs since the last interview, while over three in ten reported that they were now looking for a new or additional job.

Other measures include the respondents' reported satisfaction with the job, their perception of the job as a future career and the levels of formal and informal training provided in the workplace (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2 Perceptions of job by respondents not in education or training**

| | |
|---|---|
| Would like this type of job as career | 40.5% |
| Very satisfied with this job | 29.8% |
| Have had formal training in this job | 32.1% |
| Have had informal training in this job | 80.9% |

These provide a mixed picture of the employment situation. Only four in ten see their job as a potential future career, and only three in ten report a high level of satisfaction with their job. Moreover, while the majority has received informal training in their employment (defined as being shown how to do tasks or watching others), only three in ten have received formal training (defined as seminars, workshops, presentations or other kinds of training organized by work).

## Those unemployed

Of those respondents not in education or training, those who were unemployed form a very small part – only 8 respondents. Therefore the data provide by these young people must be treated with some caution. However the reasons they give for their difficulty in finding work are illustrative of one of the main challenges facing young people – the lack of skills and qualifications (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3 Reasons for difficulty finding a job**

| | |
|---|---|
| Not enough or appropriate skills or training | 75% |
| Not enough or appropriate qualifications | 75% |
| Not enough job experience | 62.5% |
| Not enough jobs available | 62.5% |
| Need to move away from home | 37.5% |
| Health problem or disability | 12.5% |

## Not in the labour force (inactive

A small group of respondents fell into the category of being neither in education or training, nor in the labour market (not working and not looking for work). These accounted for 0.5% (4) of all respondents. Two were male and two were female. All four reported not being ready for any more study at the moment.

# Chapter 4
# Satisfaction with choices
# – concluding remarks

This project has focussed on regional school completers from the 2006 Year 12 cohort. These school completers had all deferred an offer of a university place when first contacted in 2007. This report, the first of two arising from this project, seeks to provide detailed data on the study and labour market destinations of these young people. It reports on the courses and institutions they have entered, the kinds of jobs they are doing, the hours they are working, and the circumstances of those who are unemployed or not in the labour market. It seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of the transition from school for regional deferrers.

This study is based on the premise that regional (or non-metropolitan) school completers are much more likely than their city counterparts to defer an offer of a place at university. Previous research suggests that this is due to a combination of factors relating to isolation and financial hardship. This study confirms the lower socio-economic status of regional deferrers, compared with school completers who defer statewide.

However, despite these hardships, the respondents in this study display a range of mainly positive destination outcomes. Approximately seven in ten have taken up a place at university. A further 9.3% have entered vocational education and training courses, mainly at Certificate IV level or above, and a further 3.1% have entered traineeships or apprenticeships. In all, over eight in ten are in some form of education or training.

The study has also provided data which indicate that, of those in education or training, most were satisfied with their study choice – see Table 4.1 below.

**Table 4.1 Satisfaction with study choice**

| | |
|---|---|
| University students | 97.2% |
| VET students | 93.3% |
| Apprentices/trainees | 100% |

A majority of the respondents in study also reported being satisfied with the way their school had prepared them for further study – see Tabel 4.2 below.

**Table 4.2 Satisfaction with how school prepared me for further study (satisfied/very satisfied)**

| | |
|---|---|
| University students | 91.7% |
| VET students | 89.3% |
| Apprentices/trainees | 96.0% |

Of the remaining 17.7% of respondents, most were working (16.3%) and only a very small group (1.0%) was unemployed, while an even smaller group may be classed as inactive, that is neither in education or training, nor working, nor seeking work. Those of this group who were working also showed high levels of satisfaction with aspects of their work, and were also satisfied, though to a lesser extent, with the preparation their school had given them – see Tables 4.3 and 4.4 below.

**Table 4.3 Satisfaction with job (satisfied/very satisfied)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Full-time workers | 91.3% |
| Part-time workers | 92.3% |
| Apprentices/trainees | 96.0% |

**Table 4.4 Satisfaction with how school prepared me for work (satisfied/very satisfied)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Full-time workers | 80.4% |
| Part-time workers | 84.6% |
| Apprentices/trainees | 88.0% |

It might also be noted that a general question on the respondents' satisfaction with "life in general" at the time of the survey elicited a positive response from 96.6% of the survey respondents.

Despite these mainly positive outcomes, this research suggests that some deferrers in country Victoria are less likely to take up a university place than others. These include those students whose achievement profile is low and those who come from a lower SES background. Given that low SES youth are dominant amongst regional deferrers in any case, it is somewhat disturbing that this background characteristic continues to exert an influence.

It is also important to consider whether the mainly positive outcomes reported in this study can be maintained over the longer term. A re-contact of the cohort in 2009 will allow an assessment to be made of whether those students entering courses at university or TAFE have continued in their studies, or, in the case of shorter courses, completed them. It will also allow us to assess whether apprentices are still in training and whether trainees have completed. For those in less secure destinations, particularly the unemployed, those in part-time work and those who are inactive, the re-contact will provide information on whether progress has been made in securing full-time work or a place in education or training.

# Appendix
# Destinations by LLEN

**Table A1 2008 Destinations by LLEN**

| | | Inactive | Uni degree | VET C IV+ | VET EL | Apprentice | Trainee | Work FT | Work PT | Unemployed | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baw Baw Latrobe | N | 0 | 43 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 62 |
| | % | 0.0 | 69.4 | 6.5 | 3.2 | 1.6 | 4.8 | 8.1 | 4.8 | 1.6 | 100.0 |
| Campaspe Cohuna | N | 0 | 17 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 28 |
| | % | 0.0 | 60.7 | 3.6 | 7.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 17.9 | 10.7 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Central Grampians | N | 0 | 15 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 20 |
| | % | 0.0 | 75.0 | 10.0 | 0.0 | 5.0 | 0.0 | 10.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Central Ranges | N | 0 | 34 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 53 |
| | % | 0.0 | 64.2 | 17.0 | 3.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 11.3 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 100.0 |
| Gippsland East | N | 2 | 36 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 55 |
| | % | 3.6 | 65.5 | 14.5 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 3.6 | 5.5 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 100.0 |
| Goldfields | N | 1 | 78 | 12 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 13 | 8 | 1 | 119 |
| | % | 0.8 | 65.5 | 10.1 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 0.8 | 10.9 | 6.7 | 0.8 | 100.0 |
| Goulburn Murray | N | 0 | 58 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 76 |
| | % | 0.0 | 76.3 | 6.6 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 0.0 | 9.2 | 5.3 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Highlands | N | 0 | 77 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 9 | 2 | 112 |
| | % | 0.0 | 68.8 | 4.5 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 15.2 | 8.0 | 1.8 | 100.0 |
| North Central | N | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| | % | 0.0 | 60.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 20.0 | 0.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| NE Tracks | N | 1 | 56 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 73 |
| | % | 1.4 | 76.7 | 4.1 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 1.4 | 11.0 | 2.7 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Northern Mallee | N | 0 | 26 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| | % | 0.0 | 81.3 | 3.1 | 0.0 | 6.3 | 0.0 | 9.4 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Sth Gipps Bass Coast | N | 0 | 40 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 56 |
| | % | 0.0 | 71.4 | 10.7 | 1.8 | 0.0 | 7.1 | 1.8 | 7.1 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| South West | N | 0 | 64 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 90 |
| | % | 0.0 | 71.1 | 1.1 | 2.2 | 0.0 | 3.3 | 16.7 | 4.4 | 1.1 | 100.0 |
| Wimmera Sthn Mallee | N | 0 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| | % | 0.0 | 64.0 | 4.0 | 0.0 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 24.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | N | 4 | 563 | 58 | 17 | 10 | 15 | 92 | 39 | 8 | 806 |
| | % | 0.5 | 69.9 | 7.2 | 2.1 | 1.2 | 1.9 | 11.4 | 4.8 | 1.0 | 100.0 |