

Parents and carers play an important role in helping their children to make career choices. They are the greatest influence on their children's career choice. Making career choices may be challenging. The "world of work" is complex and careful investigation is needed so that careers can be properly planned.

The workplace children will enter may be very different from when their parents started working.

## Some strategies to help your teenagers with their career choices:

### Remain positive

No matter how complex and confusing the changes in employment and training may seem, the majority of school leavers now have access to a number of education and vocational pathway opportunities.

Try to avoid the "What are you going to do/be when you leave school?" Type questions. These questions are often very confronting. Instead take the opportunity to talk about career options whenever possible, for example when a news item appears on a current affairs program or when a University/TAFE Open Day is approaching.

### Encourage your child to develop a positive self-esteem

Focus on their achievements – but not just at school. Acknowledge their efforts in all their activities – keeping their room tidy, participating in sport, community activities, setting goals and achieving them.

Show them you believe in them!

### Allow for a change in direction

It is very unusual for a student to choose a career at a very early age and never waiver in their choice. Be prepared for changes in direction and encourage your teenager to continue to explore a variety of options.

### Encourage them to learn from their mistakes

Even if you feel uncertain about their choice, remain positive as they make their first steps towards their career. It isn't the end of the world if they choose the wrong work experience or subject. Discovering that a previous career interest is not for them is a positive step in the decision making process as it gives them the time to re-assess their interests and to broaden their options.



### Encourage them to find an industry contact

When a teenager begins to express an interest in a particular career, if it is possible, help them to establish links with someone in that field. This person can then provide a direct, first hand information link with that particular occupation or industry.

### Networking

Students should be actively encouraged to develop an information network themselves. This network could well be friends, neighbours, part-time work employers, work experience employers and your family's builder/car repairer/plumber/accountant (depending on their career interests) and other contacts made by the student. The network serves two purposes – it allows students to gain realistic insights into their chosen career and it broadens their chances of finding jobs as a large number of vacancies are only advertised by word-of-mouth.

### Share your experiences

Talk to your teenagers about your own experiences of work and study and your reasons for making particular career decisions. Discuss the problems you have faced and how you dealt with them. Speak openly of the positive and negative aspects of the jobs you have done.

### Respect their feelings and their privacy

Do they have someone special, perhaps not always you, to confide in? A relative, family or professional friend or someone who is interested in young people like a church or sports group leader can provide a sympathetic ear. Each student is special and needs someone to listen in a special way. No matter how strongly you may feel about what your teenagers are doing, there may be times when you need to be able to step back from the situation.

