



Exploring the lived experiences of pre-apprenticeship students and employers — support document

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Contents

Tables and figures	4
Tables	4
Figures	4
Purpose	5
Introduction	5
Apprentice satisfaction	5
Evaluating effectiveness	6
What is expected from a pre-apprenticeship program?	7
This research	7
Qualitative research	8
Qualitative methodology	8
Research participants	8
Sample	9
Analysis	10
Findings	11
Students	11
Employers and GTOs	20
Limitations	22
Discussion	23
The value of work experience	23
Student intentions	24
Employers and GTOs	24
References	26
Appendix A – Data codes and themes	27

Tables and figures

Tables

Table 1	Characteristics of student interviewees	9
Table A1	The codes generated by the researchers from the interview data, grouped by theme	27

Figures

Figure 1	Employer and GTO views on the value of pre-apprenticeships	20
Figure 2	Factors that promote pre-apprenticeship completion and transition to apprenticeships	23

Purpose

The purpose of this support document, which accompanies the research summary *Understanding the value of pre-apprenticeships*, is to share the findings from literature, describe the methodology used in the conduct of the thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected, and present in detail the themes identified in the data by the researchers.

Introduction

Pre-apprenticeship programs are a central pillar in strategies designed to attract apprentices, as evidenced by the funding allocated to them by the Australian Government and state governments, as well as their inclusion in investigations of apprenticeships, notably, the Australian Government's most recent report, *Skills for tomorrow* (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations 2024). Irrespective of their widespread use, the relationship between pre-apprenticeship training and apprenticeship success – including satisfaction with them – and their value to both apprentices and employers has not been well studied.

Research to date has yielded mixed findings on the value and impact of pre-apprenticeships (Foley & Blomberg 2011; Group Training Association of NSW & ACT 2014). Quantitative analyses have offered no clear consensus on whether pre-apprenticeship training directly improves apprenticeship completion rates. That said, completion rates are just one measure of impact.

For students, success may be measured with reference to their expectations from the pre-apprenticeship, which is often reported to be securing an apprenticeship, although the terms 'taster' and 'try-a-trade' – often used in relation to pre-apprenticeships – suggests that for students this may not be their only aim. For employers and industry more broadly, success might be related to the impact of pre-apprenticeship on the availability and suitability of apprentice candidates, the work-readiness of apprentices, or their commitment to the full length of the contract of training.

Apprentice satisfaction

Karmel and Oliver (2011) observed that apprentices who had completed a pre-apprenticeship were less likely to withdraw due to dissatisfaction with the type of work, although this did not lead to a higher likelihood of completing the apprenticeship. While pre-apprenticeship training seems to influence apprenticeship satisfaction, the effect is not uniform. The relationship between student completion and student satisfaction with their pre-apprenticeship program is not well studied.

Karmel (2021) studied the relationship between the completion of pre-vocational training and satisfaction with an apprenticeship and found that the more relevant the pre-apprenticeship was to the apprenticeship, the greater satisfaction a student reported. Karmel (2021) found that highly relevant pre-vocational training led to greater satisfaction with apprenticeships, while irrelevant training was linked to lower satisfaction levels with their apprenticeship compared to those who had not completed any pre-vocational training. However, in some occupations, such as engineering, ICT, and horticulture, apprentices who had completed highly relevant pre-vocational training reported lower satisfaction levels than those who had not participated in such training (Karmel 2021). This suggests that other factors, such

as the design and quality of the subsequent apprenticeship training program, may play a critical role in satisfying students.

Additionally, satisfaction levels varied according to apprentice characteristics. Karmel (2021) also noted that apprentices with disabilities tended to report lower satisfaction compared to those without disabilities, while other groups, such as those aged 20 to 24 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices, early school leavers, and those living in remote areas, reported relatively high satisfaction. Karmel and Oliver (2011) concluded that, while pre-apprenticeships had a modest positive impact on job-related satisfaction, it did not affect satisfaction with off-the-job training. That research also found differing effects by trade, with pre-apprenticeships increasing the likelihood of completion for apprentices in construction and electrotechnology, but not for hairdressing, automotive and engineering.

In the absence of conclusive evidence on the impact of pre-apprenticeships on satisfaction, the Productivity Commission's 2021 review of the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development recommended further research on pre-apprenticeships to better understand their effects.

Evaluating effectiveness

One challenge in assessing the effectiveness and impact of pre-apprenticeships is the lack of a singular pre-apprenticeship purpose.

As for apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships may serve multiple purposes, depending on the role of the individual/body making the assessment. Dumbrell and Smith (2013) outlined two views of pre-apprenticeships: industry/skills formation for employers and equity/social inclusion for students. An industry/skill formation view would define the purpose of a pre-apprenticeship as attracting 'good workers for the occupation', would be selective based on merit, deliver technical skills and knowledge and the desired outcome would be an apprenticeship in the occupation. The equity/social inclusion view, on the other hand, would aim to get disadvantaged people into jobs through non-selective or targeted recruitment and the training would be focused on employability skills and work habits, with the goal being any job or further study.

Others have defined purpose with reference to a similar dichotomy, for example, Toner and Woolley (2007) outlined 'labour market efficiency' and 'skill shortage' objectives. That research ultimately recommended the development of 'streams', the 'skills shortage' stream with rigorous selection. However, the utility of such streams is brought into question by the evidence that students and indeed employers hold multiple purposes for pre-apprenticeships.

Another challenge is that there is no formal definition of a pre-apprenticeship that allows the programs to be easily identified in the VET data, as Karmel and Oliver (2011) indicated many years ago. Feedback received from the employers interviewed for this research showed that an employer might consider any training or licensing acquired by a person that makes them more prepared for the apprenticeship or attractive to the employer – for example, a driver's licence – to be defined as a pre-apprenticeship. However, this project is limited to exploring pre-apprenticeship activity within nationally recognised VET, although, even there, there is no standardised definition of what constitutes a pre-apprenticeship or how it differs from other VET training, with the descriptions in the literature varying:

- Pre-apprenticeship training is described as a pathway that helps individuals to gain entry to an industry through an apprenticeship, particularly in traditional trades (Foley & Blomberg 2011).
- Pre-apprenticeships are courses offering initial training in a specific trade, giving prospective apprentices an understanding of the trade and helping them to secure an apprenticeship. These

programs aim to align the expectations of new apprentices with the realities of the trade (Stromback 2012).

- Australian Apprenticeships (2024) defines pre-apprenticeships as ‘entry-level training’ and are ‘a great way to test out the industry before committing’. This definition also stipulates that a pre-apprenticeship may lead to a certificate II but may also be unaccredited training.

What is expected from a pre-apprenticeship program?

Ideally, a pre-apprenticeship is valuable for both employers and students. A pre-apprenticeship program can equip students with industry-specific skills and experience, making them more employable.

According to the literature, students may have multiple motivations for enrolling, including:

- gaining insight into industries and occupations to make informed career choices
- creating a pathway into trades by expanding opportunities and developing workplace-relevant skills
- offering an alternative pathway into the workforce, even if not pursuing an apprenticeship (Australian Industry Group 2016; Dumbrell & Smith 2013; Karmel 2021).

Although pre-apprenticeships are not necessary for entering the workforce, they can offer networking opportunities and help students to connect with employers. Some students who do not pursue apprenticeships after completing a pre-apprenticeship still find the course beneficial for securing employment or further education (Arrowsmith 2020; Group Training Association of NSW & ACT 2014).

While completing a pre-apprenticeship does not guarantee an apprenticeship, it can offer a pathway through various means, helping students to gain relevant experience and skills or work preparedness. They can be an important pathway for students who might need more support, including First Nations peoples, people with disabilities, at-risk youth, early school leavers and women. However, it is noteworthy that past research has found that pre-apprenticeships are not accessed equally across the spectrum of student demographics and may be under-utilised by certain cohorts, such as early school leavers and those with disabilities (Karmel 2021).

Employers often view candidates with pre-apprenticeship experience as more dedicated and skilled, which increases their chances of securing an apprenticeship (Arrowsmith 2020; Dumbrell & Smith 2013). Dumbrell and Smith (2013) interviewed employers about their views on pre-apprenticeships and reported that they were supportive of pre-apprenticeship programs. Most believed that pre-apprenticeships helped them to filter out unsuitable candidates, and some employers specifically noted that they believed pre-apprenticeships contributed to better apprenticeship retention and completion rates.

This research

To improve understanding of the value of pre-apprenticeship programs to students and employers, as well as their satisfaction with the outcome of training, this qualitative phase of the research collected data from pre-apprenticeship students, employers of apprentices and group training organisations (GTOs). The insight into the lived experiences of students and employers deepens exploration of the results of the quantitative analysis and expands our understanding of the factors that may motivate students to pursue a pre-apprenticeship; to transition to an apprenticeship or not; and the value they and employers get out of pre-apprenticeships.

The full quantitative research findings can be found in *A quantitative assessment of the effect of a pre-apprenticeship on an apprenticeship completion*. A research summary, which combines the findings of both analyses, is also available: *Understanding the value of pre-apprenticeships*.

Qualitative research

This phase of the project sought to understand the value students place on pre-apprenticeships and their motivations for commencing their pre-apprenticeship programs.

Research questions:

- What is the student intention/motivation for undertaking a pre-apprenticeship?
- What value did the pre-apprenticeship add to the apprenticeship, and was the student satisfied with the training and the outcomes achieved?

Understanding the lived experience of pre-apprenticeship students and the factors that motivated them to undertake a pre-apprenticeship can provide insight into trends observed in the quantitative data. Qualitative data can also reveal factors that are not measured quantitatively but may still exert a significant impact on commencement, completion and satisfaction rates.

Qualitative methodology

Given that the aim of the qualitative research was to explore the values and motivations of completer and non-completer students and apprentice and non-apprentice employers, semi-structured interviews were selected as the data-collection method. Interviews of up to 30 minutes were conducted via Microsoft Teams or phone call. Student participants were provided with a \$70 gift voucher for their participation.

Research participants

Student participants

The students to be included in data collection were those who had commenced a nationally recognised pre-apprenticeship program in one of the jurisdictions that had made data available for the quantitative data analysis (Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales). NCVET's internal ethical and privacy policy was consulted, prompting the decision to exclude students aged under 18 from the research due to the additional burden of seeking parenting/guardian permission for their participation.

The plan was to select current and former pre-apprenticeship students by approaching registered training organisations (RTOs) with pre-apprenticeship programs on scope and to work with the leadership team to invite their students to participate in our research. However, this approach method would have likely excluded pre-apprenticeship non-completers as they rarely remain in contact with RTOs. In order to reach non-completers as well, the research team explored using student data to make direct contact with past pre-apprenticeship program students.

In the first recruitment phase, the researchers made contact by email with the 654 students who had enrolled in a pre-apprenticeship program between 2020 and 2022 and who had a valid email address listed in the student file data. There were 340 undeliverable emails; two students who asked not to be contacted again; and 22 students who replied and agreed to participate in an interview. Due to no-shows only 12 interviews were conducted from that cohort. Subsequently, the researchers reverted to the original plan to contact RTOs and ask them to share the invitation with their current students. In this way, several thousand students were made aware of the research and this mixed recruitment method resulted in a further four interviews being completed, resulting in a total of 16 interviews. The students represented a range of locations, geographical areas, genders, industries and completion status (table 1).

Table 1 Characteristics of student interviewees

Attribute		Participants (n = 16)
Gender	Female	5
	Male	11
Age ranges	18–24 (youth) years	5
	25–35 years	4
	40+ years	2
State	Western Australia	11
	South Australia	2
	Victoria	3
Qualification	Certificate II in Plumbing	1
	Certificate II in Electrotechnology	6
	Certificate II in Painting & Decorating	2
	Certificate II in Electrical	2
	Certificate II in Salon Assistant	1
	Certificate II in Roof Carpentry	1
	Certificate II in Commercial Cookery	1
	Certificate II in Light Vehicle	2
Completed status	Completed	6
	Not completed or not yet completed	10
Apprentice status	Apprentice	9
	Not apprentice	7
Apprentice in same field as pre-apprenticeship (of 9 apprentices)	Yes	7
	No	2
Work experience	Yes	11
	No	5

Notes: In order to maintain anonymity of students, there will be no cross-tabulation of characteristics by individual.

Employer and GTO participants

Employer and group training organisation (GTO) attitudes towards pre-apprenticeships are much more studied in the literature than the students themselves, so for this study we aimed to include just five participants from these entities to confirm findings in the literature. The recruitment method included placing ads in industry association newsletters, directly emailing industry bodies and GTOs to request an interview, and emailing 12 employers of apprentices. The researchers interviewed three GTOs and three employers, encompassing a range of industries, including construction, engineering, business services, childcare and hairdressing. To ensure their anonymity, we will not publish a cross-tabulation of their characteristics.

Sample

For a thematic analysis, the number of interviews required is dependent upon the richness of data supplied, and typically researchers will stop when they are no longer hearing anything new from participants (data saturation). For this reason, it can be difficult to determine the number of participants required before beginning data collection. To determine the appropriate number of interviews for obtaining sufficient data for analysis, the concept of ‘information power’ was used. Information power is established by examining five facets of information richness: the aim of the study; sample specificity; use of established theory; quality of dialogue; and analysis strategy (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora 2016). This study sought to gain a broad understanding of the experiences of pre-apprenticeship students and did not seek to develop new theories. The quality of dialogue collected in interviews was high, meaning that the sample of up to 16 students was deemed sufficient to explore the research questions. For

employers and GTOs, the study sought to confirm the findings of the literature review so a small sample was selected in order to reduce the burden of recruitment.

Analysis

The data collected in interviews were transcribed from recordings of online interviews, reviewed for accuracy, and analysed using the principles of reflexive thematic analysis, a method of coding meaningful utterances in texts and identifying themes related to the research questions. Six steps are involved in coding data: familiarise yourself with the data; generate initial codes; combine codes into themes; review themes; determine significance of themes; and report findings (Braun & Clarke 2013).

The researchers prioritised inductive analysis; that is, identifying codes and themes in the data rather than finding data to fit pre-defined themes, and identified both semantic and latent meaning with codes. Latent coding seeks to delve deeper than the surface level meaning of utterances and explore the hidden assumptions, ideologies and ideas that inform the semantic content of texts (Byrne 2022).

Quotations from students, employers and GTOs are included in the results presented below, with individuals attributed using a participant number that preserves their anonymity, e.g. PARTICIPANT #1.

Findings

Students

The student participants were very candid and open about their experiences with their pre-apprenticeship programs. The mix of completer and non-completer students allowed insight into some of the challenges students face and also the ways in which completion rates do not tell the full story of the impact exerted by pre-apprenticeships on individuals.

A list of all the codes and themes in the data can be found in Appendix A - data codes and themes.

Intention

Students were able to articulate a range of intentions behind their commencement of a pre-apprenticeship, including trying something new out, being unfulfilled in their current work, and wanting to pursue work that was rewarding and appealing.

Trying something new

Students who took up a pre-apprenticeship to ‘try something new’ tended to be those who had not yet settled on a career or found work that they enjoyed. Typically, this theme was identified amongst the younger research participants, those who had finished school and entered the workforce but had not yet gained a formal qualification. They may have spent some time travelling, working in temporary jobs and were now ready to experiment with a ‘real’ job pathway. They often had discussions with people in their lives to gather ideas and test out potential study options. In some cases, they had been encouraged by family to try an apprenticeship, or enticed by offers of a free course.

Mum was saying that you could do like taster courses originally, um about, you know, trades and I thought maybe I could do electric technology and go towards being an electrician. [A] couple of people in my family had already gone down that route of becoming an electrician, so it kind of felt like out of all the trades, maybe just kind of following the family. (PARTICIPANT #26)

I [had] just come back from being a bum around Europe for a year so I was like oh, ‘go do something with my life’ and I wouldn’t say it was just something to do, but in a sense it was. (PARTICIPANT #13)

Finding fulfilling work

Underpinning the decision to seek out a pre-apprenticeship was an understanding that working in the trades was rewarding, which made it an appealing option. Participants talked about the salaries that trade work attracted and believed most trades are a future-proof career. The students also liked the idea of having variety in their work and looked ahead to consider what they might enjoy doing for their entire working life.

I guess I just looked at it [as] I don't want to be working for the rest of my life doing a job that is average, I want to actually enjoy going to work. (PARTICIPANT #17)

The vast majority of options, so instrumentation engineering, there's solar ... there's so many options in this trade that were just really appealing to me. And I'm thinking of going down the line of instrumentation further on. But yeah, just having all those options is what really drew me to it. (PARTICIPANT #28)

Participants looked forward to working in a job they could be proud of and indicated that they held a particular personal interest that aligned with the trade they had chosen to study.

I have a fascination with things that I can't touch, hear, smell or see ... it's interesting, but that's all indoor and laboratory-based. So, I needed something that's going to spark interest and still be on the tools and outdoors, and I've kind of always had an interest in electrical so, yeah, I went down that route. (PARTICIPANT #2)

Escaping current job

I was construction manager and I just hated the job. (PARTICIPANT #18)

I was I working in a factory and I was thinking like leaving my job. But then, like, where I'm going to get another job, stuff like that. (PARTICIPANT #22)

I was a bit bored of sitting in an office. (PARTICIPANT #11)

Student participants talked about their desire to leave their current job or career pathway. They had tried something and identified what they didn't like about it, and doing that assessment led them to choose an apprenticeship. Typically, the students identified finding more active work, work with more variety and better career prospects, and work that allowed them to draw upon their personal passions and interests.

Becoming attractive to employers

In collecting information about their prospective career, students commonly heard that employers would not consider them for an apprenticeship unless they had completed a pre-apprenticeship program. Some students discovered this through the requirements listed in job ads, others through word of mouth from friends and family who worked in the trades. Others had proactively sought out an employer they wanted to work for and talked to them about what they needed to do to secure an apprenticeship.

While for some occupations the pre-apprenticeship was seen as a prerequisite, for other occupations students elected to undertake a pre-apprenticeship program to give them an edge in applying for the apprenticeship. In both instances, applicants understood that employers value completion of a related pre-apprenticeship. Students who reported this intention for enrolling in the pre-apprenticeship were more likely to be fully committed to the subsequent apprenticeship and career path.

He [employer] said do your pre-apprenticeship and if you're still interested let us know and we'll look at putting you on when a position comes up. (PARTICIPANT #23)

People that I handed my resume in to said that, they'd asked me if I'd done my pre-apprenticeship and I said 'no, I haven't'. That was when I was like 'Oh, I might as well go do that'. (PARTICIPANT #30)

Considering a trade since high school

Students held beliefs that trades were a rewarding career pathway, for income and job security, and indicated that they had learned this in high school. Although they had not acted on their interest as teenagers, they had held onto that knowledge and used it later in life to pursue a trade that had piqued their interest.

Probably would have been about 16–17 when I started thinking about what I wanted to do. But really made the decision I think, I was 21 when I started the course. (PARTICIPANT #11)

Intention to action

Student participants described the actions they took once they had determined an apprenticeship was what they wanted. They turned to the internet to find pre-apprenticeship programs and to figure out the cost of enrolling and consulted with friends and family to discuss the pros and cons of doing an apprenticeship and enlist support.

Factors that students cited as important to their commencement of a pre-apprenticeship were the course fees, having family support, having the time and energy to study, and managing financially while working reduced hours. Students made lifestyle changes to facilitate study, including working part-time in their current job to make time for class, or relying on a partner or parents to subsidise their costs of living. Many of the students relied on parental support in the form of food and board for the duration of their pre-apprenticeship and into their apprenticeship.

Just relying on family really help me.

(PARTICIPANT #31)

The cost of undertaking a pre-apprenticeship while living on a reduced income from their current work was a major source of anxiety for students before they enrolled. Discounted courses offered in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities for students to get started on their pathway to an apprenticeship, which they would not have been able to afford previously.

COVID was actually the biggest help for me ... when they [RTO] dropped the prices of it all, it allowed me the access to get in.

(PARTICIPANT #2)

Motivations

Underlying students' actions to research, enrol and study a pre-apprenticeship were core beliefs about the world and themselves. Students displayed resilience and determination when the pre-apprenticeship did not evolve as they had imagined, or when their study was interrupted by COVID.

These students demonstrated self-belief and self-efficacy, recognising that they could make a change to their own lives. That belief empowered them to take the chance on a pre-apprenticeship even though they might not have enjoyed secondary school or had never excelled academically, or were already mature-aged.

It's like anything, you decide you want to go do something, you just go and do it. (ID#1)

Nothing good happens in a comfort zone. I'm a big believer in getting yourself out [there] and being uncomfortable. (ID#23)

Some students indicated they looked at the pre-apprenticeship from an investment mindset. They recognised they would be taking a risk, financially and time-wise, but that the pre-apprenticeship course would pay off for them later, displaying faith in the value of apprenticeships and the vocation they aspired to join.

I knew I needed to do it so, and I knew my situation probably wasn't gonna get any better anytime soon, so I figured it's probably better to just do it now and get it out of the way. (ID#23)

Expectations

Student participants judged the value of their pre-apprenticeship program by how it fulfilled their expectations and what it ultimately led to. As outlined above, students had expressed quite broad expectations of their pre-apprenticeship programs, indicating that they were anticipating learning skills and knowledge related to the occupation and that they hoped to get an apprenticeship and to make some friends and industry contacts.

The participants expected that the pre-apprenticeship program would give them basic skills related to their occupation and allow them to undertake some work experience. Many were unable to expand further on their concept of 'skills', generally providing the example of 'using basic tools'.

I was hoping to get a better understanding of how to use like the tools and stuff. (PARTICIPANT #26)

Students expressed the expectation that work experience and the pre-apprenticeship program would allow them to gauge what the occupation was ‘really like’ and so help them determine whether an apprenticeship was for them.

Electrical and then probably what my like I would get an understanding of then what my apprenticeship would look like, maybe what the job would look like because I didn't even know what it meant, being an electrician. (PARTICIPANT #23)

There were participants who had a singular expectation: to get an apprenticeship. And others who had no idea what to expect and went into the program not knowing what they wanted out of it.

I didn't actually really know what to expect, going into it. (PARTICIPANT #17)

A desire to make friends or develop contacts within the industry was an expectation for very few students. This tended to be the students who were very committed to going on to the apprenticeship and were already thinking about their future careers and how to secure ongoing work or start their own business.

Value

The value that students got out of their pre-apprenticeship programs contrasted with their humble expectations. In addition to finding an apprenticeship, they reported unanticipated benefits such as confidence, greater insight into the trade and an increased interest and passion for the trade, while many more reported they valued making friends and contacts in the program, which they had not expected before they started.

Got an apprenticeship

One of the main outcomes that students valued in the pre-apprenticeship was the increased ease of finding an apprenticeship. Nine of the student participants were already working as apprentices at the time of interview. Some had not completed their pre-apprenticeship because they had secured an apprenticeship before finishing:

And so that's why I went and got the pre apprenticeship and the only reason I didn't finish it is because I got a job and I spoke to my employer and I said, 'Look mate, I'm halfway through this pre-apprenticeship and I'm six months off', and he goes, 'No, you've got a job now. Don't worry about it. You're going to work. (PARTICIPANT #18)

Students who were not able to find an apprenticeship after their pre-apprenticeship tended to see less value in having completed their program. Typically, students who could not find an apprenticeship felt that was due to no positions being advertised in their area and needing to ‘know the right people’ to get a foothold in the industry, or the timing of looking for work during COVID, when trades demand had slowed. Another reason cited was related to their age; they understood that mature-aged candidates would need to be paid a higher wage and so might be less attractive to employers.

I went into civil [construction work] and ended up doing labouring and draining but never went to plumbing because I couldn't find work because it's a bit hard at my age and there wasn't – like even now you don't you don't see plumbing apprenticeships advertised. (PARTICIPANT #1)

I would have been 19 or 20, so pretty sure I fell under the mature-age or like the higher end of the junior pay brackets. I mean, yeah, so that played a bit of a part. Also, you know it was COVID and no one was hiring. (PARTICIPANT #13)

Many of the students saw value in having done the pre-apprenticeship even if it didn't lead to an apprenticeship, either because they changed their minds about what suited them or because they could

not find work in their trade of choice. Students who didn't gain an apprenticeship talked about the value of the general employability skills, friendships and re-introduction to working life they had gained.

Even when students did not feel fully satisfied with their pre-apprenticeship, they tended to see value in having done it. For example, one student (PARTICIPANT #13), who initially said, 'It was a waste of six months and \$800', later in the interview also said, 'I think it [the pre-apprenticeship] gave me a bit of confidence to come up here [regional town where they were doing an unrelated traineeship]'.

Increased employability

For the participants, doing the pre-apprenticeship was valuable because it allowed them to develop employability skills that helped them even when they did not go on to an apprenticeship in the same field of education. The pre-apprenticeship gave them confidence and practice engaging with employers through the work experience block.

Well, it [the pre-apprenticeship] was pretty important. Just being able to get through interviews and stuff. For the placement now, even though it didn't end up in the field, certainly helped me when I was applying for other positions. (PARTICIPANT #11)

Yeah, I had a good experience. I think it [the pre-apprenticeship] definitely gave me that edge going into the job, to be a little bit more confident and I guess it taught me what questions to ask to get the response that I was seeking. (PARTICIPANT #17)

And for those students who found an apprenticeship before they had even completed their pre-apprenticeship, their increased employability was a key point of value, getting them into paid learning sooner than expected.

Increased understanding of trade and apprenticeship

Students found the pre-apprenticeship valuable in preparing them for the expectations and work of an apprenticeship. Sometimes the idea of what is involved in a trade turns out to be quite different from the reality and the pre-apprenticeship offers potential apprentices a chance to confirm that the job is something they would enjoy as a career and, also, that they could make it through the four-year training contract commitment.

You see the apprentices get into it [an apprenticeship] who haven't done one [a pre-apprenticeship] and they maybe last two or three weeks because they really don't know what they got into. So it's a real advantage to know what you're doing before you sign up for that four year contract. (PARTICIPANT #11)

The chance to learn the basic skills required for an apprenticeship, or to ensure skills already acquired are being performed correctly was another value students saw in the pre-apprenticeship course. This gave students confidence to apply for an apprenticeship, knowing that they would be useful to their future employer, as well as not embarrassing themselves.

It [the pre-apprenticeship] definitely refines the very basic skills that I already had going into it. I definitely learned a lot of niche, specific things that you probably wouldn't pick up learning from your parents. (PARTICIPANT #30)

The students who were required to undertake a work experience placement saw great value in it when the employer made good use of their time. The expectation was that work experience would provide the best information to students about whether the type of work was for them, and this expectation was confirmed when students were allowed to perform work tasks and felt they were a genuine part of the work team while they were on site.

They treated me as an equal even though I was just a work experience kid, and that made me feel really comfortable and open up a bit and as for the work, they didn't get me doing much, but what they did get me to do I found was quite good. (PARTICIPANT #28)

However, for students who were not provided with any meaningful tasks, or who felt as if they were treated like a nuisance on the worksite, they saw little value in the work experience. The main complaint was that the tasks they undertook during work placement did not align with what they had learned during their studies. Another complaint related to the work culture and attitude of the employer, some of whom had exhibited bullying and abusive workplace behaviours.

I guess being work placements, you didn't really get the opportunity to actually do anything. It was kind of just helping clean up and watching them work. So I guess in that sense I could see how they run jobs, you know, get a real basic idea of it. But I didn't really get any hands-on experience from it. (PARTICIPANT #17)

The one [placement] I'm at now is just a little bit overwhelming and I feel because I'm not an actual employee getting paid, I feel really out of place there and like they don't want me around. (PARTICIPANT #31)

Made friends or networks

Students reported that the relationships they built with fellow students made their pre-apprenticeship experience more valuable. Having those connections with peers motivated them to attend class, helped them to consolidate their learning by sharing it and helping each other, and gave them industry contacts they could call upon once they had embarked on their careers.

But my worries were wasted on nothing because the group that I'm with are absolutely great. They're like the best guys there. I'm excited to go to TAFE tomorrow. That's how good it is. (PARTICIPANT #27)

Satisfaction

Students expressed broad satisfaction with their experiences of the pre-apprenticeship programs. They enjoyed the course content, the teaching and the chance to make friends. Where students were not satisfied with their experience, they tended to cite problems with securing or completing work experience placements and issues with gaining their certificate due to assessment or administrative errors.

Work experience placements

Successful completion of a work experience placement contributed to student satisfaction with their pre-apprenticeship experience. Students who enjoyed their placement felt it had added a lot of value to their learning and confidence.

They treated me as an equal even though I was just a work experience kid, and that made me feel really comfortable and open up a bit. And as for the work, they didn't get me doing much, but what they did get me to do I found was quite good. (PARTICIPANT #28)

Conversely, students who had a poor work placement experience, or difficulty fulfilling the placement hours requirements, reported that these issues had decreased their satisfaction with the pre-apprenticeship. Most commonly, students were responsible for securing their own work experience placements and this could prove challenging for those who had no contacts in industry or who lived in regional areas, where employers were scarce. Participants sometimes reported that a number of their peers had dropped out due to difficulties in finding a suitable placement.

I only know there was [sic] only two or three people maybe in our class that actually were able to do the full however many hours we needed to do for work placement ... I know there was [sic] at least

three or four of us that didn't complete the workplace hours just because it took us a while to find someone and then when we did find someone, we could only do one day a week. (PARTICIPANT #30)

Of those who secured a work placement, the way they were treated and how useful they felt at the worksite influenced their satisfaction. The more common complaint was that students were disappointed by what they were learning on the job site. Another complaint related to the bullying behaviour of the employer and a resultant negative work environment.

I guess being work placements, you didn't really get the opportunity to actually do anything. It was kind of just helping clean up and watching them work. So I guess I could see how they run jobs, you know, get a real basic idea of it. But I didn't really get any hands-on experience from it.

(PARTICIPANT #17)

VET teacher quality

Students who were satisfied with the overall experience of their pre-apprenticeship program tended to attribute this to the quality of their VET teacher. Those who experienced issues with the RTO administration or personal challenges in completing their course made the point that their teacher was not the reason for their dissatisfaction. The behaviours that VET teachers exhibited that students appreciated were the teachers being deeply knowledgeable about the industry; being reassuring and responsive to the learners' learning needs; facilitating a supportive and light-hearted classroom atmosphere; and being available to answer students' questions quickly.

He is the best lecturer around; like he is very interactive. Recently we've had a BBQ at our TAFE area, just us on a Saturday because we're almost done and he's like 'oh, come over for some sausages, we'll kick a footy around'.

(PARTICIPANT #27)

He was really reassuring, he explained things really well. He was obviously very well versed in all of the theories, and he understood how to teach it. It wasn't an explanation saying this is the law. It was more like this is how this works, explaining through step by step, making sure all of the parts are understood, which is really good because I'm someone who likes to understand all the little details and I start to lose the bigger picture when the smaller details aren't falling into place.

(PARTICIPANT #26)

Where students were dissatisfied with the performance of their VET teacher, it was sometimes due to their teacher's inability to keep track of student progress and support them to gather all the evidence they needed to gain completion. There were also some incidents of bullying and harassment by teachers, who openly preferred certain students over others and prioritised them for mentoring.

They [the trainer] should think about how they treat people, because in the class, if we because sometimes we have to do the hair in front of the client. The way she talked to us was so embarrassing. They look at us look like we're stupid like, we're learning. That's why we're learning.

But you don't to talk to us the way she talked to us.

(PARTICIPANT #22)

Another factor that contributed to student satisfaction was the ability of the VET teacher to control the classroom. In some cases, there was a mix of student ages in the classroom – some school leavers, some older students – with mixed motivations for being in the program. In classrooms where the unmotivated learners were disruptive, students reported lower satisfaction.

At one stage they, the young kids or someone, had drawn a cartoon on the board, which remained there for a fair portion of the day and it included this hunched over old woman with a walking stick. And at the top was written 'Class of 24' ... I'd got a soft chair for myself because of my arthritis and so on, and that was 'disappeared' [by the younger students] when I went back. (PARTICIPANT #29)

Changes in teaching staff was another factor that led to dissatisfaction, with students reporting the frustration of having to explain to a new VET teacher the stage they were at in their learning and which assessments they had already completed.

When we started we had this one educator who also worked in the salon. So when we started it was OK because we were learning step by step everything; it was OK. But then I think after six months that guy left. And since then we keep changing the educator, just how we learn, like it just keeps changing and we cannot continue from the previous because it's a new educator and she's [the RTO manager] is not really in the class. (PARTICIPANT #22)

Similarly, low support from VET teachers was another factor that led to dissatisfaction with their pre-apprenticeship program. Some students struggled to ask for the support they needed when they felt they were not keeping up, and this was particularly apparent with students who needed to study online. Students struggled to articulate why they did not reach out for help: in some instances, it was that they felt overwhelmed by other personal circumstances, and study was not their first priority at the time. In other cases, it seemed they might have lacked confidence.

I don't think so. From what I remember. Yeah, I feel like I got behind and I don't feel like they reached out to me [to help]. In saying that, I don't really remember reaching out to them either. (PARTICIPANT #23)

Program content and assessment

Many of the students were satisfied with the pre-apprenticeship program content and their learning. They enjoyed the chance to learn the basic skills they would need on the job and the theory that underpinned the occupational tasks. This left them feeling confident they would be a good apprenticeship candidate.

I enjoyed that I'm learning new things, ways you're cooking that I never thought about before. (PARTICIPANT #32)

I've learned a lot [more] than I thought I would. (PARTICIPANT #28)

Where students were not satisfied with the content, it came down to their feeling as if they were rushed through the learning, or the way the information was presented was uninteresting or repetitive. At times students felt they did not have enough time to practise skills with the tools before they were required to undertake assessment, and that made them feel anxious. Some students turned to family members or friends who were in trades to help learn skills before assessment.

They try and cram too much into the time you've got, and then, [with] relatively large class sizes and if you're not one of the five out of 10 or 15 people that get to actually tinker with the whatever it is, you sort of get a bit hamstrung when it comes to your assessment. (PARTICIPANT #13)

The only thing that was my saving grace [in passing assessments] is that dad's a tradie and he's got a big shed and had lots of tools and stuff. So he was really supportive and he really wanted to try and help me. (PARTICIPANT #23)

The move to online learning during COVID-19 presented a challenge for students who preferred a more hands-on style of learning and had to adjust to learning through a lecture-style approach.

So I started in the classroom and that was fine but then we went completely online. And going completely online for me, who had never had any experience in a trade or in any of it, especially not electrical, I really struggled. I found it really challenging to keep up with it, to understand it, to stay interested. Like you know, sitting there, like listening to someone waffle on is quite challenging, especially when you're not getting it ... I didn't get that hands-on experience that I was hoping to get and that I felt like I needed the most going into a hands-on job. (PARTICIPANT #23)

Peer support

Students who were able to form friendly and supportive relationships with their pre-apprenticeship peers were more likely to report satisfaction with their program. Students enjoyed the chance to reinforce their own learning by sharing it with others who might need additional support, and appreciated the support they received in turn.

I think I found with my class everyone got along quite well and so we all worked as a team in a way, helped each other out, giving advice, which had really helped all of us with our learning. Because myself and a couple other students, we didn't find it as hard, and so helping other students reinforced that in our minds, what we're learning, you know, going over it multiple times.' (PARTICIPANT #17)

Although some were content to get on with their study and not form relationships with others, making friends or networking with other students was a surprise benefit of undertaking the course for many students. It was not often mentioned as an expectation going into the pre-apprenticeship but many talked about the value other students had added to their experience. In instances where students had a frustrating experience with their RTO or trainer, their relationships with their peers sometimes helped them to push through to completion despite losing motivation to complete.

Administrative challenges

There were participants who considered themselves 'completers' despite not attaining the certificate, a situation that typically occurred when they faced administrative challenges related to their completion of assessments. For example, the following student, whose VET teacher did not keep good records of which assessments the students had completed:

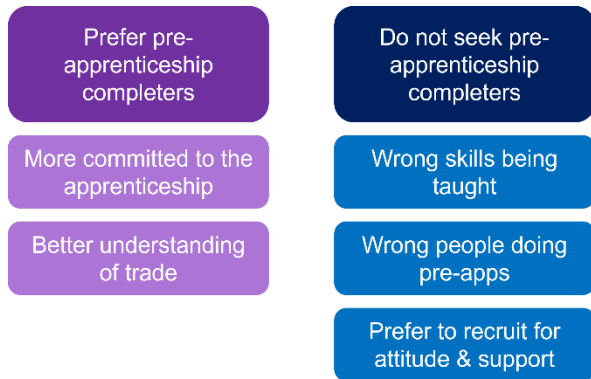
[trainer] wasn't the most organised. He said I didn't complete an assessment of a little metal detector thing. I was like, 'yeah, I did'. He said, 'No, you didn't, it's not in my record'. I was like, 'Dude, I've got a little metal detector thing in my drawer at home'. So yeah, there was a couple things like that where he was like 'You haven't done this, this and this'. And it's like, I have. And then he'd find it the next day in the bottom drawer. So maybe that's why I never got my certificate. (PARTICIPANT #13)

In another example, a student missed a single assessment due to an unexpected public holiday just prior to the end of term and was told they would have to repeat the entire subject, including paying for it again, the following year. The inflexibility displayed by the RTO deterred that student from completing their certificate but also from pursuing an apprenticeship, as they felt they would not be able to compete with other candidates who had completed the pre-apprenticeship.

I got all but one of the practicals done to get the Cert. II, and my teacher said if you put on your resume all of the modules that you've done, they'll see that the module that you've missed is not one that's relevant towards going to a cert III. So, they they'll still take you because that module isn't actually relevant towards the [certificate] three. (PARTICIPANT #26)

Employers and GTOs

Figure 1 Employer and GTO views on the value of pre-apprenticeships



Error! Reference source not found. presents employers' opposing views of the value of pre-apprenticeships. Some employers preferred to seek out pre-apprenticeship completers when they hired apprentices because they believed those apprentices would be more committed to the apprenticeship and have a better understanding of what they were getting into. They considered those with the preparation associated with a pre-apprenticeship would be more productive from day one, be more prepared for the type of work they would be undertaking and be driven to complete their apprenticeship.

They've done a little bit of safety. Yes, they've done some use of hand and power tools. Yes, they've got a little bit of basic knowledge in and around you know what's going on in the industry and that side of things, which is means that they're not starting 100% green. (GTO#1)

An opposing view expressed by employers was that pre-apprenticeship completers were no more attractive as apprenticeship candidates than any other person. This opinion was based on a distrust of the recruitment methods for pre-apprenticeships, with employers stating that they believed the 'wrong' people were being pushed into pre-apprenticeship programs, in that the program was being used as a pathway for people who did not know what they wanted to do. Another concern was that the content of the pre-apprenticeship program did not align with the skills and knowledge required of a worker in their particular trade occupation. Instead, these employers preferred to rely upon an interview process to select apprentices, with a heavy emphasis on recruiting for 'attitude'.

So, I've had a lot of apprentices over the time. I've had a lot of good ones and had a lot of bad ones. I've changed my interview process now is based on hiring on attitude, not on any qualifications they might have. (EMPLOYER#3)

What makes the pre-apprenticeship valuable to employers?

Employers and GTOs described the value of the pre-apprenticeship in three ways: to facilitate apprentice recruitment; to deliver 'real' work experience and prepare candidates; and to boost enthusiasm for the occupation in potential apprentices.

Facilitating recruitment

Employers who valued pre-apprenticeships considered their completers to be better candidates for an apprenticeship and be more likely to go on to complete their apprenticeship. A student's successful completion of a pre-apprenticeship program communicated to employers that the student had basic skills and knowledge, that they were dedicated enough to enrol in and complete a course they had paid for, and that they were capable of managing their life well enough to focus on study and work. For this reason, some employers liked to go to RTOs and locate apprentice candidates directly from the program.

Student participants support this practice by reporting they had been recruited before completing their pre-apprenticeship, or had seen their peers being recruited. This practice has a compounding effect in establishing the value of pre-apprenticeship programs by communicating to hopeful apprentices that enrolling in a pre-apprenticeship offers the potential for early and easy recruitment into an apprenticeship.

Preparing candidates

Employers who preferred to recruit pre-apprenticeship students claimed they did so because those candidates were more prepared to take on an apprenticeship. Having completed a pre-apprenticeship meant they had developed skills that would make it easier for them to learn and become productive workers. It also meant that the students had the appropriate expectations and attitude toward the apprenticeship work, and that they were probably more committed to completing the actual apprenticeship.

Students reported enjoying the ‘head start’ the pre-apprenticeship subjects gave them in completing their apprenticeship. While employers appreciated that productivity advantage too, they do not universally also appreciate apprentices advancing through their qualification faster and the higher wage this would attract.

Stoking enthusiasm for the occupation

Employers valued the pre-apprenticeship as a means for encouraging enthusiasm for their occupation and/or industry. They saw attracting dedicated potential apprentice candidates as essential to the health of their industry’s future workforce and looked forward to sharing their own passion with a ‘next generation’ of workers. In this way, the pre-apprenticeship provides employers with a sense that they were giving back.

Where could pre-apprenticeship value be improved?

Employers and GTOs provided some feedback on where pre-apprenticeships could add more value. Employers were not unanimous in their agreement of the benefits the programs provided to apprentice candidates. Based on the narratives heard, the perceived value of pre-apprenticeships is likely to vary greatly between sectors. Areas for improvement include: ensuring the program content matches that which apprentices will be required to do in their first year; ensuring the right people are recruited into pre-apprenticeships; improving work experience placements; and vetting work experience employers.

Attracting the right candidates to pre-apprenticeships

While employers admit that a pre-apprenticeship is a program that allows someone to try out a vocational interest, some felt that the pre-apprenticeship programs were over-populated with students who had been pushed into a vocational program based on the cost or the convenience or desire to have them move out of an ‘unemployed, not in education’ status. Some students also reported that they felt their class was divided between students who wanted to be there for their own purposes and those who had been forced into it and had therefore become disruptive. Some employers felt this meant they could not rely upon pre-apprenticeship completers to be any better apprenticeship candidates than any other applicant.

Aligning pre-apprenticeship program content with apprenticeships

Some employers reported that pre-apprenticeship completers did not have a good understanding of what they would be required to do as an apprentice; for example, they would have preferred students to have

learned more customer service skills than practical skills, the latter they felt they were capable of teaching to the student themselves. That criticism extended to work safety, where employers felt it would be more beneficial for students to commence an apprenticeship knowing how to be safe on site than being able to undertake specific work tasks.

Raise the standard of work experience placements

GTOs considered whether employers offering work placements ought to be more carefully vetted to ensure their ability to provide a quality experience to pre-apprenticeship students. They feared that students were either being deterred from the occupations or learning poor practices by being placed with less desirable employers.

Other employers complained that they had not been approached in many years by their local RTO to take on work experience students. They were eager and happy to do this and found it disappointing that work experience was no longer a requirement of the programs. Employers and GTOs, like the student participants, saw the work experience placements as the most valuable component of a pre-apprenticeship, as it allowed students to truly understand what they were getting into.

Limitations

This research did not include pre-apprenticeship students aged under 18 due to the greater complexity and risk in recruiting that cohort. There may be different patterns of completion and reasons for non-completion or non-transition in that cohort, which further research could explore.

Potential students who did not enrol in a pre-apprenticeship were not included in the research and this makes it difficult to be certain of their reasons for failing to enrol compared to those who did. Furthermore, this research did not investigate specific cohorts. Based on the quantitative findings, there may be value in conducting further research with specific cohorts and/or industries to understand how pre-apprenticeships can better serve their needs.

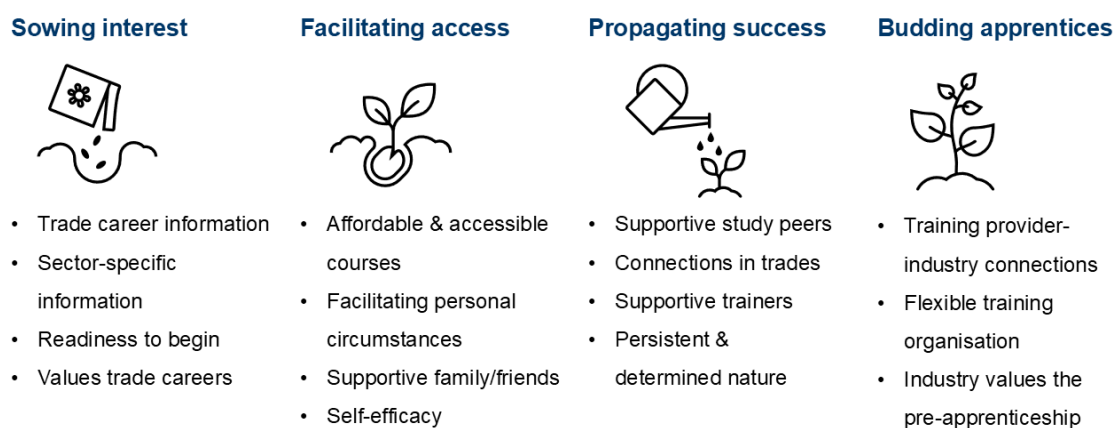
Discussion

Reflecting on the findings in the extant literature, students enrol in pre-apprenticeships for a variety of reasons, but an understanding of the value of an apprenticeship underpinned their decision. It was notable that most of the students interviewed fell into the category of ‘mature-age’ by the time they began searching for an apprenticeship. Gaining general workplace skills was therefore not an intention for the students interviewed; rather, they were interested in getting an apprenticeship, exploring the possibility of an apprenticeship, or seeking a way to return to the workforce.

Their stories tell us that young people may not move directly from secondary school into apprenticeships; however, that does not mean they cannot be attracted into trades later. The career information provided to secondary school students is important in generating a supply of apprentices for the future workforce.

Each student’s decision for enrolling varied, but common drivers and conditions were evident. Indeed, each stage of the pre-apprenticeship indicated that students had factors in common that contributed to a satisfying outcome. **Error! Reference source not found.** depicts an overview of the common drivers of enrolment, success in study and transition to apprenticeships. At each stage, students may disengage, and the reasons for this may be outside the control of policy. However, understanding the factors that promote student engagement and satisfaction may ensure that the resources available to programs are better targeted.

Figure 2 Factors that promote pre-apprenticeship completion and transition to apprenticeships



The value of work experience

Employers and students both viewed work experience as an essential component of pre-apprenticeship programs. Students looked forward to getting a ‘real taste’ for the occupation they were interested in, and in making contact with a potential employer. Employers and GTOs valued the work experience for the same reason. Providing work experience gave employers a sense of pride in their occupation, as they passed on their own enthusiasm for the trade. Employers who offered student placements viewed this service as ‘giving back’, with the added bonus of being able to identify excellent apprentice candidates, who were more likely to complete their four-year training contract.

There were challenges on both sides of the work experience relationship, with students reporting difficulty securing a work experience placement where they lacked personal contacts in the trade, while

employers reported difficulties finding safe work for students and freeing up the capacity to provide students with a meaningful experience.

The challenges of establishing quality work experience placements have been consistent across many years (Dumbrell & Smith 2013). Work experience is a highly valued component of pre-apprenticeships and an area that may benefit from focused support from governments and industries.

Student intentions

Students often intend to transition to an apprenticeship when they commence their pre-apprenticeship program. However, students commence for other reasons, including searching for more fulfilling work or trying something out to enable a return to the workforce. The intention to commence an apprenticeship is informed by a belief that trades are a stable and well-paid career path, a view that is often formed in school, even if it is not acted upon at that stage. This indicates that promotion of apprenticeship careers is effective.

Students who have already decided on an apprenticeship recognise that employers prefer to hire applicants with the relevant certificate II, which motivates them to undertake a pre-apprenticeship program before their apprenticeship. A further factor that prompted some students to enrol was a COVID-era reduction in course fees, which made the pathway accessible to them for the first time. In those cases, students had harboured a desire to become a tradesperson for years and had been waiting for the right financial and personal circumstances.

Finally, the student research participants tended to be individuals who demonstrated strong self-efficacy, with the personal resources and financial support to dedicate time to study. Some students achieved program completions in very difficult conditions, suggesting that they may be outliers amongst pre-apprenticeship students. Many of those who did not complete also wished to transition to an apprenticeship, but they lacked the resources to navigate the challenges they encountered during their study. This pattern, alongside the findings of the quantitative analysis – which shows students belonging to equity groups completing and transitioning to apprenticeships at a lower rate than their peers – suggests that pre-apprenticeships targeting specific student cohorts could improve completions, satisfaction and outcomes for individuals and further boost the supply of apprentices.

Employers and GTOs

Unlike Dumbrell and Smith (2013), this research heard opinions from employers who placed little value on a pre-apprenticeship as preparation for an apprenticeship. While those employers appeared not to be biased against pre-apprenticeship completers, they saw pre-apprenticeship completion as a less important factor to be considered when recruiting a new apprentice: more important to them was the individual's attitude, interest in the occupation, and the support system they had around them.

What those employers valued in potential candidates was very similar to the attributes other employers valued in the pre-apprenticeship students, meaning that the qualities the pre-apprenticeship demands from students coincide with the qualities employers recruit. A pre-apprenticeship can, however, add additional value, in that it sets realistic expectations about the work apprentices will be doing, while also giving them an advantage in terms of initial productivity in the workplace. In some instances, it also enables credit towards their apprenticeship qualification. That said, those advantages only apply when the pre-apprenticeship program is closely aligned with employer expectations.

GTOs were more positive about the value of pre-apprenticeships, possibly because they are in a position to partner more closely with industry and develop programs that are responsive to employer

demand. For that reason, their role in developing and supporting pre-apprenticeship programs is important to maintain.

Based on this research, it is likely that the perceived and actual value of pre-apprenticeships – as well as their purpose – varies across different trades and non-trades. Where employers can readily find suitable apprentices without sourcing them from pre-apprenticeship programs, a focus on improving pre-apprenticeships may not be useful. However, occupations that struggle to attract suitable apprentices may benefit from greater investment in targeted pre-apprenticeship programs.

If jobs and skills councils and other industry bodies were to explore pre-apprenticeship student pathways and outcomes for their specific trades/non-trades, it is likely they would encounter insights and possibilities worth pursuing. A closer alignment of the pre-apprenticeship curriculum with the expectations of apprentice employers may further improve the value placed upon those programs and in turn the outcomes for students.

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Appendix A – data codes and themes

Table A1 The codes generated by the researchers from the interview data, grouped by theme

Theme	Code
Students	
Student expectations of their pre-apprenticeship	
	Occupational skills
	Occupational knowledge
	Did not know what to expect
	Will get an apprenticeship
	Make friends and networks
	Will have trouble keeping up
	Will dislike it like school
Students prepare for pre-apprenticeship	
	Applied for pre-app multiple times
	Cost of course was prohibitive
	Course fee reduction enabled access
	Undertook research on career
	Sought family support
	Took a financial risk
	Friend referred them
	Created time to study
	Quit job or reduced hours
	Saved money
	Arranged transport
Student satisfaction with their pre-apprenticeship	
Met expectations	Content was interesting
	Enjoyed learning with peers
	Enjoyed work experience
	Trainers were excellent
	Gained insight into trade
Did not meet expectations	COVID interrupted study
	Delivery & assessment was disappointing
	Experience bullying from staff or students
	Did not find staff supportive
	Content not valuable
	Online learning was challenging
	Peers not as motivated
	Skills did not match those required in the apprenticeship
	Encountered administrative issues completing assignments
	Work experience was difficult to set up
	Was turned off seeking an apprenticeship
Student intention & motivation	Understood that employers require a pre-apprenticeship
	Feeling unfulfilled in current work
	Considered trades since high school
	Trade work is appealing
	Trying something new out
The value students found in their pre-apprenticeship	
	Able to find an apprenticeship easily
	Confidence and practice

Increased employability
Increased interest in trade
Made friends or networks

Beliefs and attitudes about themselves

Investment mindset
Open to new things
Pride in self
Resilience and determination
Self-efficacy

Employers & GTOs

Pre-apprenticeships are not valuable

Career advice is poor, leading to wrong students in programs
The pre-apprenticeship work experienced is not adequate
The wrong skills are being taught in the pre-app
The wrong young people are doing pre-apprenticeships
More safety instruction should be included
Employers should be vetted to ensure good work experience

Prefer to recruit pre-apprenticeship completers

Pre-apprenticeship students are more keen and confident
Pre-apprenticeship students commence with skills
Pre-apprenticeship students understand the work
Pre-apprenticeship students are safer
Pre-apprenticeships allow easier selection of candidates
Pre-apprenticeship students are more likely to complete their apprenticeship

Employer recruitment priorities

Recruit for individual attitude
Recruit for the support the student has
Young people are different now
Recruit from schools

Pre-apprenticeships could be improved

Increase offering of multiple trade taster courses
Increase focus on partnering with employers
Targeting programs at specific cohorts
