



Future of Education Roundtable

July 2023





In today's rapidly evolving world, the intersection of education and business plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of our communities. With this understanding in mind, the ShireBiz Future of Education Roundtable was established with a clear purpose: to bridge the gap between businesses and educational institutions.

The primary aims of this forum were to equip businesses with a comprehensive understanding of the diverse educational pathways available to individuals and an appreciation of how their active support could bolster the academic and career prospects of secondary students and individuals of all ages.

The forum highlighted the positive outcomes that could be achieved through greater collaboration and the unparalleled opportunities for students to pursue their educational aspirations and thrive in their chosen careers, including professional trades.

The ShireBiz Future of Education Roundtable was held on 23 May from 9.30 am to 11 am at the Embark Restaurant, Loftus TAFE.

The following report identifies key issues raised on the day and proposed solutions that will be explored further at subsequent meetings.

Roundtable participants included representatives from TAFE, the University of Wollongong, Regional Industry Education Partnership Training Services NSW, We Future Leaders, Southern Strength, The Youth Partnership, Shire Careers Advisors Network (SSCAN) and St George and Sutherland Shire Community College.

Employer representatives included small business owners, Sutherland Shire Council, Sutherland Shire Business Chamber, Tradies, Britton Maritime and Sutherland Hospital.

The forum was coordinated by ShireBiz. Jo Ryan, Managing Director of Infodec Communications, moderated with the assistance of Samantha Britton.

This report has been prepared by Jo Ryan, Infodec Communications, for ShireBiz.

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Observation

All groups advised that they are willing to work together to achieve the best outcomes for students, businesses, and the Sutherland Shire community. Some broader observations about the current situation include:

- There are economic and social benefits in improving links between business and educational institutions.
- There appears to be some replication of actions related to work experience and engagement with business. A more streamlined approach will improve outcomes for students and businesses.
- Students generally prefer to stay in the Sutherland Shire to complete work experience.
- There are no direct links between business owners and educational institutions at present.
- Technology can play a role in providing efficient links between industry and educational institutions. It was suggested that a portal be developed that can be accessed to match students with work experience hosts.
- Funding will be required to facilitate outcomes to several suggested actions.
- SMEs may not be experienced in training and mentoring younger people.
- SMEs may not have the time to engage with work-experience students, and larger businesses and government entities may be in a position to do more.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were discussed on the day, and they will be explored further at subsequent meetings:

ISSUE	PROPOSED TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION
A working group will hold regular meetings each term to plan new activities and micro activities to support early career pathway candidates (without replicating existing services).	Short term
Working group representatives will hold a strategy meeting to develop an overarching strategy for more targeted support of Year 10 work experience opportunities.	Short term
Support for students with additional needs on work experience placements, such as life skills coaching.	Short term
Make students aware of career opportunities earlier, before some students become disengaged.	Short term
Holding a local careers expo for younger high school students that combines education and local work opportunities.	Medium term
Coordinated industry visits to local schools.	Medium term
Apprenticeship sharing arrangements so very small businesses can team up to support an apprentice.	Medium term
Integrate knowledge of businesses/business make-up into future plans.	Medium term
While the Group already possesses a bank of employers for VET courses, funding is required to expand and support these programs.	Medium term
More structured work experience programs that support participating businesses.	Medium term
Running a program for local business professionals to mentor students.	Medium term
Create a bank of employers who can host students for planned work experience weeks, providing them with comprehensive insights into different businesses.	Long term
Creating a portal for schools that matches employers to work experience candidates.	Long term

Educational Attainment in the Sutherland Shire

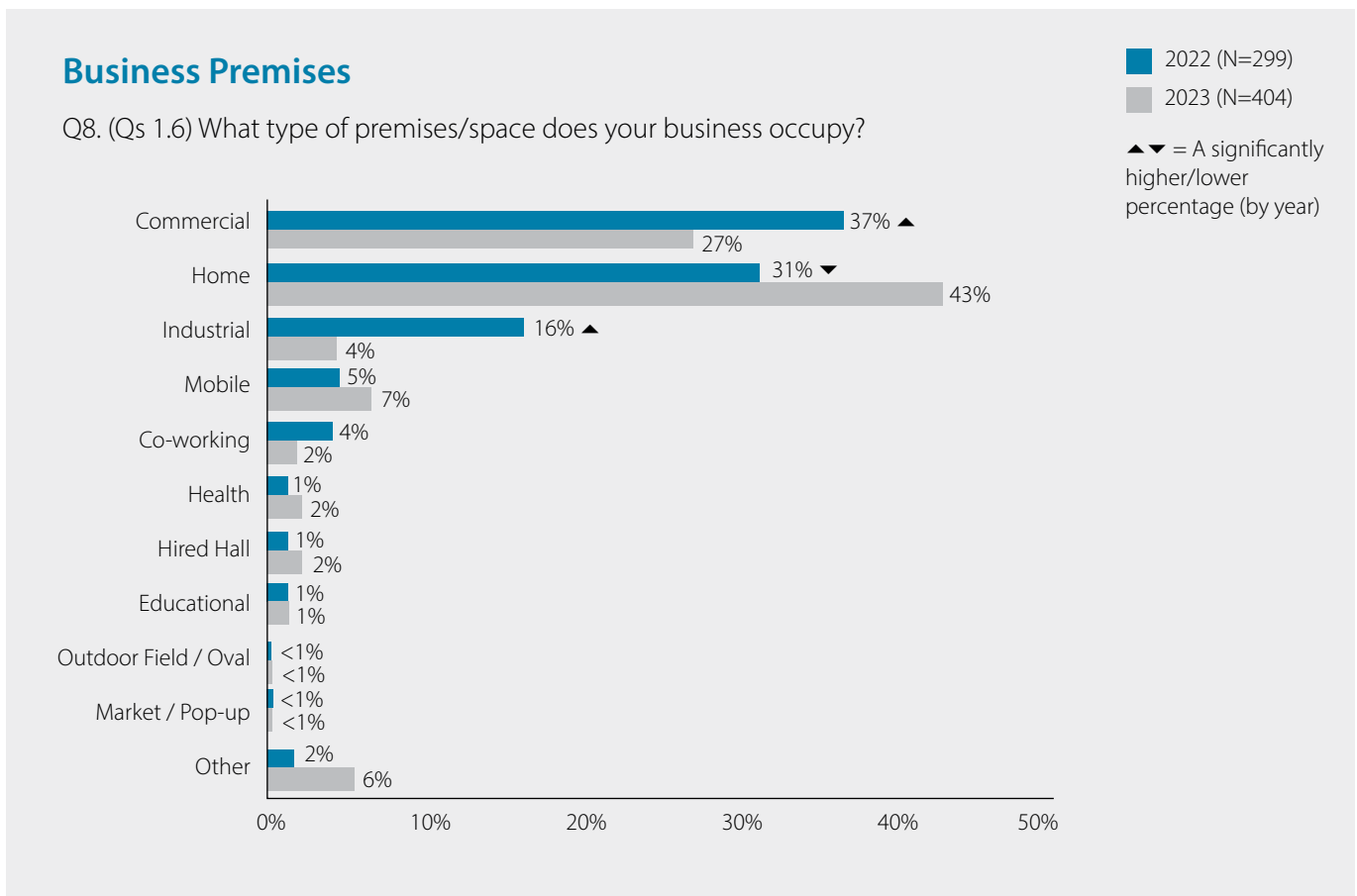
An examination of Census data from 2021 reveals a notable difference in the highest level of schooling attained by the population in Sutherland Shire compared to Greater Sydney. In Sutherland Shire, a higher percentage of individuals had left school at an early level (Year 10 or below) and a lower rate had completed Year 12 or its equivalent.

Specifically, 29.9% of the population in Sutherland Shire left school at Year 10 or below, while 60.5% successfully completed Year 12 or an equivalent qualification. In contrast, for Greater Sydney as a whole, the respective figures were 24.6% and 64.5%.

Businesses in the Sutherland Shire

While the group did not directly focus on the makeup of businesses, the success of student placement in the Sutherland Shire will also be impacted by current trends and future demands. For example, 31% of

registered businesses are defined as 'home based'. While this number appears to be decreasing, it ultimately impacts the ability of those businesses to host work-experience students.



Source: Sutherland Shire Council Business Survey 2022

Q&A Discussion

A Q&A session was held during the roundtable, allowing employers to propose ways in which a collaborative approach may be undertaken.

Key issues raised throughout the Q&A session included:

Making employers more visible to young people

Suggestions to make employers more visible included inviting industry into schools to do talks with students or coordinating a day when employers visit schools. Transport was highlighted as an issue for students visiting work sites, due to the cost of bus hire.

RIEP suggested they may be able to assist with funding for bus hire. Or, public transport could be used.

An example of how it might work is the employer confirms it can host 15 students on a specific day. An expression of interest invitation is emailed to several schools. The schools might each nominate a couple of students to take part.

Beforehand, the schools could drum up student interest by obtaining information from the employer and talking to students about the opportunity first, to help get the right students to participate. Employers can connect to local career advisors by attending network meetings as industry guests and speaking to all the career advisors in one room. Employers could present slideshows or provide information such as brochures for advisors to take back to their students. The careers advisors network also runs expos that employers could link with.

Responses from different speakers:

Universities reach out to schools, but we'd love to have industries as well. And we could even involve a number of schools at one location.

Individual approaches can be really rewarding, but it's only touching the surface of the problem. A coordinated approach is needed.

The Sutherland Shire Business Chamber has many members, so it would be a great connection.

Not everybody is capable of taking an intern. The role of the group could be supporting businesses to take them.

Many businesses in the Sutherland Shire Business Chamber would get involved, and the Chamber can provide a platform to match work experience candidates. But, we need to define what that might look like. We must look at how we can support the businesses to get involved.

The hospitality industry has a massive shortfall of staff. There could be opportunities for students to work on conference events, but there needs to be a consideration on how this would be managed.

There is still the concept where people think work experience is just an extra hand for menial tasks. Businesses need more structure around what that work experience could look like.

There are positive stories from work experience where it has developed into a career path.

While SMEs can do some of the heavy lifting, big employers have a responsibility because they have more people to manage work experience participants, and there are more opportunities.

The Role of Sutherland Shire Council

Sutherland Shire Council has the scale and capacity to do more, but at present, there are organisational challenges. They are happy to consider career 'tasters'. Beyond the work experience placement, SSC is currently reviewing their entire youth or early career pathways to increase its partnership with universities and professional roles, because the council has struggled in recruitment areas like finance professionals or community development.

Understaffing issues and work experience in Sutherland Shire hospitals

University students take up places for nurses and the hospital takes students who have mandated placements. But students who would like to get a taste of the hospital environment really need help to get through.

The hospital has a volunteer program, so it's a natural extension to look at volunteering and include other people.

Holding a careers expo targeted at younger students

It was suggested that the model of the SSCAN organised Year 12 Careers Information Expo could be adapted to also offer a Careers Expo for younger students that combines education and local work opportunities..

The year 12 careers expo is already set up and could be open to more employers.

The Sutherland Shire Apprenticeships/Traineeships & Jobs Expo will be held on 12th September 2023 at Gymea Tradies.

A localised portal for work experience that matches employers could also be beneficial.

The suggested working group, strategy and further actions

It was recommended that a working group should be formed to support further efforts. The group of like-minded people connected to the work experience issue could meet to discuss what they could do together. From there, the group can formulate a strategy and actions like creating a portal.

Forum attendees suggested that we need an encompassing strategy and then underneath that, the activities that flow from the system.

The Sutherland Shire Business Chamber wants to develop a business mentoring strategy for schools, rather than the 18 to thirties pathways, because that's

where it sees the gap.

Other issues that were identified included:

The challenge of supporting those students with additional needs in getting work experience. Bunnings, Woolworths, and Coles were big work placement providers for students with additional needs.

Clarification about the legalities including issues like working with children requirements, was sought. The issue of insurance also needed further clarification.

The administrative burden on careers advisors managing work experience.

A challenge arises when students not actively engaged in high school learning wish to participate. Signing them out of school before they can join such programs, as with the master builders' pre-apprenticeship program, poses potential difficulties in reintegrating them if needed.

Roundtable Presentations



TAFE NSW Loftus Campus

TAFE NSW Loftus Campus, led by Gail Evans, Head Teacher of Hospitality, offers diverse programs catering to various student needs.

The YES Program at Embark Restaurant is designed for disengaged young students seeking to explore hospitality. They gain practical experience in making coffees, non-alcoholic beverages and 'mock waiting' scenarios through non-accredited courses.

TAFE Loftus Campus boasts its most significant intake of predominantly female apprentices in Commercial Cookery for 2023. Other trades, such as hair, beauty, electrical, and plumbing, are held at Gymea. Additionally, business services traineeships are available.

The campus accommodates school-based apprenticeships in commercial cookery, trades and business services, enabling students to balance education and practical learning.

For Year 10 students, a new Certificate in Hospitality offers a one-day-a-week program for two terms, resulting in a Certification One.

TVET programs cater to year 11 and 12 students, providing pathway options for their Higher School Certificate (HSC) by attending one day a week for two years.

The college has experienced a surge in young adult enrolments, creating a vibrant and bustling atmosphere, particularly with the increase in apprentice activities.

Most courses are fully subsidised, with exceptions for specific minor qualifications that are not fully subsidised.

There are many opportunities for young people. We find that when they come to TAFE, they are very different, even students who have yet to engage at school. When they come to TAFE, you see them grow. It's an absolute pleasure to teach them as well. And I know that happens in the trades and elsewhere.

University of Wollongong

Nicole Smith, Manager, UOW Liverpool and Sutherland Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor (Innovation, Enterprise and External Relations) Portfolio, University of Wollongong. She shares these insights on university's current rebranding efforts and its vision for a better future through education, research, and partnership.

UOW is ranked among the top 1% of world universities and the 14th best modern university globally, with a strong focus on graduate employer satisfaction. While excelling in teaching, UOW is also dedicated to research.

The Sutherland Campus primarily offers programs in Nursing, boasting the largest enrolment of approximately 330 students in 2023. Additionally, undergraduate degrees in business and business administration are available.

UOW prioritises empowering students and providing opportunities, offering pathway programs, especially at the Sutherland campus. The campus's strategic location within the Sutherland Shire enables students to access education locally, benefiting working professionals, non-school students (mature-aged), and high-level athletes.

Many students at the Sutherland Campus work and study simultaneously, seeking creative pathways to enter and access university. Some return to UOW to overcome career barriers and pursue formal qualifications.

Students highly value the proximity to home and the close-knit campus community, fostering strong friendships and a positive student experience.

Regional Industry Educational Partnership

Sarah Deeks serves as a senior project officer in the Regional Industry Educational Partnerships (RIEP), operating under the Department of Education's Training Services in New South Wales and Southwest Sydney.

RIEP's primary objective is to bridge the gap between industry and local high schools by creating meaningful connections. The program aims to increase students' awareness and personal engagement with various industries during their school years, fostering future career opportunities.

Sarah's focus area covers south-west Sydney, including the Sutherland Shire and Georges River regions. She collaborates with 90 schools, encompassing public, independent and Catholic institutions. RIEP works

closely with schools to identify students' interests and then links them with relevant industries.

The program offers a range of initiatives, including hospitality programs, female trade courses, aviation drone workshops, job readiness programs and expo partnerships with schools. The goal is to facilitate seamless connections and enable sustained relationships between schools and industries.

RIEP acts as the conduit between industry professionals seeking school partnerships and schools interested in connecting with industries. The ultimate aim is to create self-sustaining relationships, benefiting both students and industries in the long term.

We Future Leaders

Darian Brooker is the founder and CEO of We Future Leaders, offering tutoring and mentoring services to students from preschool through university or tertiary education, including TAFE.

Their comprehensive programs cover a wide range of subjects, with a focus on supporting students with neurodivergence, home-schooled or distance-education students, and mainstream students.

The mission of We Future Leaders extends beyond assisting struggling students. They believe tutoring and mentoring can benefit all students, fostering growth and resilience in their learning journey.

We Future Leaders emphasises collaboration with schools, families and other professionals like speech pathologists and psychologists, ensuring a cohesive and impactful approach to student development.

Mentoring is critical, focusing on bonding with students, understanding personal issues that may hinder progress, and building resilience through resourcefulness.

The organisation's approach to resilience includes teaching students how to be resourceful internally and externally, empowering them to cope with life's challenges and changes independently.

Southern Strength

Steve Atherton is the Chair of Southern Strength. His organisation represents about 60 advanced manufacturing companies in Southwestern Sydney, totalling approximately three and a half thousand employees. Steve's involvement with micro-credentials began with the NETAN board, working to address skill shortages and develop short courses to bridge the gaps.

In just 18 months, NETAN has successfully developed 52 micro-credentials, with 26 more in the pipeline. These micro-credentials have garnered a positive response, with 100% satisfaction among industry supervisors and significant enrolment and completion rates.

Micro-credentials offer a practical solution for SMEs, which comprise 85% of employers in the country. Time-poor SMEs can benefit from hiring candidates with specific qualifications, creating opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships.

Micro-credentials also empower students to explore various industries before committing to lengthy apprenticeships or traineeships, allowing them to gain valuable insights and skills relevant to their chosen field.

As micro-credentials gain momentum, they hold the potential to address skill shortages and provide a stepping-stone for individuals aspiring to pursue broader skill sets.

The Youth Partnership

Deanna Lang is the CEO of the Youth Partnership. Youth Partnership serves all of South-eastern Sydney, connecting around 6000 students from approximately 70 high schools to volunteer host employers for mandatory work placements in VET courses.

There has been a persistent misconception of linear VET versus university pathways. Shifting the focus from ATAR performance as the sole measure of success is crucial to elevate the status of VET. We now witness VET and university paths intertwining, acknowledging that each can complement the other based on individual needs and combinations.

The lifting of the restriction on one VET course counting towards ATAR is anticipated to boost VET uptake significantly, providing students with greater

flexibility and choices.

Recent years, particularly 2020 and 2021, presented challenges due to worker shortages. Many students missed out on valuable life skills and work experience opportunities. Anxieties about work placements and part-time jobs have affected a considerable cohort, prompting closer collaboration with host employers to support young people effectively.

By fostering meaningful discussions about VET and recognising the impact of worker shortages, we can better equip students with diverse pathways and valuable experiences, promoting the integration of VET and university options so they can thrive in their educational journey.

Shire Careers Advisors Network

Kath Haywood is the Chair of the Shire Careers Advisors Network (SSCAN). She outlines what students are seeking regarding education, work experience and guidance in 2023.

Other representatives of the Careers Advisors Group who attended the forum included Vicky Hristodoulou and Catherine Thomson.

The Sutherland Shire Careers Advisors Network, comprises approximately 20 schools across the Shire, collaborating closely with institutions like TAFE, UOW, GSCC, the Youth Partnership and RIEP. Many students actively engage in TAFE programs, specifically the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EVET) courses that contribute to their Higher School Certificate (HSC). Some may also participate in the YES program, focusing on youth engagement strategies and Year 10 stage five EVET courses.

In Sutherland Shire schools, students pursuing VET courses receive support from The Youth Partnership to obtain work placements. RIEP has been a valuable addition to local school support, assisting in connecting with industries and connecting career advisers with industry volunteers for mock interviews that involves volunteer interviewers.

Schools strive to connect students with industries and further education opportunities, primarily focusing on work experience and pre-apprenticeship programs. The network has access to TAFE campuses and benefits from the proximity of UOW, where they conduct network meetings twice a term. The Advisors Network recently organised the Sutherland Shire Year 12 Careers Information Day at the basketball stadium, attended by 1500 Year 12 students.

Placing students in work experience emerges as one of the most significant challenges. Students studying VET courses must complete two weeks of work placement, primarily tailored to the industry they are pursuing, such as hospitality settings for those studying hospitality.

Additionally, the group implements work experience programs in local schools, which are not mandatory, providing us with flexibility. Recently 165 Year

10 students from The Jannali High School were simultaneously engaged in a work experience week. Although this approach gives students greater choice, it presents challenges, as schools seek more local businesses willing to offer work experience opportunities. While primary schools and childcare centres are open to accepting students, there are untapped industries in our local area that could provide a broader array of opportunities.

The Advisors Group is aware of various industries based in or associated with Sutherland Shire, and they seek to establish connections to expose students to a broader range of options. To achieve this, they envision creating a bank of employers who can host students for planned work experience weeks, providing them with comprehensive insights into different businesses.

A significant aspect of our engagement with students is addressing their limited awareness of potential career paths. Gymea Technology High School runs a START Program, which allows students to explore various trades and make informed decisions about their career preferences. For instance, the program offers Early Childhood, Business Administration, plumbing and electrical opportunities.

Notably, students prefer conducting their work experience within the Sutherland Shire.

To streamline the coordination of work placements across multiple schools, external handling of this aspect would be more efficient, rather than each school individually reaching out to potential host employers.

While the Group already possesses a bank of employers for VET courses, funding is required to expand and support these programs. The possibility of establishing a conversation on this matter seems promising due to the evident synergies.

Regarding pre-apprenticeship programs, a challenge arises when students not actively engaged in high school learning wish to participate. Signing them out of school before they can enrol in short courses or pre-apprenticeship programs such as the Master Builders

Pre-Apprenticeship, poses potential difficulties if the student does not engage and legally must return to school.

In conclusion, the forum discussions shed light on students' preferences for education, work experience

guidance and emphasised the need for collaborative efforts to enhance students' career readiness and exploration opportunities in 2023 and beyond.

St George and Sutherland Community College

Bernadette Mills is the CEO of St George and Sutherland Community College (SGSCC)

As a community college with 42 years of experience in adult education, SGSCC is well-versed in addressing various issues in the education space. The college's collaboration with other groups in the forum has led to a successful synergy.

SGSCC's offerings cater to young people and adults seeking career change or progression. The college delivers nationally recognised qualifications in community services areas, including childcare, age care, disability, mental health and youth services. Students attend classes on campus two days a week and work in the industry one day a week, allowing them to combine education and income generation.

Apart from being an adult education service, SGSCC provides tutoring from kindergarten to Year 12, not only for support but also to accelerate the learning of young individuals. The college also offers leisure and lifestyle courses, which often act as a stepping-stone for disengaged youth to explore further educational opportunities with us.

Located in the former Jannali Girls High School building, SGSCC fosters a diverse community of students, ranging from their nineties to young individuals, including international students pursuing

qualifications within the community sector. SGSCC works closely with more than 300 employers for work placement, benefiting over a thousand students on campus. It also functions as a host employer and is open to hosting various events to promote community partnerships and networks.

The teacher/trainer shortages within the organisation are addressed by providing training and assessment qualifications, benefiting around 50 to 60 trainers and assessors annually. They take on the challenge of engaging disengaged youth from the school system in Year 9 and Year 10, providing them with equivalent certifications and assisting in re-engagement or placement in traineeships within our delivered areas.

The college's commitment to work placement is evident in its 97% success rate for students transitioning from work placement to employment. Courses at the college include substantial work placement hours, ranging from 180 to 400 hours within the year, leading to high employability rates.

SGSCC has a long-standing track record of facilitating education and employment outcomes for diverse students, creating a thriving community of learners and professionals in the community services sector.

Forum Attendees

We greatly appreciate and value the input and interest from the following organisations and businesses who, in addition to the presenters, contributed their insight to the issues raised in this report:

- ShireBiz
- Tradies
- Sutherland Shire Council
- Sutherland Shire Business Chamber
- Britton Maritime
- Sutherland Shire Hospital

Other organisations who expressed interest but were not able to attend on the day included:

- Tynan Motors
- ANSTO
- Sammut Group
- Scentre Group
- Enware

About ShireBiz

ShireBiz is a business driven economic development group comprising current and past CEOs and public sector leaders, providing their skills and experience to the board.

The main benefit of economic development will be jobs in the Sutherland Shire and Southern Sydney. ShireBiz also provides a portal for business to each level of Government. We are business-led, with Government support.

ShireBiz has recently enjoyed its tenth birthday, having formed because of a public meeting held in October 2012. Our board of current and retired business professionals and political figures meets monthly, with sub-board and executive meetings held more frequently.

ShireBiz is a not-for-profit association under the NSW Dept of Fair-Trading Associations Constitution.

To find out more, visit:

www.shirebiz.org.au