



TAFE Back to Work

– Case Studies





Linking job seekers, work ready skills and employers

Back to Work programs delivered by public VET providers

These case studies demonstrate how Victoria's TAFE Institutes and dual sector universities deploy their expertise to respond to students' aspirations, industry skill needs, community expectations and government policy goals.

The five case studies describe relevant, localised responses to the aims of the Victorian Government's TAFE Back to Work Fund (BTW).

Aims of the TAFE Back to Work Fund

BTW combines social and economic objectives. The Fund has invested in innovative approaches to vocational skills development so that work ready job seekers are well matched to job opportunities. With particular attention to equity outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers, BTW recognises that the personal benefits of vocational training are best realised by developing skills that make direct contributions to improved productivity in contemporary workplaces.

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BTW has invested in public VET providers' training infrastructure. Extracting value from existing resources supports high quality vocational learning for BTW participants and releases value for students enrolled in other qualifications.

Maximising training outcomes through partnerships

The case studies share much in common. There is consistent reliance on the business and social agency partnerships nurtured over many decades by Victoria's public VET providers.

Box Hill Institute's BTW program has drawn on extensive IT industry networks to shape a new qualification in cyber security. Holmesglen and Chisholm Institute have drawn on relationships with schools, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and other agencies to research, implement and evaluate their joint BTW program – Career Pilot.

Consistent themes like expertise in partnering capability are matched by innovative training responses that account for regional industry profiles.

The suite of projects within Wodonga TAFE's BTW program mirrors the diversity of BTW participant needs and job opportunities across Victoria's north-east. Federation Training's Paddock to Plate program integrates training opportunities with the Gippsland's agribusiness-tourism supply chain.

Setting VET system benchmarks for quality training responses

The BTW case studies demonstrate the capacity of Victoria's public VET providers to create and implement training programs that give equal prominence to the personal circumstances of disadvantaged job seekers and cutting edge industry training. Victoria Polytechnic's BTW program, for example, meshes the development of job ready attributes for disadvantaged job seekers with IT training encompassing robotics.

In each of the BTW programs presented here, Victoria's public VET providers are setting benchmarks for the VET system. The case studies showcase BTW programs that stress skills formation and skills deepening among program participants. At the same time, the case studies underline the determination to keep industry needs at the heart of each public provider's training mission.

The power of system learning

During the Victorian TAFE Association's annual conference in late August 2016, an update on each of the case study BTW programs was presented by program managers. Challenges were discussed, innovations shared and networks strengthened.

This kind of mutual support can be expressed in another way – as system learning. Victoria's public VET providers are maximising the impact of BTW programs by maximising the reach of ideas that work.

The BTW case studies are evidence of commitment to the power of system learning. They are a practical expression of the central role played by public providers' in VET system stewardship and leadership.



Industry needs driving training program design

Back to Work at Box Hill Institute

The internet is an essential ingredient in contemporary life, from democracy and social identity to banking services and shopping. It's a sprawling international network that links individuals and industries and it's a network under constant threat. The general manager in Australia for BAE Systems Applied Intelligence, Dr Rajiv Shah, succinctly describes the threats:

... any organisation is a target, whether in financial services, the public sector, or operating critical national infrastructure. If there is private data, intellectual property, payment details, or motivation to disrupt, then there is a threat.

Cyber security skills are in high demand from microbusinesses and large corporations alike, and across all industry sectors.

The Victorian government has identified eight industry sectors that hold great promise for the state's economic prosperity – they include the defence industry in which BAE Systems is an international player, food and fibre, international education, medical technologies and professional services. Each of these sectors places a premium on cyber security for reasons ranging from privacy and commercial positioning to national security.

Cyber security – a strategic focus

Box Hill Institute made a strategic choice to put cyber security at the heart of its Back to Work program that aims to match marginalised job seekers with skills in demand.

With a recognised capability in IT services education and training, the Institute took the idea to its industry network. Industries responded enthusiastically and in the latter half of 2015, the Institute convened an Industry Advisory Group (IAG) to shape a cyber security training qualification.

The importance of engaging with industry expertise soon became apparent. IAG participants – from security, banking, IT, telecommunications and information security firms and organisations – reviewed the national training package. They concluded that no existing qualification adequately attended to skills development and skills deepening in cyber security. There was no current training option that supported the development of job ready, technician level cyber security skills. The real challenge was to develop a new qualification and a new curriculum.

Collaborating with industry leaders

To maintain momentum for the Back to Work program, Box Hill Institute worked with the IAG to develop an interim cyber security training program which welcomed its first intake of 10 participants in April 2016. Simultaneously, the collaboration took up the task of shaping a best fit training response to meet industry needs.

The result of that collaboration is highlighted in *Australia's Cyber Security Strategy: Enabling innovation, growth & prosperity*, released by the Australian government in April 2016:

The private sector has also invested in developing cyber skills. Box Hill Institute of TAFE in Victoria is developing a twelve-month cyber security apprenticeship with a Certificate IV qualification in conjunction with the private sector.

The new qualification will position Back to Work program participants for employment in a field with strong prospects for long term, diversified careers. As Australia's Cyber Security Strategy notes:

Demand in Australia for cyber security services and related jobs – such as legal services, insurance and risk management – will grow by at least 21 per cent over the next five years. There will be significant employment and career opportunities for those with appropriate skills. However, the public and private sectors cannot fill their cyber security vacancies.

NAB is represented on the IAG and has signed up students from the course. Other industry partners, such as CISCO, NBNCo and ANZ are liaising with the Institute about opportunities for students. By October 2016, Box Hill Institute's Back to Work program had more than 20 participants with an 80 per cent retention rate. The Institute will offer the program from its city campus in 2017. Encouraged by the response from industry and the outcomes for participants, the Institute is developing an advanced diploma in cyber security, ready for delivery in mid 2017.

Existing capabilities are the foundation for quality and innovation

Box Hill Institute's ability to lead this advance through the Back to Work program has drawn on well established strengths.

The Institute has a longstanding capability in information technology education and training. It offers a suite of qualifications from Certificate IV to Masters levels. It has a practical commitment to meaningful industry consultation and collaboration which directly influences the customisation of its education and training offerings. It has a demonstrated capacity to blend the benefits of apprenticeships through learning at the Institute and on the job – a traditional strength both of the Institute and of all Victoria's TAFE institutes and dual sector providers.



Energising networks and valuing the evidence

Back to Work at Holmesglen and Chisholm Institute

Career Pilot is a Back to Work partnership between Holmesglen and Chisholm Institute. With bases at Holmesglen's Moorabbin campus and Chisholm's Frankston campus, Career Pilot is an industry-oriented, learner-centred, evidence-informed collaboration between south-east Melbourne's trusted TAFE providers. Career Pilot capitalises on their local knowledge and long term investment in educating the region's young people.

From the outset, Holmesglen and Chisholm wanted to involve young people who were not in employment, education or training, who had finished Year 11 or 12 but were now disengaged, and who had endeavoured unsuccessfully to find employment. Their aim is that by the end of 2017, there will be 300 Career Pilot graduates in, or working

towards, employment. To achieve that target, Holmesglen and Chisholm needed a distinctive Back to Work program designed to attract them and support them to completion.

Drawing on longstanding networks, the TAFE partners sought expertise and capability beyond their specialist understanding of training, industry engagement and applied research.

Working from the evidence

They sought program design guidance from the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Research and Policy Centre. The Brotherhood and Holmesglen have a mutually valued connection through planning and operating the Waverley Campus Youth Foyer. Opened in 2013, the Foyer is an integrated learning and accommodation centre for at risk 16-24 year olds.

Career Pilot applies evidence brought together by the Brotherhood. The evidence bears on how personal and social circumstances interact to influence a young person's life chances, and how integrated approaches to education, training and employment can improve their outcomes. Holmesglen, Chisholm and the Brotherhood continue to collaborate on a structured evaluation of Career Pilot.

This action research strategy exemplifies the commitment of both TAFE providers to extend applied research capability in partnership with industry and community agencies. They recognise the data collected, and the structured knowledge they build, is most powerful when shared internally, and with youth support networks and Back to Work programs offered by other TAFE providers and dual sector universities.

Engaging employers and youth support agencies

Employer participation in Career Pilot is a standing priority. The design challenge was to shape the employer role in a way that was workable for employers and meaningful for participants. The employer role was defined through close attention to the evidence base revealed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence. To secure support and participation, Holmesglen and Chisholm activated their unrivalled networks with local employers and industry bodies.

Holmesglen and Chisholm have consulted with schools and youth support services across the region. Career Pilot's design has benefited from the diverse, practical know-how of secondary schools, Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), Skills and Jobs Centres located within both TAFE providers, and other specialist youth services. Together they have provided program advice, recruitment channels and student support.

Career Pilot continues to evolve

Career Pilot will continue to evolve prior to full implementation in 2107. Feedback from participants, employers and other stakeholders continues to inform design. In 2016, Career Pilot tested a design comprising three components – an engagement phase, a core 12 week Career Pilot program, and a transition phase.

During each component, participants can access support from external agencies and from internal TAFE resources, including career counselling, mentoring and Skills and Jobs Centres. A Career Pilot operating principle is that participants have concrete opportunities to establish and tap their own networks among employers and support services. This approach builds the agency of participants to steer their own course, to become their own career pilots, calling in assistance when they judge it's needed.

Working from strengths

Career Pilot has endorsed a strengths-based approach. The participants' strengths, when they start the program, form the base from which individual career journeys are mapped out. Career Pilot will continue to incorporate steps that identify participants' employability and self-management skills (such as problem-solving and presentation skills), industry and education tasters, a supported work placement, and career launch preparation that encompasses writing job applications and goal setting. Employers and industry body contributions are crucial to the industry tasters, work placements and career launch.

Career Pilot participants complete the Certificate III in General Education for Adults. The qualification was selected because participants have diverse career goals and the competencies can be contextualised to their needs. In addition, the relevant instructional design and training capabilities are readily available within Holmesglen and Chisholm.



As the Certificate III is not tied to a specific industry or occupational outcome, it allows Career Pilot to attract a wide group of disengaged young people with varied career goals and work ready training needs. The Certificate III is also a point of reconnection with training. It provides a foundation for entry into TAFE programs aligned with their career preferences.

Responding to policy objectives

The collaboration between Holmesglen and Chisholm Institute demonstrates an intrinsic capacity of Victoria's TAFE providers and dual sector universities. They have the expertise to respond imaginatively and pragmatically to government policy objectives that rely on a combination of training, education, industry engagement and research capabilities.

Victoria's public VET providers have long supported people of all ages to craft their potential into personal reality. Career Pilot is yet another of example of Holmesglen and Chisholm doing just that for vulnerable young people in Melbourne's south-east.



Paddock to Plate

Back to Work at Federation Training

The Victorian Government's Back to Work Fund is an investment in the future of Victorians seeking to secure a firmer labour market foothold. Back to Work is also reinvesting in TAFE Institutes and dual sector universities as the public providers of VET.

Federation Training's Paddock to Plate program is a vivid illustration of how both forms of investment are closely linked to positive outcomes for regional communities.

Planning for Paddock to Plate began with careful analysis of industry concentrations, unemployment and demand for labour across Gippsland.

Understanding the regional labour market

The data revealed two industry sectors with a strong presence in each of Gippsland's six local government areas: agribusiness (including food and fibre) and tourism (including accommodation and retail trade). Analysis also revealed variations in Gippsland's unemployment rates (ranging from 3.4% in South Gippsland Shire to 6.9% in the City of Latrobe) and a workforce participation rate of 61.2% – well below the participation rate of 65% for Victoria as a whole.

On the weight of this evidence, Federation Training designed Paddock to Plate – a program that caters for the skills required by local employers by mirroring the agribusiness supply chain, from production to tourism related services. Working with industry maximises Back to Work Fund outcomes. Paddock to Plate has an ongoing emphasis on expanding industry partnerships, including working with local industry to develop apprenticeships in cookery and traineeships in hospitality and horticulture.

In 2016, Federation Training's Paddock to Plate program enrolled 170 students in the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), many of whom are disadvantaged youth or unemployed. The program aims to set them on a journey to an apprenticeship, traineeship or further education in agriculture, horticulture or hospitality. It's a unique education experience which may lead to further training opportunities, and ultimately Gippsland-based employment outcomes.

Building on Federation Training's strengths

It's an aim that relies heavily on Federation Training's already strong relationships with regional employers, large and small.

It relies just as heavily on the expertise within Federation Training to develop and implement training programs which integrate industry's current skill requirements and respond to the learning needs and work aspirations of young people. This entails more than taking a qualification or skillset off the shelf and delivering it. The Victorian Government's Back to Work Fund created a platform for Federation Training to create a contextualised program by deploying its strengths in instructional design and teaching.



Federation Training's student support services are an embedded component of Paddock to Plate. Students have access to support ranging from health and referral services to Federation Training's Skills and Jobs Centre – an employment skills hub offering free employment advice and support services to the community.

Importantly for Paddock to Plate, the Back to Work Fund enabled Federation Training to reopen its three training restaurants – the Waratah Restaurant at Morwell, the Wildflower Café at Leongatha, and the OakTree Restaurant at Bairnsdale.

The restaurants are valuable assets – they deepen the region's skills base in food preparation and customer service that Gippsland's hospitality and tourism depends on. With the training restaurants back in operation there are now opportunities for a larger number of students, beyond those in the Paddock to Plate program, to set their sights on employment in those sectors.

Importantly, reopening the training restaurants means Federation Training can now reinvest in the human capital that effective, productive skills development depends on – highly skilled trainers with teaching expertise and hands-on industry experience.

Understanding how your work fits in

The story of Paddock to Plate begins long before a satisfied customer leaves the training restaurant.

VCAL students in the agriculture stream can follow the products they grow on farms in Bairnsdale and Sale to training restaurants as an end point. Horticulture students in Sale, Leongatha, Morwell and Bairnsdale can likewise follow the herbs and vegetables they propagate, grow and harvest to their use in training restaurant kitchens. Agriculture and horticulture students also see their produce taking other routes to customers via nurseries and the shelves of retail outlets.

By interacting with students and businesses across the supply chain, Paddock to Plate broadens understanding about how the supply chain functions to the benefit of each link in the chain.

Establishing a foothold in the agribusiness and tourism sectors requires foundation and employability skills too. Paddock to Plate integrates industry relevant training with personal development and learning in literacy, numeracy and oracy, all of which are fundamental to the package a young person takes to a prospective employer.





Familiarising participants with IT work and workplaces

Back to Work at Victoria Polytechnic

Victoria Polytechnic's Back to Work program is dedicated to bringing jobs into the lives of disengaged young people who face barriers to both education and training. Back to Work funding has enabled the Polytechnic to focus resources, expertise and partnerships in ways that anchor self-belief and strengthen employability, foundation and technical skills.

For some young people who struggle to find work, formal training is part of the answer but not the whole answer. It is critically important to facilitate their access to a broad range of supports and engagement opportunities that are integrated with the training program.

Through careful planning and review, Victoria Polytechnic has implemented a Back to Work program that offers a grounded, holistic response.

Meshing training with job opportunities

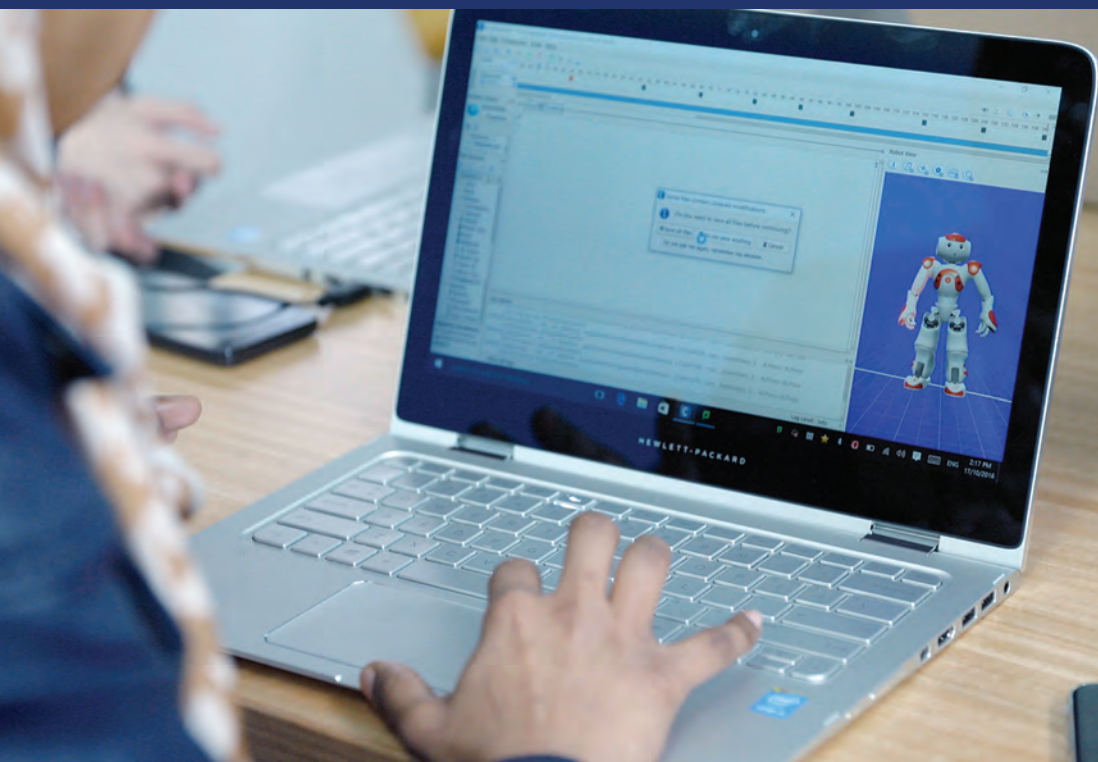
Labour market research indicated entry level job opportunities are available in the IT sector. With those opportunities in view, Victoria Polytechnic designed a two phase Back to Work journey that incorporated a Certificate II and then a Certificate III in Information, Digital Media and Technology. Victoria Polytechnic soon recognised some Back to Work program participants already possessed a depth of technical skills honed through game playing and other avenues. While those skills may require sharpening for employment purposes, they provide a good bridge to the certificates. For participants, the pressing skill challenges often lay elsewhere. The Back to Work program's design responds to those other challenges.

Certificate program delivery is integrated with delivery of language, literacy and numeracy units of competency. In both Phase 1, the pre-employment course, and Phase 2, the traineeship course, Back to Work participants progressively build their jobseeking, application and interview skills through regular workshops. The workshops include dry run interviews with employers through which participants receive supportive feedback and progressively build self-confidence.

Victoria Polytechnic's Back to Work program welcomed 10 participants into its pilot program in April 2016, with six completing the program and two others gaining employment before the end of Phase 2. In 2017, the Polytechnic plans to run four Phase 1 and Phase 2 courses and hopes to graduate 60 students.

Partnerships with purpose

Victoria Polytechnic recognised the importance of enlarging the canvas for its Back to Work program by connecting participants directly to industry. Good industry links increase traineeship options, but for the participant group there was another compelling rationale – to provide multiple opportunities for them to interact with industry insiders and familiarise themselves with the world of IT work. Following an introduction through the Victorian Department of Education and Training, a partnership that meets those ends has developed between Infoxchange and Victoria Polytechnic.



Infoxchange is a not-for-profit social enterprise that works closely with the community sector in applying digital technology solutions and services to demanding social challenges. A recent winner of an Australian Information Industry award for community services, Infoxchange runs a Youth IT Careers program supported by Microsoft that assists young people to stay engaged through education and employment. The Infoxchange partnership has introduced participants in Victoria Polytechnic's Back to Work program to Youth IT Careers, including access to Microsoft training programs and learning resources. The partnership has opened networks that welcome industry visits from Back to Work participants and provide guest speakers as part of their learning program.

Maximising benefits of Victoria Polytechnic's expertise

In addition to its longstanding capability in partnering with industry, the Back to Work program has drawn together many strands of Victoria Polytechnic's expertise.

Back to Work program participants benefit from the Polytechnic's deep experience in working with non-traditional learners, including developing learning and support resources tailored to their needs. Participants work with a specialist IT teacher who has an IT industry background, and a specialist LLN teacher – a staffing complement that will grow in 2017 with the program's expansion. Of critical importance for Back to Work participants is the support available through a dedicated Youth Engagement Officer, along with ready access to Victoria Polytechnic's student support services.

A key benefit for Back to Work program participants is Victoria Polytechnic's depth in industry relevant IT training capacity. They have ready access to industry standard hardware and state of the art IT labs. In October, the Polytechnic took delivery of two autonomous, programmable humanoid robots and Virtual Reality headsets – Youth IT Careers students will be the first to use and program these technologies. Victoria Polytechnic's extensive understanding of industry needs is informing the development of a Back to Work industry engagement strategy designed to increase traineeship opportunities available to Back to Work graduates.



There is no single pathway to work

Back to Work at Wodonga TAFE

There is no single pathway to work. Each of us starts from a different place and each of us takes a different journey. Wodonga TAFE's Back to Work program assists participants to map a pathway that acknowledges their individual starting points.

Wodonga TAFE's Back to Work program has shaped a strategic approach that responds to differing individual circumstances and opportunities in local communities. The program continues to focus on outcomes set out in Wodonga TAFE's Back to Work funding submission and continues to adapt program elements to ensure success for students.

Wodonga TAFE has galvanised community support for its Back to Work program by expanding existing partnerships with local employers and support services. There are almost 36 partner organisations involved, including local employers of apprentices, Gateway Community Health, Myrtleford Neighbourhood House, The Personnel Group, the Skills and Job Centre based at Wodonga TAFE, Target, Vicinity, and Wodonga City Council.

Listening to student and employer voices

Guiding voices in design and delivery of the Back to Work program are the voices of students and employers. Listening and responding to their aspirations clarifies where the focus of program design and delivery needs to be, and builds student engagement and persistence with the learning program. There are fixed program checkpoints to identify individual needs and progress. Before engaging in the program, a careful assessment is undertaken to assess each student's job readiness and skills profile. That assessment informs the mix of training, information and support that needs to be aligned so that each participant takes a direction that is personally meaningful and builds confidence. Equally, employers have a unique say in what they are looking for in a student.

Wodonga TAFE serves socially diverse and geographically dispersed communities. Employment profiles vary markedly between a provincial centre like Wodonga with a population of almost 50,000, and a small community like Myrtleford with a population of 3000 and an hour's drive to the south of Wodonga. Matching these distinctive employment landscapes to the distinctive aspirations of program participants has led to Wodonga TAFE's Back to Work program enrolling more than 140 students. Through 15 separate programs, they have worked towards their job aspirations, and 18 participants had already moved into employment by October 2016.

They include specific projects for Indigenous and Nepali jobseekers, industry taster programs in rural operations and retailing, and a community landscaping project for jobseekers who have a disability. Employability skills training, industry visits, career counselling and industry guest speakers are scoped into project designs.

Displaying skills to employers

The program does not step away from important realities that often present obstacles for job seekers. On a very practical level, job seekers frequently encounter an old conundrum – they are unable to access available jobs because they lack work experience which they can only get if they have a job that proves their mettle.



Wodonga TAFE's Back to Work program tackles that impediment directly by introducing the skills of program participants to prospective employers through work placements and public activities that put their skills on visible display. Work placements with local employers, organised through the program and its partners, have significant benefits for jobseekers. Employers can see the skills of Back to Work participants in action. The demonstration effect can be a powerful substitute for lack of experience. Employers see participants at work and can then speak confidently about their competence, both within their own organisation and to other employers. In effect, they become referees.

Work placements also create the opportunity for an employer to provide direct feedback about job ready skills that need further development. The power of work-based feedback is that Wodonga TAFE's Back to Work team can build the capabilities that need attention by adjusting the learning programs of individual students and groups of students. Back to Work funding has facilitated provision of job ready skills development, enabling a closer match between jobseekers' aspirations of and employers' needs. More support is provided to employers and students on occasions when the desired outcome is yet to be achieved.

Social enterprise as a training platform

Social Raw is an innovative project that has assisted Back to Work participants to display their skills and attributes to local employers and the community generally. With the support of Wodonga Plaza, the city's largest shopping mall, Back to Work participants established a student-led, socially enterprising pop-up shop. They planned and worked on the interior design of the shop fitout, which includes a dedicated learning space, café and merchandise displays. Following the shop's opening in August 2016, Back to Work participants managed rostering and registers, sourced merchandise, made and served coffee, controlled stock and conversed with customers. While running the retail outlet, students completed a Certificate II in Retail Services, barista training and training in safe food handling.

Social Raw empowers young jobseekers in the Back to Work program to develop and extend their skills and knowledge, build a visible claim to work experience, and demonstrate their employability skills to employers in the Plaza and among their customers. Social Raw also empowers others through stocking products from not-for-profit groups and small businesses, such as recycled timber furniture made by people with a disability. The furniture is displayed and sold at the pop-up shop, with all proceeds going to the local agency. It's a great example of a social enterprise supporting another social enterprise.



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