



# Department of Industry and Skills

Changing attitudes towards  
skilled careers research.



*Research need.*

# *Background*

The Department of Industry and Skills (the Department) commissioned Colmar Brunton to undertake research into attitudes, perceptions and awareness in regard to the opportunities available through apprenticeships (and traineeships) and other VET pathways (skilled based careers linking to jobs of the future) and identify relevant messaging and approaches to encourage better engagement and participation.

The research was undertaken between June and August 2018.

This presentation provides a summary of the qualitative and quantitative findings from the research.





# *Research objectives*

The key research objectives for this project, as set by the Department, included:

- Understand current attitudes, perceptions and awareness and how they influence the decision to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship;
- Understand current attitudes, perceptions and awareness and how they influence the decision of an employer to take on an apprenticeship or traineeship;
- Understand how strongly held the attitudes, perceptions are held and likelihood or scale of effort required to shift;
- Gain clear understanding of influencers and the scope of influence each group may contribute to decision making;
- Understand the brand value of apprenticeships/traineeships;
- Gain clear direction on relevant messaging/positioning/value propositions of apprenticeships/skilled careers to encourage greater uptake by the target audiences – 1. Potential apprentices, 2. Prospective and current employers of apprentices 3. Broader community and influencers;
- Insight into appropriate channels/methods of communication for all groups;
- Insight into how to best communicate the connection of apprenticeships / VET to jobs of the future;
- Detail of any variance in attitudinal/ perceptions and awareness between regional and metropolitan areas in South Australia (measured in the quantitative component); and
- Insight on ideal timing for communications or promotions.



# *How results have been presented*

The findings presented have been split into three groups:

1. **Employers:** this group includes participants who either currently employ or are open to employing apprentices or trainees, as well as representatives from peak industry bodies.
2. **Potential apprentices:** this includes school students, university students, young job seekers and mature age job seekers who are open to considering an apprenticeship or traineeship in the future.
3. **Influencers:** this group includes parents of school students and school career advisors. This group exists in the qualitative component only.

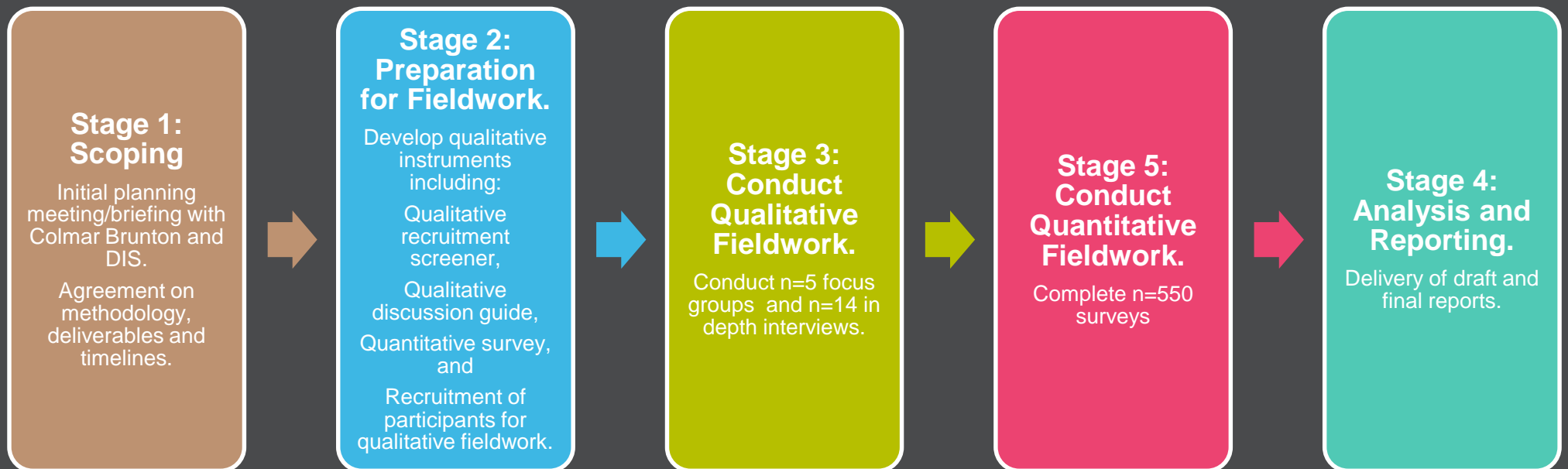




*Our approach.*



## *Summary of our approach.*





*Perceptions.*



# Perceptions – School students

Potential A&Ts

## *What happens after school*

- Most spoke of doing further education after school (University, TAFE, A&T).
- Seen as '*just what you do*'.
- Necessary to get a good job.
- Further education pathway largely depends on what job/career they are interested in.





## Potential A&Ts

# Perceptions – School students

## VET vs. University

- Considered pathway(s) depends also on previous exposure i.e. family or friends.
- If parents/siblings all went to University, this pathway would be higher in the consideration set.
- Some, who were interested in a VET pathway, saw this as equal to attending university.
- General push for students to attend university and a perception amongst students that this is '*what most people do*'.

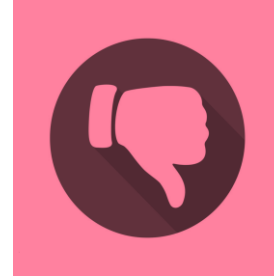
## VET

- Aware that this can be completed while at school and counts towards SACE outcomes.
- Perception of being good for people who 'didn't really like school' or 'school wasn't really their thing' and those who were better at hands-on work.
- Apprenticeships and traineeships were seen as being practical, a provider of work experience, a way to earn while you learn and a secure pathway to employment.
- Students felt that this was what you did if you wanted to become skilled in a trade such as hospitality, hairdressing, plumbing, electrical and so on.



# Advantages & disadvantages – School students

## Potential A&Ts



Helps you learn about a particular career path

Hands-on experience

A pathway to employment

Involves modern experience

Get paid whilst learning

Ability to 'test-out' a particular career path

Work experience

Takes time out of school work (VET)

If career collapses you don't have anything other than specific qualification

Costs money to purchase the tools required

Fewer options than university, specific to 'trades'

Early mornings

Manual, physical work required

Not always guaranteed work after your apprenticeship

Apprenticeship takes a lot of time

## Potential A&Ts

# *Perceptions – Mature aged*

- Looking for something to do for the rest of their lives.
- Had to be something they were passionate about.
- Looking for something more hands on or that would allow part-time work, semi-retired lifestyle.
- Some confusion around what VET covers.
- Greater understanding if they had a child/family members considering/in this pathway.
- Greater awareness of traditional trades such as plumbing, electrical.





## Potential A&Ts

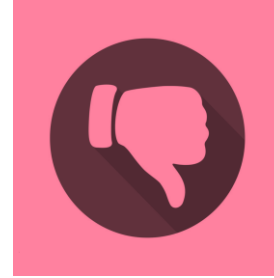
# *Perceptions – Mature aged*

What the pathway would need to offer to be of interest and appropriate for their lifestyle.

- **The topics/courses offered:** at this age, participants were quite set on the skill or job they wanted to have. One participant wanted to be a qualified remedial masseuse, another wanted to get the next level of qualification in training and assessment. Therefore, this pathway would only be taken if their area of interest was offered in a course.
- **Flexibility:** an ability to study at own pace.
- **Hands-on experience:** learning and practicing the skills at the campus. Face-to-face was desired by the mature aged students rather than 'online' and 'off campus' study methods.
- **Quick way to get qualifications:** mature aged students do not want to spend years getting a qualification as they aren't always in a financial position to do so and want to get into their interest as soon as possible.
- **Cost:** always an important factor for study, particularly if having to pay out of pocket.

# Advantages & disadvantages – Mature aged

## Potential A&Ts



A university pathway, can compliment university study

Restrictive in terms of what you can study

Practical application of skills

Significant time investment

Hands-on experience

Challenging to keep job after apprenticeship

Earning capacity similar to university graduates

Apprenticeships are targeted at 'younger' generation i.e. 'apprenticeship' and 'career' are not appealing or relatable to mature aged students

Ability to help you do what you love

Often out of pocket costs

Working in the industry you're interested in

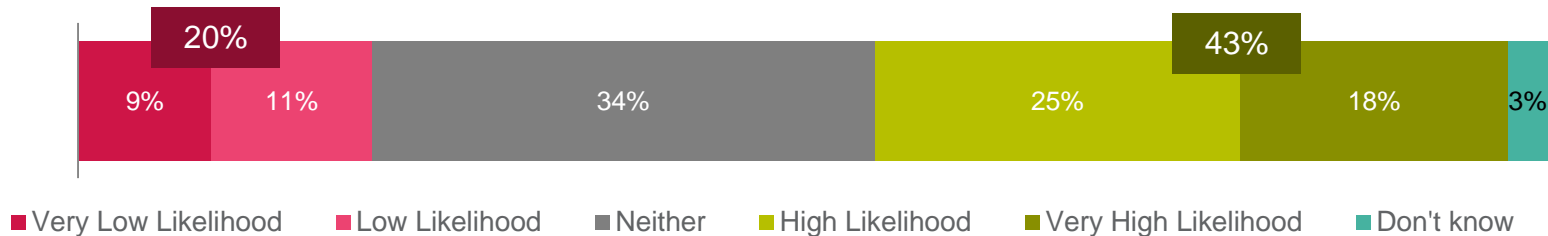
Seen has hard manual labour

Earn while you learn to keep up lifestyle

# Future likelihood

## Potential A&Ts

How likely would you be to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship in the future?



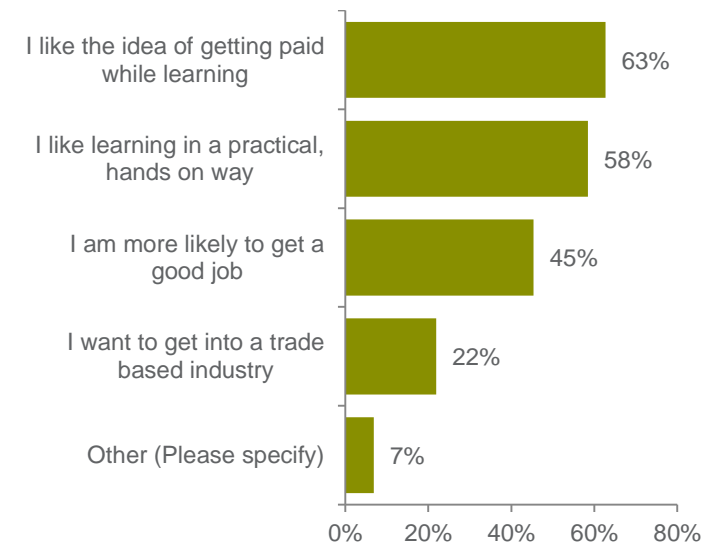
### Why's that?

(5/10 and below, n=190)



### Why's that?

(6/10 and above, n=260)



Q4a. How likely would you be to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship in the future? Please provide a number between 0 and 10, where 0 means very low likelihood and 10 means very high likelihood. (SR)

Base: All respondents (n=450)

Q4b. Why is that? (MR)

## Potential A&Ts & influencers

# *Process*

## *School*

- Understanding on how to start the A&T process largely gained at school, during career planning.
- Extent and focus varies from school to school.
- Where participants thought the education process around VET and apprenticeships should take place.
- Engaging parents in this discussion is vital as they are one of the key drivers and need to be supportive and on-board.

## *TAFE*

- Mature age job seekers had less of an idea of how to enter into an apprenticeship. They understood you could approach this pathway via TAFE.

## *Central database*

- Talk of a central database which could be used to match employers with potential apprentices/trainees, was suggested by multiple participants within the influencer group as a way of streamlining the process.

# Employers

## *Perceptions*

- A&Ts generally viewed very positively by employers, whether they had experience employing them or not.
- A&Ts can:
  - Help an employer grow.
  - Help inform them on the latest industry knowledge.
- Finding the right one:
  - Critical, as it is a big investment (time and money).
  - Hope that they will stay with the business, especially after their training.
  - Can be difficult, perception that young people lack life skills and have a sense of entitlement. They expect to climb the ranks quickly and are above menial tasks.
  - Basic numeracy and literacy are lacking.
  - Employers want A&Ts to demonstrate confidence, honesty, common sense, enthusiasm and a positive attitude.



# Perceptions

Employers

Focus within schools:

- Heavily weighted towards university (particularly in private schools).
- Some schools promote themselves based on their university entrance rates e.g. one local school boasted a 97% university attendance rate of their students.
- Trade pathway is a backup option, something that students can do if they can't get into university.
- This perception needs to change, trades and apprenticeships need to be positioned as a desirable career path.

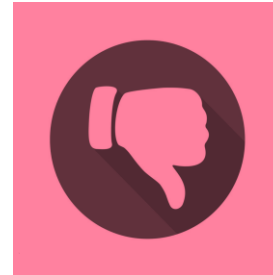
Process rather achieving an outcome:

- Perception that a VET course or apprenticeship is seen as a process rather than being about achieving an outcome (as university is seen). E.g. you study law at university to become a lawyer. You do an apprenticeship to become an apprentice.
- Greater focus could be placed on the outcome of the apprenticeship i.e. a qualified plumber/electrician/hairdresser, rather than the process.



# Advantages & disadvantages

## Employers



If all goes well, they can become a loyal employee.	Takes time to train apprentices, which takes them away from other work and slows productivity while training apprentices from scratch.
If they stay on, they can help grow your business.	Significant investment taking on an apprentice and some employers get concerned when they have dips in workflow that there would be nothing for the apprentice to do.
They know the way you work and know how to do things to the standard and speed that the employer expects.	You need to pick the apprentice well. Sometimes, they are doing it to just get a trade, not because they are actually passionate about the field.
Apprentices can bring new ideas and knowledge to the business, based on what they are learning at TAFE or trade school.	Employers fear that apprentices will leave at the end of the apprenticeship and all of the training and time invested in the apprentice will be for nothing.
Employers feel as though they are training the next generation and contributing back to the industry.	

# Employers

## Process

This group typically found A&Ts via:

- Being approached by candidates seeking an apprenticeship;
- Taking on people who have proven themselves via work experience; and
- Visiting TAFEs to network with potential apprentices/trainees.

There was a feeling that once a candidate had been selected, the apprenticeship process requires a lot of time and commitment from both parties and can be cumbersome to manage.

*“Small employers struggle with the process.”* Peak industry body.

The communication gap between the typical over 50 year old tradesman and their 20 year old apprentice was described as a common issue experienced within this pathway by one of the peak body representatives. The need for mentors in the process was seen to be valuable tool to help bridge this gap.



# Future likelihood

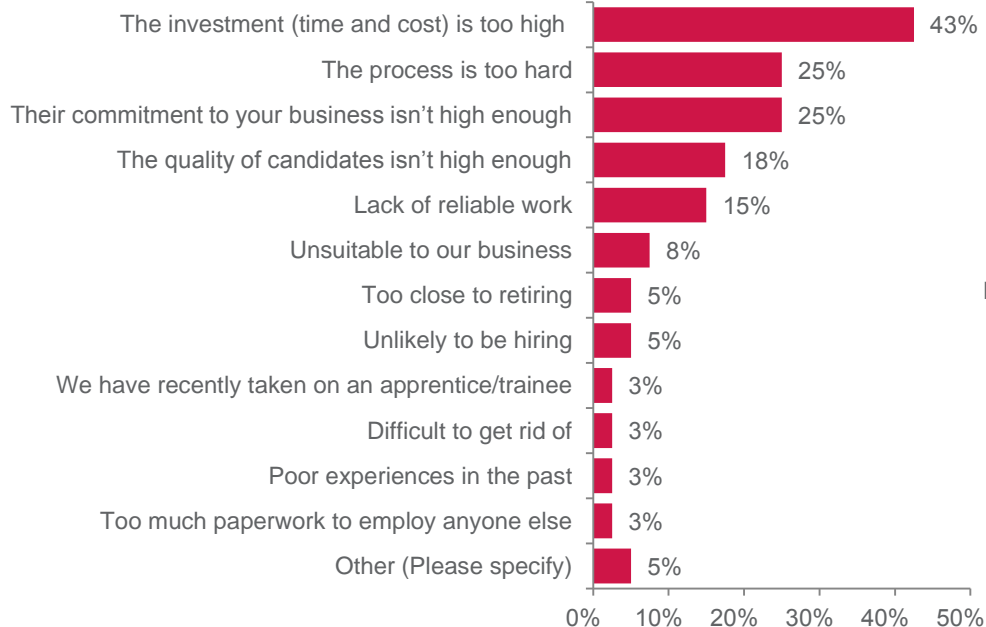
## Employers

How likely would you be to take on an apprentice or trainee in the future?



Very Low Likelihood Low likelihood Neither High likelihood Very High Likelihood

**Why's that?**  
(5/10 and below, n=40)



**Why's that?**  
(6/10 and above, n=60)



Q18a. How likely would you be to take on an apprentice or trainee in the future? Please provide a number between 0 and 10, where 0 means very low likelihood and 10 means very high likelihood. (SR)

Q18b. Why is that? (MR)

Base: All respondents (n=100)

# Influencers

## Perceptions

Valuable pathway:

- Great for all students to consider as a potential pathway.
- Particularly suited to those who prefer hands on learning and practical experience as opposed to theory lead learning which is more typical in universities.
- Understanding that the current earning potential is strong as a tradesperson and that there is also plenty of work available.
- Parents believe that it comes down to what is right for the individual.
- No point pushing a child to pursue a qualification that they aren't interested in.
- Career advisors focused on matching each student to the pathway that they were most interested in and that best suited their method of learning and skill set.
- Students with a family history in a trade were seen to be more likely to pursue this pathway.

*"Students pursuing VET are more likely to have family members or friends in trades."* School Career Advisor

*"It depends on the student. I ask them what they think they are good at, what their passionate about and then we look at the options together"*  
School Career Advisor



## Influencers

# Advantages & disadvantages



Doing VET subjects and school based apprenticeships exposes students to possible career pathways before they have committed to anything. It is a great way to test the water and make an educated decision.

Gets you into the workforce quicker.

Exposure to an adult learning environment.

Helps to build resilience.

Students can gain exposure to working in an industry they are interested in while completing their SACE.

Get paid while gaining a qualification rather than getting a HECS debt.

Real world experience.



Doing VET subjects and school based apprenticeships is a large time commitment, and can disadvantage students in their other subjects.

Some employers do it just for the subsidies and don't treat apprentices/trainees well.

It can be hard to find an employer to take you on as an apprentice/trainee.

Young people these days don't want to get their hands dirty.

Opportunities for students depends on funding from the Government. One year your school receives funding and the next year it does not. Change in Government can impact on opportunities.

There is strong public sentiment that 'you need to go to uni', 'it won't lead to anything'. There are existing perceptions that will be difficult to change.



*How to  
change  
perceptions.*

## Potential A&Ts

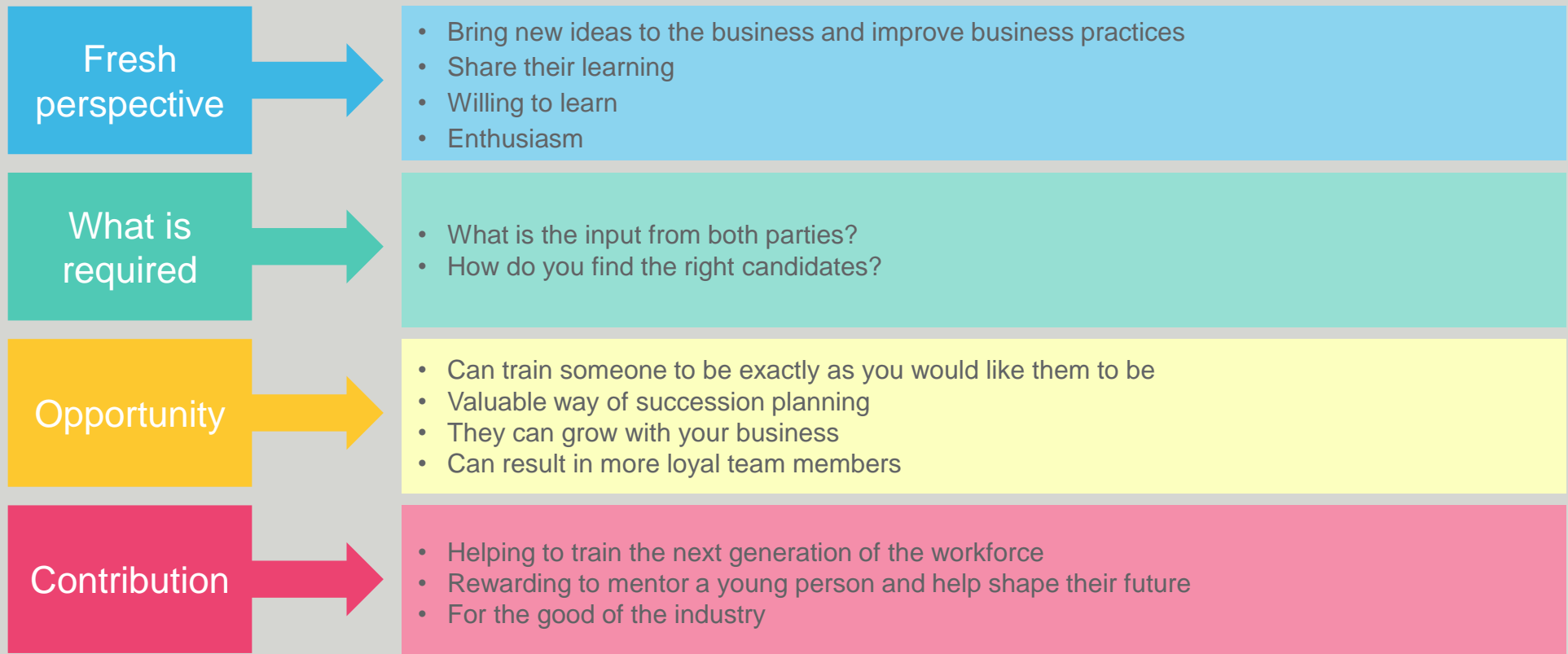
# *What do potential apprentices need to know?*





# Employers

## *What do employers need to know?*



# *Spreading the word*



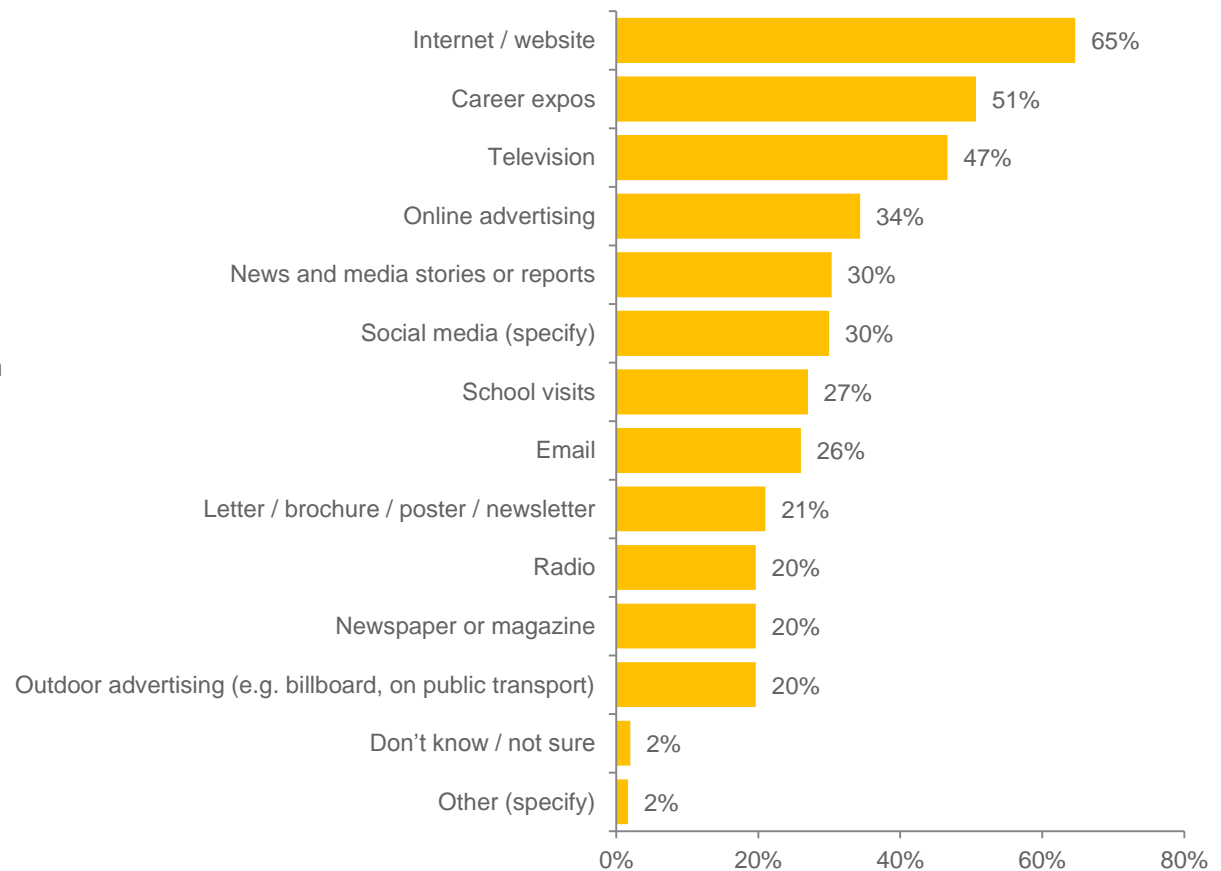
- Schools seen as the best way to promote this pathway. Can get in early and use career advisors as a credible way of spreading the word (provided they do so without bias).
- Industry experts and apprentices with real life relatable examples of what the pathway takes and has to offer.
- Career expos are a good source of information (look to what the Universities and Defence do to market themselves to students in this space).
- Important to get parents onboard as they are a key driver in their children's decision making process when it comes to the direction they take.
- Advertising via social media, in particular via you tube (the TV equivalent for the younger generation) and Instagram and Facebook.
- Placing communication material in areas that young people frequent like buses and trains, sporting and music venues. Considering TVC as a means of better informing parents was also discussed.

# Information sources

Potential A&Ts

What is the best way to provide this information to you about apprenticeships and traineeships?

Respondents were most interested in receiving information on this topic via websites (65%), at career expos (51%), on the television (47%) and online advertising (34%).

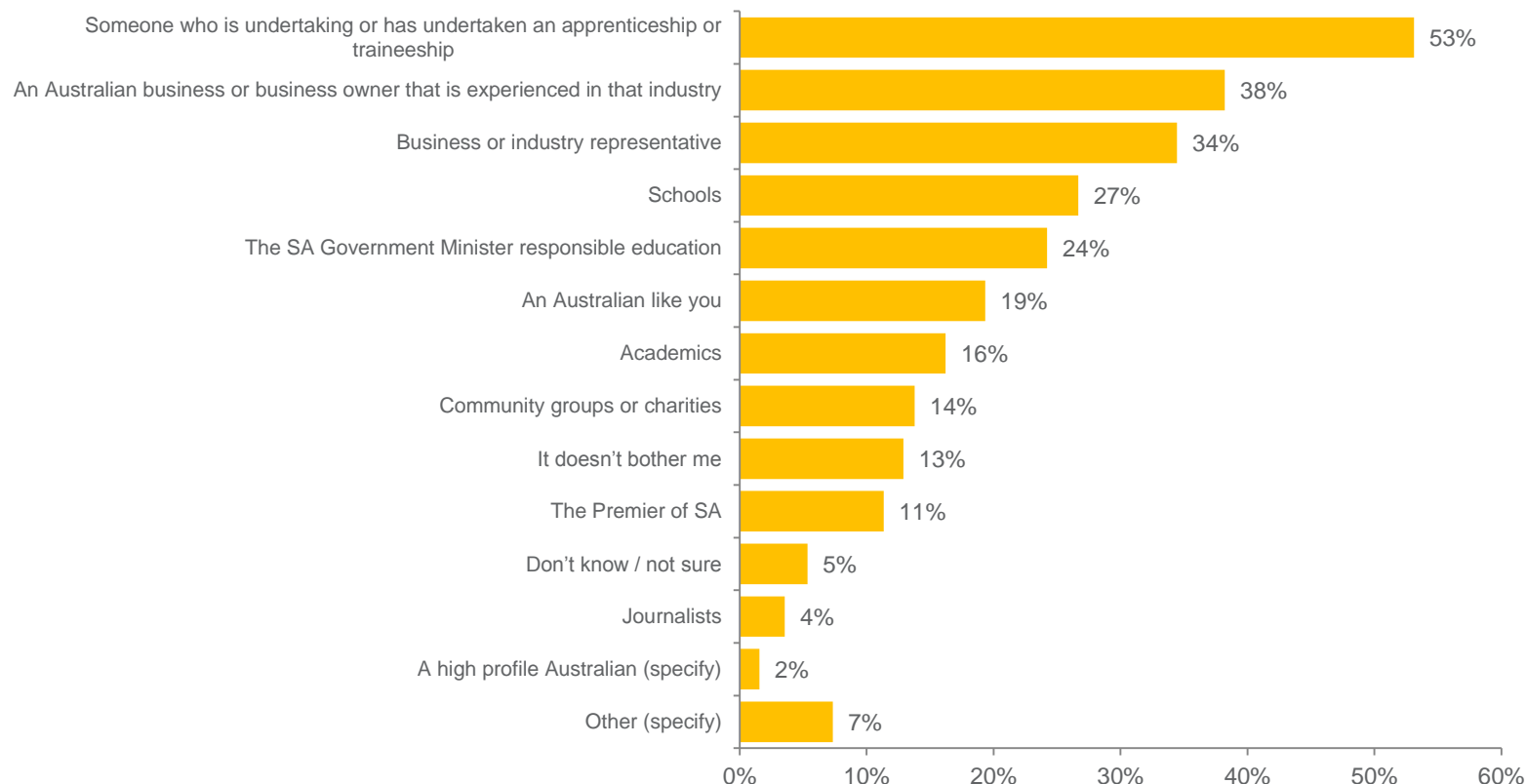


# Who?

## Potential A&Ts

### Who would you trust to communicate this information to you?

Hearing the message 'straight from the horses mouth' so to speak, was seen as important with more than half of respondents (53%) answering that they would trust the information the most if it came from a person undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship. Second to this was an Australian business or business owner with experience employing A&Ts (38%), followed by a business or industry representative (34%). Schools were also suggested as a trusted body (27%).



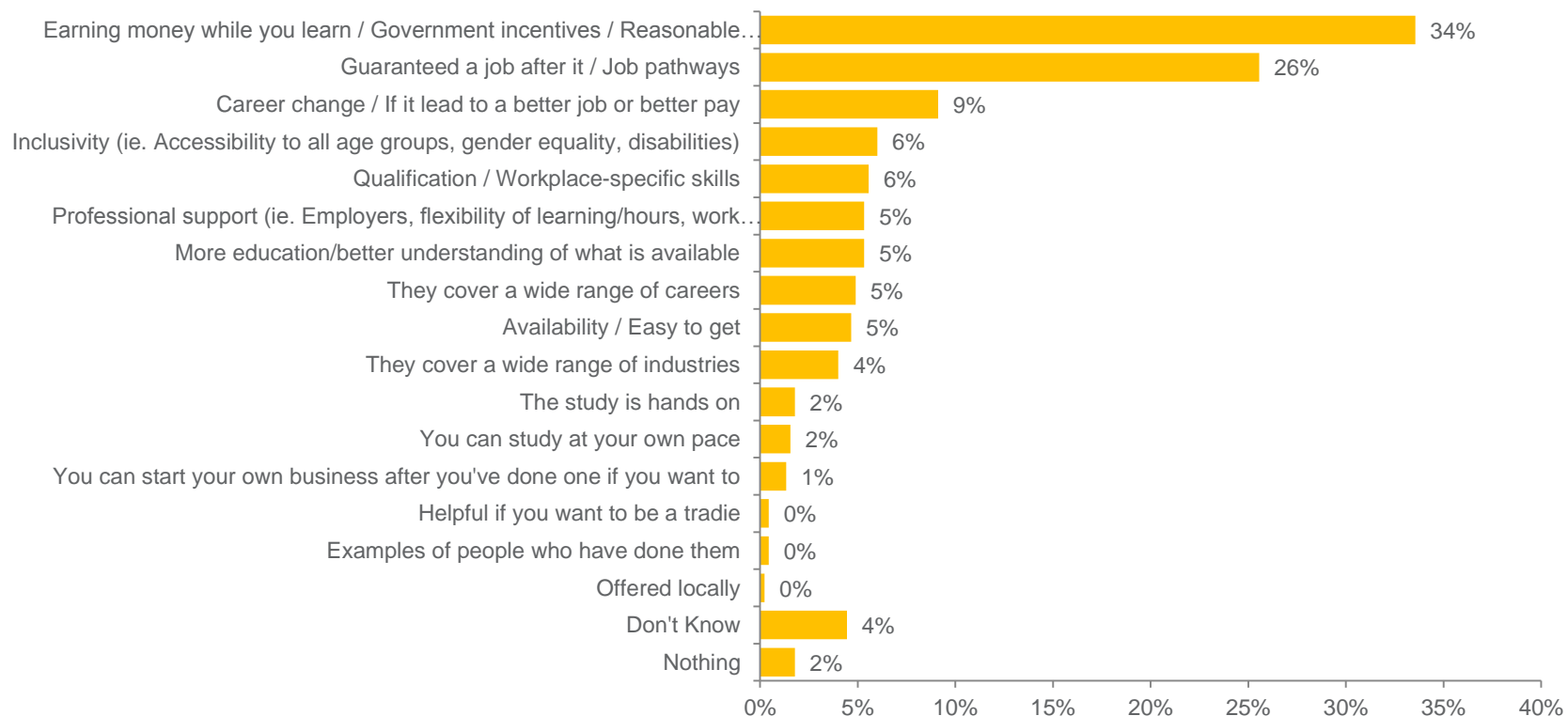
Q13. Who would you trust to communicate this information to you about apprenticeships and traineeships? MR  
Base: All respondents (n=450)

# One thing.

## Potential A&Ts

If there was one thing that would encourage you to complete an apprenticeship or traineeship, what would it be?

The two main points that respondents in the potential apprentice and trainee group said would encourage them to complete an A/T were earning money while you learn/government incentives and reasonable pay (34%) and having a guaranteed job/pathway after completing the A/T (26%).



# One thing.

## Employers

If there was one thing that would encourage you to employ an apprentice or trainee, what would it be?

The key areas that would be most likely to encourage employment of an A/T related to worthwhile subsidies (42%), candidate attitude, quality and work ethic (25%) and Government support (simpler processes/regulations) (10%).





*Messages.*

# Words or messages to use



## Employers

- Mentoring role
- Passionate, enthusiastic team members
- Test before entering into a long term commitment
- Less financial investment
- Contributing to the workforce of the future
- Train someone your way
- Needs to be a call to action
- What is in it for them
- *‘Are you investing in the people that are the future of your business?’*
- *‘Do you need motivated people ready to be part of your business?’*
- *‘Get staffed’*

## Potential apprentices

- Work ready
- Engaging
- Opportunity
- Reliability
- Specific interest
- Lots of opportunities and experiences
- Career
- Be your own boss
- Starting point, so many opportunities from there
- Real life experience
- Hands on exposure
- Quick way to get a job
- *“Earn while you learn”*

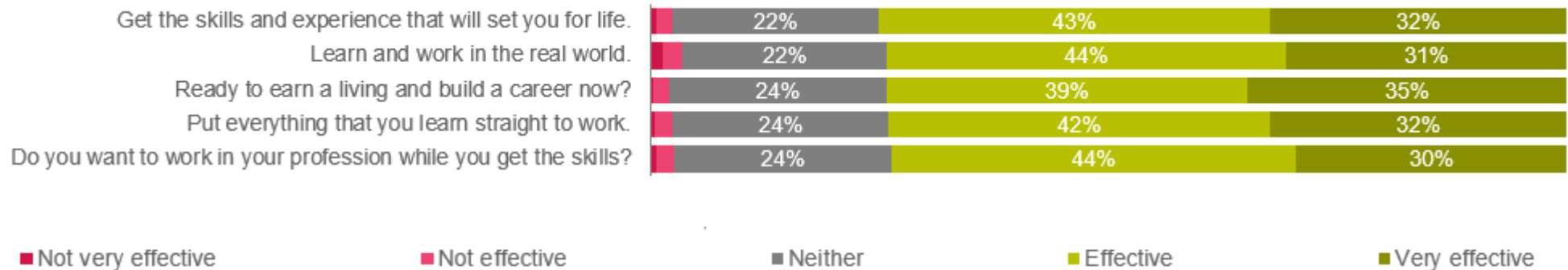
# Key message take outs

	✓	✗
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investing in skills</li> <li>Future of the business</li> <li>Passionate and motivated people</li> <li>Focus on the benefit to the individual and business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global economy</li> <li>'Skilled' and 'ready to work' not seen as true</li> </ul>
Potential apprentices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Earn while you learn</li> <li>Guarantee career (not job/work)</li> <li>Do what you love</li> <li>Build your career</li> <li>Be your own boss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work, job</li> <li>Responsibility</li> <li>Condescending questions</li> </ul>
Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doing something they love</li> <li>Keeping options open</li> <li>Equipping them with the skills employers need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncertainty around what employers will need in the future</li> </ul>

# Messaging (most effective)

Potential A&Ts

How effective do you think these statements are at encouraging people to consider undertaking an apprenticeship?



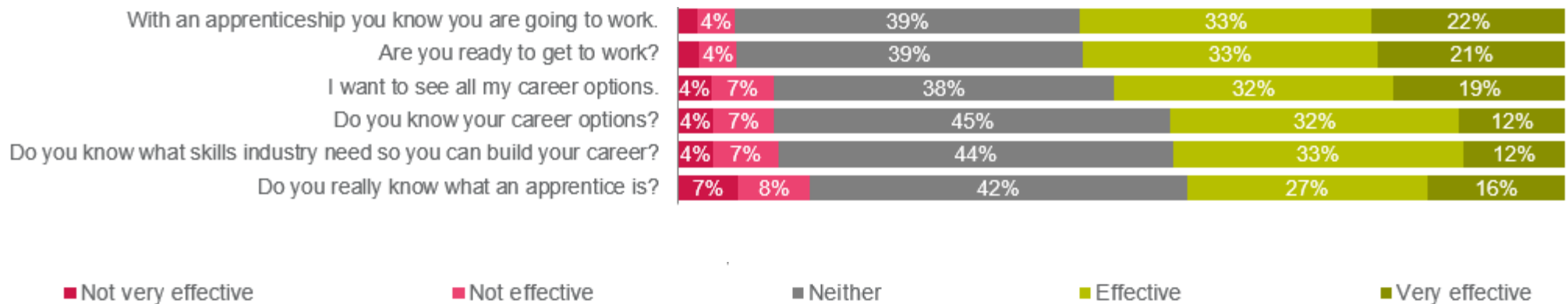
Q8b. Now we're going to look at a group of messages about apprenticeships. Imagine that these messages will be alongside imagery of people doing work in apprentice-based fields. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not very effective and 10 is very effective, please indicate how effective you think each of the following messages are at encouraging people to consider undertaking an apprenticeship?

Base: All respondents (n=450)

# Messaging(least effective)

## Potential A&Ts

How effective do you think these statements are at encouraging people to consider undertaking an apprenticeship?



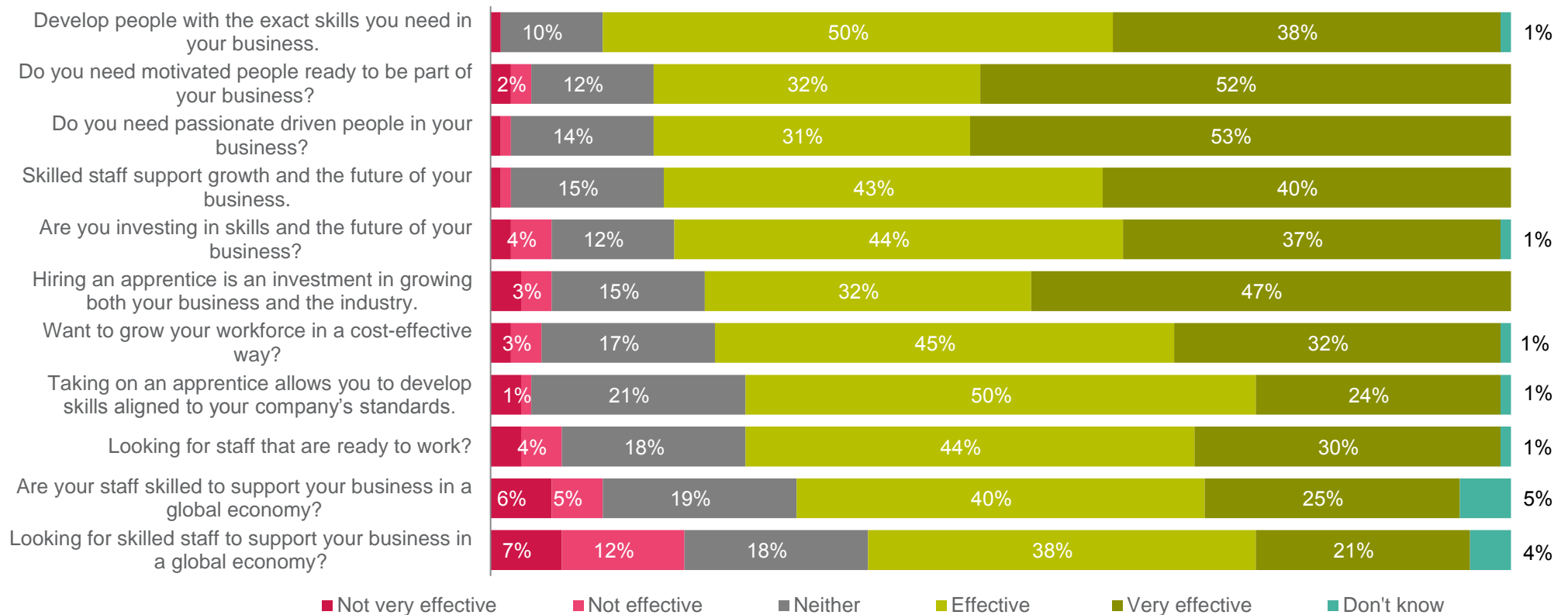
Q8b. Now we're going to look at a group of messages about apprenticeships. Imagine that these messages will be alongside imagery of people doing work in apprentice-based fields. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not very effective and 10 is very effective, please indicate how effective you think each of the following messages are at encouraging people to consider undertaking an apprenticeship?

Base: All respondents (n=450)

# Messaging

## Employers

Please indicate how effective you think each of the following messages are at encouraging employers to employ apprentices and trainees



Q23. Now we're going to look at a group of messages about apprenticeships. Imagine that these messages will be alongside imagery of people doing work in apprentice-based fields. Using a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not very effective and 10 is very effective, please indicate how effective you think each of the following messages are at encouraging employers to employ apprentices and trainees. SR

Base: All respondents (n=100)



*Creative.*

# *How to communicate the messages.*

- A story telling approach was seen to work well:
  - Set the scene with the apprentice pictured.
  - Show the apprentice learning with guidance from their mentor.
  - Then finish with the apprentice thriving in their new environment.
- Important considerations:
  - Show the employer looking proud and feeling a sense of achievement, being able to watch the apprentice succeed based on his/her training;
  - Emphasise the sense achievement the apprentice feels in doing a good job and performing independently in their new role.
  - Overwhelmingly, people preferred to see images of people rather than images like the ship or wind farm.
  - Being able to identify with the people in the images is important and for that reason, suggestions were made to enhance the diversity shown in the ads to ensure that they appeal to a wide audience (males/females/different ages/different backgrounds).



