It’s never too early to start considering your future career directions. Making decisions about what you would like to study after school can be both stressful and exciting. Many students often feel lost about what they would like to study and many feel like they don’t know where to start!

There are many things to consider -

- Complete Year 12 or leave school early?
- TAFE or university?
- Have a gap year or go straight into further study?
- Can I afford to move away if I can’t study locally?

For students and their families who haven’t been to a university or TAFE information session, there are even more questions -

- Where can I study the course I am interested in?
- How do I choose between several courses across several institutions?
- How much will my course cost?
- How do I find out about scholarships?
- What if I don’t obtain the ATAR I need?
- What is university and TAFE actually like?

These decisions can be difficult to make, and then you have the added pressure of focusing on your studies and other commitments like sport, hobbies and employment.

Not only can it be tough for students, but also for parents!

- Where do we access information?
- How do we best support our child?
- How can we afford the costs associated with further study?
- Will Youth Allowance and HECS-HELP, FEE-HELP, or VET FEE-HELP be available?

Apart from meeting with your career adviser early in the year, it is a great idea to attend information sessions run by TAFE and university institutions. Many run focus days and information seminars throughout the year, and most run Open Days in August and September.

By attending information sessions, you and your family will be able to do the following:

- Speak directly to current students and lecturers and hear from them about the courses you are interested in.
- Look around the campus and get a feel for the culture of the institution (e.g., does it have a modern or traditional feel? Do you think it would be easy to meet people? Would you prefer to study at a small or large campus?).
- Learn about scholarships, course costs, government fee assistance, global exchange programs and accommodation options.
- Ask about alternative pathway programs available as a back up in case you don’t get the ATAR you need for your course.
- Attend workshops and sessions on the courses you are interested in and compare facilities and students services between institutions.

Attending information sessions will assist you in setting new career goals or firming up ideas you already have. Having a course or courses in mind can also assist you in feeling more motivated to work hard at school.
Information sessions are usually free and you may have to register. Start to map out session dates on a calendar and pick the ones you will be able to attend. Here are some tertiary information session dates to get you started:

Charles Sturt University - 'MyDay' CSU: The events will showcase over 40 courses. February events include Medical Radiation Science and Nursing. For more information and to register, www.csu.edu.au/go/myday

Have you considered a career in Forensic Science? Then you should attend the next Forensic Science Careers Information Day on Wednesday 1 April, at the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM), Southbank.

Work at the VIFM includes
- Forensic pathology
- Clinical forensic medicine
- Medico-legal death investigation
- Paternity testing
- Forensic science services
- Preparing coroners reports
- Offering expert opinions on a range of issues

You will receive information on careers in the industry, but you will not be able to participate in a tour of the Building. There are limited spaces available so you will need to register quickly. For more information and to register, go to www.vifm.org/about-us/careers-at-vifm/

Science in the City, RMIT: You and your parents will be able to learn about the science programs on offer at RMIT, which include biology, biotechnology, chemistry, environmental science, food science, nanotechnology and physics. You will also be able to undertake a laboratory tour at the City Campus and speak to lecturers about how you can broaden your career options and give yourself a competitive edge. The event will run on Monday 30 March. There are limited spaces, so register now - www.rmit.edu.au/appliedsciences/discover

A Day at UNSW: This full-day activity is designed to give you your first taste of university life! UNSW's outstanding Faculties, including Arts and Social Science, Built Environment, Business, Art & Design, Engineering, Law, Medicine and Science will offer activities and lectures on the day to help you determine what university program is right for you. You'll be able to participate in workshops based on your interests. The next event is being held Thursday 25 June, www.whatson.unsw.edu.au/egateway/students.schedules_search?p_event_id=36

Monash University - 'At Monash Seminar Series': showcases different faculties within the University. The seminars run over several months and students have to book in advance. The following seminars are running in March:

- 10: Nursing, Midwifery, Physiotherapy, & Occupational Therapy
- 11: Business and Economics
- 12: Science
- 17: Arts (Science & Humanities)
- 18: Information Technology
- 19: Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

For more information and to register, go to, www.monash.edu.au/study/life/student/seminars/

Pre apprenticeships: If you are interested in pursuing an apprenticeship pathway and are unsure about continuing on at school this year, you may want to enrol in a pre apprenticeship. Contact your local TAFE institution to ask about the programs they have available. You can undertake pre apprenticeships in areas such as bricklaying, building, plumbing, electrical, automotive, community services, beauty etc.

What is studying at Deakin University like? The Faculty of Science, Engineering and Built Environment have a series of YouTube clips from the student perspective of what it is like to study courses such as science, engineering, IT, environment, architecture etc. To access the clips, go to www.youtube.com/user/deakinuniversity
Interested in Engineering? Engineers Australia has a fantastic Facebook site that students can join. You will be able to keep up to date with developments in Australian and global engineering, conferences and information sessions, and gain ideas about different occupations in engineering, www.facebook.com/EngineersAustralia

Did you know? That Federation University at Ballarat has vocational and higher education courses, and has the highest graduate full-time employment rate of any Victorian public university? Visit their website to search available courses- www.federation.edu.au/future-students/

UMAT Simulation Day: Students in Year 12 interested in applying for medicine, dentistry, or optometry will need to sit the compulsory UMAT examination. National Institute of Education (NIE) will be conducting a UMAT preparation workshop on Saturday 7 March at St Vincent’s Hospital, Melbourne from 9am – 5.30pm. Students in Years 10 and 11 can also register, but it’s important to note they cannot sit the UMAT until they are in Year 12. Spaces are limited. Please register at www.nie.edu.au

Short courses in arts at RMIT: RMIT offers an array of short and single courses taught by experienced lecturers and established artists. Courses include photography, drawing, lithography, sculpture, jewellery, casting, and molding etc. RMIT also offer folio preparation courses for VCE students. For more information, go to www.shortcourses.rmit.edu.au/page/high_school_students

Monash University- website just for parents: Monash has a dedicated site for parents who would like to help their children in the transition from school to university. This website helps to provide a good idea of what students are going through, from choosing the right course to adjusting to university life. www.monash.edu/study/options/parents

Applications for the following gap year programs are now open:

Gap Year in the Army, Navy and Air Force: The Australian Defence Force Gap Year program provides an opportunity for young Australians, who have finished Year 12 to experience military training and lifestyle whilst gaining new skills and pay over their Gap Year in the Army, Navy or Air Force. You will earn more than $45,000, have subsidised accommodation and full medical and dental coverage.

The Army has Gap Year job opportunities for Rifleman, Driver Transport, Administration Clerk, Supply Coordinator and Unit Quartermaster. The Air Force and Navy both have the one structured role. Applications will be open from Monday 2nd March for current Year 12 students. For more information and to apply, go to www.defencejobs.gov.au/education/gapyear/

Antipodeans Abroad GapBreak Program Info Night: Find out about Antipodeans Abroad 2016 Gap Year Volunteering and Paid Work programs at their upcoming Online Info Night. Antipodeans has a 20+ year track record in youth travel programs to developing and first world destinations. Find out about their 18+ GapBreak destinations on offer for 2016. 6.00pm - 7.00pm Wednesday 4 March 2015 - listen in from your home computer or iPad. Registration essential – students need to register online at www.antipodeans.com.au/info-nights

Latitude Global Volunteering: Applications are now open for gap year placements in countries such as:

- Poland
- United Kingdom
- Japan
- Argentina
- Vanuatu
- Canada
- China
- Ghana
- Fiji
- Malawi

For information and to download the registration form, go to www.latitude.org.au/