We aspire to a future where all 15-19 year olds are well equipped to make meaningful life choices and to become active participants in their communities, in our democracy and increasingly as global citizens.

For this to occur, and to secure their economic future, young adults will need to be fully engaged in education, training or skilled employment.

We are committed to increasing the retention rates and engagement of 15-19 year olds in education and training.

To do this, it is important that schools and TAFE continue to respond to the unique talents and aptitudes of individual students and continue to create learning environments which will allow these to flourish.

Education and training make an invaluable contribution to the mental and physical well being of young adults and to developing their sense of self worth, adaptability and resilience in the face of challenge and change.

We will continue to identify innovative ways of providing an education and training system that will achieve these outcomes.

Our ongoing recognition as a world-class public education and training system, and our capacity to best serve 15-19 year olds, will depend on our being flexible in responding to economic, social and technological change.
A Profile of the 15-19 Cohort

In this period of their lives 15-19 year olds experience an important transition from adolescence to adulthood. At the same time, they are moving through critical phases in their education and training, involving decision making about their study, their career choices and their future.

Learning environments and programs must cater for young adults maturing at different rates, and for their vastly differing backgrounds, abilities, aspirations, values and preferred ways of doing things.

Currently, most 15-19 year olds are studying full-time or part-time in schools. Many, however, are studying in TAFE, in university or in private colleges. There are also many young adults who are working full time, part-time or part-time combined with study.

A recent study indicated that over thirty percent of NSW government school Higher School Certificate (HSC) graduates enter university, over twenty-three percent enter Vocational Education and Training (VET), around seven percent become apprentices, five percent trainees and many directly enter the workforce.

A minority, however, are still not engaged in work or study. As a society, this is a crucial issue that we must address.

We recognise that this generation of 15-19 year olds has grown up in a rapidly changing society and world, with evolving technologies and patterns of work.

Increasingly, young adults use a number of different technologies simultaneously to communicate, access information and for entertainment. The majority of 15-19 year olds are better educated and more technologically savvy than was any previous generation.
NSW Government Investments in Our 15-19 Year Olds

The NSW Government has made a significant investment in its education and training system to make it more relevant to the 21st Century and to prepare our young people to face the challenges and opportunities of the future from a position of strength.

We have invested in specific programs to open up more opportunities for our 15-19 year old students. Key achievements include:

- **Implementation of the McGaw Review**
  These reforms to the Higher School Certificate (HSC) have resulted in a world-class credential highly valued by the community.

- **Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the HSC**
  The introduction of industry and university-recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses has expanded HSC pathways for students and enabled them to move into the workforce with skills and confidence.

- **$18 million to establish trade schools**
  Over the next four years, ten trade schools will be established in schools and TAFE NSW Institutes. They will specialise in providing training for school-based apprentices in shortage areas such as health care, construction, automotive, engineering and hospitality.

- **More than $21 million for the School to Work program**
  This program provides vocational and enterprise learning programs and assists students in planning their career and transition pathways.

- **Availability of credit transfer**
  Credit transfer or advanced standing is available at TAFE Institutes and NSW universities for specified HSC studies. Currently, credit transfer arrangements give credit into more than 500 TAFE modules. Some Years 10 and 11 VET courses attract credit into TAFE. A growing number of government school HSC students undertaking university-level courses are given credit or advanced standing.

- **Multi-campus colleges involving schools, TAFE and universities**
  The multi-campus college model is providing senior secondary students with educational advantages by offering them increased and more diverse subject choices. Student retention in all these colleges has increased markedly.
In addition, our investments, which have focused on major change to benefit all students, have also had an impact on 15-19 year olds. Such investments include:

- **$36 million annually provided directly to schools**
  To support the ongoing provision of a quality teaching profession by providing professional development for teachers

- **$16 million in targeted programs for priority schools**
  To support students in the State’s most disadvantaged communities

- **$75 million for technology**
  To increase access to education and training options including through the use of satellite technology for distance education and the availability of online courses and resources. Recurrent funding has been allocated over the next four years for the provision of email and a range of other e-services for students and teachers in government schools and TAFE Institutes

- **$616 million for literacy and numeracy**
  To raise literacy standards from the early years of schooling. State-wide funding has been provided over the next four years under the State’s Literacy and Numeracy Plans

- **Establishment of the NSW Institute of Teachers**
  To advance the status and standing of the teaching profession and oversee a system of accreditation and recognition of teachers’ professional capacity against professional standards.

These Government initiatives have been informed by an unprecedented level of consultation with the community of NSW about the kind of education and training system that people want.

The results of the three most recent consultations are contained in:

- The Report of the Consultation on Future Directions for Public Education and Training: One Size Doesn’t Fit All
- The Review Yanigura Muya: Ganggurrinyma Yaarri Guurulaw Yirringin.gurray - Freeing the Spirit: Dreaming an Equal Future, conducted in partnership with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- The Strategic Evaluation of Vocational Education and Training in Schools in New South Wales.

As a result of these consultations, significant improvements have already been made. This Strategy will build on those improvements.
The Next Phase – 2006 - 2009

While we have achieved much in providing the best learning opportunities for 15-19 year olds, we need to do more. We have set the following three goals:

1. **Aiming higher**
2. **Supporting strongly**
3. **Strengthening connections**

These goals:

- build on the fine achievements of our teachers in establishing strong academic and social foundations in the early and middle years of schooling
- take account of what young adults and the community have asked us to address
- focus on providing support that encourages students to raise their expectations and attain levels of achievement they might not otherwise have thought possible
- recognise the need for additional support in career and study management to assist each student to make informed choices about courses, work and life
- acknowledge the diverse needs of 15-19 year olds and provide targeted support for individuals and groups
- recognise that each 15-19 year old is an individual and that education and training has a powerful role in developing character and preparing each to be a responsible citizen
- seek to increase the course and pathway choices and flexibility available to students through strengthening the connectedness of our systems and partnerships.
1.0 Aiming Higher

We are committed to high standards and academic excellence for all 15-19 year old students. We want 15-19 year olds to aim high.

Students will be encouraged to remain in education and training to pursue courses which lead to university, TAFE, skilled employment and satisfying lives.

It is important that we continuously look for innovative and helpful ways to support 15-19 year olds both to aim high and to reach the places they are aiming for.

Key Actions

Higher expectations

This means setting high and clear expectations for, and providing regular feedback to support 15-19 year olds in raising their own expectations and in monitoring their progress. 15-19 year olds need to understand their abilities, how to be successful and to value success. They also need others to reinforce and acknowledge their success and support their ongoing achievement.

New approaches to the use of ICT can widen the potential resource base for all students. Virtual environments provide all students, anywhere in the state, with opportunities to discuss issues with their fellow students, teachers or experts from a particular field while they access material online. A virtual university environment is facilitated by the use of online shared work spaces, video conferencing software, shared whiteboards, real time audio, email and a variety of other approaches.

We will:

- increase the use of ICT to facilitate the development of communities of learners across the state and beyond by:
  - providing access for gifted students to a virtual university study environment
  - linking learners around special study and interest areas
  - providing programs of academic extension
- continue to find innovative and effective ways of engaging students in courses that have particular significance for university entrance
- enhance teacher professional learning programs to address issues such as adolescent development, providing for individual differences and youth culture
- expand opportunities for vocational education programs for students in Years 9-12, particularly targeting Aboriginal students
- use technology to link schools in the senior years to form virtual classrooms and so increase curriculum choices, especially in smaller secondary schools and in low candidature courses such as Physics or extension courses
- increase flexibility in school-based traineeships in Years 11 and 12 in consultation with industry, particularly by adopting a more competency-based approach to skills development. This will make school-based traineeships fairer and more comparable to other two unit HSC subjects and, as a result, they will be more accommodating for students.
Looking ahead

We are committed to helping 15-19 year olds expand their awareness of local and global challenges and opportunities, and of the rapidly changing nature of knowledge and work.

We also recognise that our 15-19 year olds will fare best if they are forward-looking and flexible in their ways of thinking, studying and working.

We will:

- identify ways for 15-19 year olds to foster critical thinking and reflection, creative thinking and develop the skills of entrepreneurship. These will be linked to curriculum outcomes and to the skills that industry wants such as problem solving, team work and communication

- establish an interagency think tank to investigate ways of increasing the participation and retention of young people in mathematics and science courses. The think tank will focus on improving the quality of mathematics and science teaching and learning K-12. It will promote mathematics and science as intellectually exciting academic disciplines in their own right, as well as key contributors to an educated and skilled workforce. The think tank will be led by an eminent Australian in this field, and teachers, students, academics, industry, other agencies and community members will be invited to participate

- establish mechanisms to identify and use emerging technologies that have the potential to play a role in improving learning opportunities and outcomes for 15-19 year olds.
2.0 Supporting Strongly

Students who are well supported and who know they are valued and respected, are more likely to be engaged in their studies. They are more likely to achieve good results and stay at school or TAFE, and more likely to undertake further education and training.

We know that there are many 15-19 year olds who are unsure about their future and find it challenging to make sense of the choices available to them. There are others who require additional special help. We will assist young adults in their decision making about options and choices and provide personalised support to individuals and groups of learners.

While the building of character is the primary role of parents and families, we also recognise the role of schools in developing responsible, well-rounded citizens.

Key Actions

Better informed choices

Young adults need to be sure that the choices they make and the standards they reach will enable them to move successfully from school into their chosen further education or career path.

Each student is an individual with particular needs and aspirations. It is important that students are supported in making course and career choices based on accurate information about their own potential and available opportunities. We are committed to providing them with better information and tools to help them make well-informed choices.

We will:

- identify ways of improving learning experiences which will increase engagement and retention and promote higher levels of attainment
- strengthen and coordinate support structures and programs to maintain the learning and engagement of students considered to be at risk of leaving school early
- support schools to develop strategies which allow students to have input into learning and subject preferences and the learning environment
- provide for students more support in academic studies, study-management, careers and pastoral care which:
  - responds to the needs and capacities of individuals or groups and takes account of the risk-taking nature of young people
  - is planned and delivered in a coordinated way
  - encourages students to participate in making decisions about their learning outcomes and aspirations
  - prepares them for transition to university, TAFE or skilled employment
- provide targeted support structures and programs to maintain learning and engagement of students identified as being at risk of leaving school early
- introduce a Taste of TAFE which will provide Years 9 and 10 students with the opportunity to experience an introduction to hands-on skills training in TAFE to assist them in determining their career options.
Career planning

Career support will be redefined and strengthened to enable students to plan more effectively for their careers. Students and parents will have access to information and programs that will facilitate career decisions.

We will:

- provide comprehensive career planning, transition and tracking programs to better equip school students to individualise their learning pathways, make improved life decisions and maintain continuity of learning
- conduct an annual destination survey of Year 12 leavers to determine ongoing relevance of course options and pathways, and look at ways of improving what is on offer
- conduct a longitudinal study to track the longer-term destinations of these young adults.

Building character

As 15-19 year olds move through the later years, the focus is increasingly on academic and vocational outcomes including the Higher School Certificate. However, they are also preparing for adulthood and participation as a full member of our democratic society. We are, therefore, committed to developing responsible, open minded, well-rounded young adults.

We will:

- provide opportunities for 15-19 year olds to continue to develop and practise the core values of public education and demonstrate responsible citizenship. The values in NSW Government schools are: integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, cooperation, participation, care, fairness and democracy
- provide opportunities for young people to engage in the creative and performing arts in ways that enable them to experience a sense of fulfillment and equip them for a well-rounded, balanced adult life
- encourage 15-19 year olds to develop healthy lifestyles which include maintaining fitness and participating in physical activity.

Key Actions
Highly connected pathways

The use of ICT will be extended to provide access to a broader range of resources and support for students, teachers and parents.

We will:

- increase the use of secure online access to information and resources and provide collaborative online learning tools for 15-19 year old students

- continue to expand on the Teaching and Learning Exchange (TaLe: http://www.tale.edu.au) content that is relevant to 15-19 year old learners, and support teachers, students and parents to access and use this content

- encourage schools to be flexible with timetabling and school organisation to increase curriculum and course choice, open up pathways and strengthen student engagement

- provide better opportunities for parents to actively support their 15-19 year old in decision making and academic progress

- improve pathways from education to skilled employment and further study for Aboriginal students.

3.0 Strengthening Connections

Technology has the potential to provide a greater flexibility in the way courses can be delivered and to give access to a wider range of options for students anywhere in the state.

By developing partnerships between schools, parents and care-givers, TAFE, universities, industry, other agencies and the community, students can connect to multiple and diverse support and career options. As well, they can expand the horizons of their learning experiences.

We are committed to creating a more highly connected education and training system so that students will have greater choice and more opportunities to undertake learning programs that suit their particular needs. Greater use of partnerships and technologies will help us achieve this.
Highly connected relationships

To meet the challenges facing 15-19 year olds, we need to strengthen our existing external relationships and identify new partnerships at both the system and local levels.

Parents of 15-19 year olds will have reports which give clear information about their child’s progress and commitment to learning.

Where appropriate, feedback will be provided to employers of those 15-19 year olds in schools and TAFE undertaking traineeship and apprenticeship pathways.

We will:

- enrich relationships of schools with universities to provide increased opportunities in schools which lead to advanced standing for university courses
- strengthen connections with government and non-government organisations to provide relevant re-entry programs for young people who have left school early
- develop improved networks and strengthen the links between and among schools and TAFE Institutes, community, local businesses and industry in order to provide a wide range of relevant, work-related learning experiences
- support new forms of locally driven, shared, specialist facilities in government schools and TAFE that maximise education and training opportunities for students.
Conclusion

The world is changing and education and training must change with it.

To reinforce the world-class reputation of our education and training, we need to continuously improve to ensure our academic standards and expectations reflect world standards.

We must continue to lift our expectations higher so that NSW's education and training system continues to serve the best interests of our 15-19 year old students in schools and TAFE. Through this Strategy we aim to do just that.

Our 15-19 year olds will have more opportunities, greater choice and more personalised pastoral care. They will be better prepared to make decisions about their futures and life options, better equipped with the skills and values to be lifelong learners and have a better understanding of what it means to be a responsible citizen in our democracy.