Moving into the unknown world of life after school is a challenge for any student. The transition of students with disabilities from the known, comfortable, safe and supportive environment of their school is even more challenging and can be fraught with difficulty and confusion.

What support is out there? What are the possibilities? What careers should I consider and how do I get there? These are just some of the unknowns which can confront any school leaver and even more so one with disabilities. Over 240 parents, students, teachers and disability sector staff gathered at the Lakes Resort Hotel to address these questions.

The event was sponsored by DECS, National Disability Coordination Officer Program and Personnel Employment and enthusiastically supported by the disability sector with representatives from:

- Bedford
- Can do 4 Kids
- Career Systems
- Community Bridging Services
- Disability SA
- Drake Supermarkets
- Interwork
- Minda
- NDCO
- Orana
- Personnel Employment
- Phoenix
- The Royal Society for the Blind
- SA Group Enterprises
- SCOSA
- City of West Torrens

Helen Nowosilskyj, Programme Manager of Western Futures opened the evening by informing parents, “that the evening was designed to assist them to know they are not alone.” “To encourage their children to feel confident about their future and take the opportunity to speak to the many service providers represented at the dinner.” The key message that flowed throughout the night was that young people should participate in one of the many school-based programs, such as the State Transition Program or Phoenix Work Experience Program.

Students and parents were presented with information about Business Services from The Phoenix Society and Bedford with both organisations providing a young worker who spoke about their experiences. Personnel Employment’s General Manager, Craig Harrison gave an overview of Open Employment, two digital stories were played of young people successfully working in commercial enterprises. Drake Supermarkets and the City of West Torrens spoke about the expectations employers have and the opportunities for people with a disability to work within these organisations.
Western Futures – Transitions Pathways Dinner *for students with a disability*

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Personnel Employment spoke about the State Transition Program, the opportunity students have to participate in vocational training and perform work experience. A student from this year’s program spoke about her experiences and the confidence gained from her participation. The student’s mother spoke to parents at the dinner about her daughter experience and how it has assisted her in developing skills and career planning.

At the conclusion of the dinner parents and students were invited to talk to the providers in an expo style environment.