



# The Problem of Youth Unemployment in a De-Industrialising City: A Genealogy of Employability Skills, Innovation and Enterprise

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Declaration

*I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed. I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.*

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## Abstract

The city of Geelong, in Victoria, Australia, was, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a booming regional centre, boasting an array of industrial manufacturing operations that included oil refining, aluminium smelting, car manufacturing and glass making, as well as a significant textile and clothing industry (Johnson 2009a). This strong industrial economic base afforded high rates of participation across the age ranges in a labour market that became more ethnically diverse with waves of migration, even as it remained gender segregated. In the post war period, dominant social narratives promised that employees of Geelong's major industries, such as the Ford Motor Company and International Harvester, could expect a 'job for life'. However, through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the impacts of successive economic recessions and industry restructuring policies fell heavily on Australia's industrial towns and cities, and their counterparts across the OECD and European Union. As de-industrialisation accelerated through the 1980s and 1990s, many of Australia's industrial towns and cities were transformed into unemployment blackspots, with rates of youth unemployment peaking at levels not seen since the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, de-industrialisation, 'neoliberal' globalisation, and emergent, algorithmically energised circuits of capitalist accumulation are among a complex array of forces and developments shaping the future of work for young people in 'Rust Belt' places such as Geelong. Entrepreneurialism, innovation and creativity are increasingly understood as critical factors in the economic recovery of 'Rust Belt' cities, and in the employment futures of the young people who live in these places.

This research project adopts a genealogical ethos that seeks to problematise the concepts of 'employability skills', 'innovation' and 'enterprise', and to ask how these complex, contested, often ambiguous concepts have emerged, at different moments since the 1980s, as promising a 'solution' to the problem of youth unemployment. Genealogy is a method of historical inquiry informed by the work of French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault. It is a practice of 'critical and effective history' (Dean 1994) that attempts to problematise and unsettle the taken-for-granted components of our present social reality, and to uncover the multiple, diverse, often non-linear trajectories that comprise the 'history of the present'. The genealogical ethos that I adopt in this project allows me to identify and analyse some of the key 'episodes', 'events', and 'moments' (Vucetic 2011) that have shaped understandings of young people's employability skills, innovation and enterprise, and the ways in which these 'capabilities' have promised – at different times and in different, but also similar ways – to promote young people's participation in changing labour markets.

This analysis is presented in a series of chapters that focus close attention on 'figures' such as the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael reports and the ways in which the concept of 'employability skills' came to figure prominently in the restructuring of Australian education (general and vocational) at the start of the 1990s; the early 2000s attempt by groups in Geelong to attract a Guggenheim Museum as part of a place-based 'innovation' agenda that echoed more regional, national and international trajectories; the Foundation for Young Australians' *New Work Order* series that, over the last five years, has 'invested' heavily in the idea of young people's 'enterprise skills' in a time of digital disruption; and, finally, the gendered, aestheticised ways in which young people's employability skills, innovation and enterprise are represented in a prominent 'lifestyle' publication in the 'Rust Belt' city of Geelong.

The thesis argues that, across the last 40 years, the discourses around young people's participation in education, training and the labour market have been powerfully reshaped by concerns to develop



young people's 'human capital'. In Australia, in the context of the 'Accord' politics advocated by the Hawke Labor Government in the 1980s, a consensus emerged among policymakers that reform of education and training systems should be harnessed much more firmly to the imperatives of national economic recovery and reconstruction. However, my analysis reveals that, these discourses are powerfully shaped by assumptions about the *type* of young person who is ideally positioned to acquire the kinds of human capital that it is thought will provide them with a degree of 'insurance' against unemployment and underemployment, and that will allow them to navigate future working lives that, it is claimed, will be characterised by almost constant churn and change. The 'ideal subject' that emerges in, and through, these 'human capital' discourses is a young person unencumbered by disadvantage or disability, apparently existing apart from, or outside of, the structures of gender, class, and race. These discourses of young people's employability skills, innovation and enterprise display a tendency to view 'young people' in the abstract: as disembodied, of no particular gender or socioeconomic background, and from no particular place. What this thesis argues is that bodies, gender, class and place continue to matter for how it is that youth studies should continue to work with, and through, the challenges and opportunities that structure young people's increasingly precarious engagements with education, training and work – in the present and the future.

## Preface

One of the central motivations of sociological endeavour, as in many other kinds of critical and creative enterprise, is a desire to ‘make the familiar strange’ (and perhaps also to ‘make the strange familiar’). Geelong, a regional Victorian city situated on Corio Bay, is the geographical anchor of this research project. As someone who was born, grew up, and currently resides in Geelong, I bring ‘insider’ knowledge and perspectives to the study of this place. However, there are fresh and insightful perspectives to be gained in ‘making Geelong strange’. Those researchers who bear a personal connection to the things they study are, in the words of anthropologist Ruth Behar (1996), ‘vulnerable observers’. Our subjective and personal insights are of immense value, but we must situate these in relation to wider processes and structures. As C. Wright Mills (2000, p.6) suggests in his landmark thesis, originally published in 1959, it is in those moments when we ‘grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society’ that we exercise the sociological imagination.

It is with these imperatives in mind that I begin in the suburb of Geelong that I call home, a suburb of working class people and modest, yet durable, homes. Newcomb, as one of the few Geelong suburbs untouched by rampant property speculation, retains much of its original character and many of its original residents. It is an intriguing vantage point from which to survey the rise and fall, ebb and flow of the city’s transformations. As I began to explore the history of this suburb, a history that is intertwined with the industrial heritage of this regional city, I came to appreciate the perceptiveness of historian Mark Peel’s (1995, p.6) observation that ‘class is the daily experience of your “place”’.

Newcomb is bordered to its east by the low-density acreages of Moolap, which, prior to the acceleration of suburban sprawl, once formed the easternmost limits of the city, and the gateway to the small coastal towns of the Bellarine Peninsula. Along Newcomb’s western boundary lies East Geelong, the suburb in which I grew up. The humble origins of East Geelong’s workers’ cottages and Californian bungalows are belied by their not-so-humble price tags. The Bellarine Highway dissects Newcomb from its neighbour to the south, Whittington. Though there is little to distinguish the two suburbs demographically, Newcomb has perhaps always been the ‘working’ counterpoint to ‘workless’ Whittington and the aura of disadvantage and stigma that persists there. And finally, at Newcomb’s northern, littoral boundary are the faint echoes of a once-thriving industrial area, where the flatlands of the former saltworks, and decommissioned smelter at Point Henry, give onto Corio Bay.

The rise of industrialism in 20<sup>th</sup> century Australia was instrumental in the creation of distinctive physical and social landscapes, historian Erik Eklund (2002, p.2) writes in his study of the steel town of Port Kembla. As the urban development agenda was harnessed to the new regime of production, the muddy paddocks and outlying market gardens, the ‘raw, unmade environments’ (Murphy & Probert 2004, p.278) that characterised the nascent suburbs of post-World War II Australia, were swiftly transformed.

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Geelong’s manufacturing workforce swelled, and it was at this time that Newcomb was consolidated as a suburb. Like many other Australian suburbs, Newcomb is a product of a time when governments took a much more interventionist role in providing for the elemental needs of working class people, as did some of the corporations for whom they were employed. In the towns of Morwell and Moe in Victoria’s Latrobe Valley, most of the housing for the extension of coal mining and electricity manufacture was provided by the Housing Commission (Howe 1988, p.60). In the northern suburbs of Geelong, where the city’s heavy industries flourished, it was the Housing

Commission, not the private property market, that met the rapidly expanding demand for housing with the influx of migrants and families after World War II. In Newcomb, among the brick veneer Commission-built homes, there stand a smaller number of aluminium-clad homes, and it is the latter which have a particularly curious genealogy. In 1964 Alcoa engaged local firm AV Jennings to build cladding houses in Newcomb for sale or rent to employees, on easy terms and low interest (Lannen 2014, p.3). With exterior walls and window frames featuring Alcoa's signature product, aluminium, these homes formed part of an employment and housing package with which Alcoa hoped to lure men and their families, some from interstate, with the promise of steady work at the company's nearby, growing Point Henry aluminium works (Lannen 2014, p.3).

A long-time resident of Newcomb reflects, 'they were all Alcoa people around here, next door ... next door' (Lannen 2014, p.3). After a 50-year tenure, Alcoa ceased production of aluminium at Point Henry in 2014. And the residents of suburbs like Newcomb will, perhaps, never again share such perceptions of sameness and commonality, as the lives and experiences contained within these locales change, disperse, fragment.

It gives pause to reflect on the deep and complex interconnections of this place with the imperatives of industrialism and 20<sup>th</sup> century urban and regional development, with the reverberations of global political-economic trends and forces, and how they shaped the forms of community, the subjectivities and life chances, and sense of place, belonging, connection, of the people who lived, migrated to, and worked in this regional city. Although the story of this place is a rich and fascinating one, the primary aim of this thesis is not to tell a story about Geelong, for that task has been accomplished, and to a high level of detail and sophistication, by other people (see for example, Regan 2015; Wynd 1981; Wynd 1986; Wynd 1988).

Recounting the history of Geelong's industrialisation and subsequent de-industrialisation is one part of a much larger aim, to identify and analyse what the shifting social, cultural, political and economic landscapes of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries mean for the labour market experiences of young people, and for how the problem of youth unemployment is conceptualised and understood. My aim is to probe the origins and evolution of discourses which understand young people in these de-industrialising locales as the architects of their own opportunity structures, and to map the 'conditions of possibility' which enable these discourses to emerge. This thesis must therefore move within and across multiple levels – local, state, national, global. Geelong, in all this, is my point of departure, and the place where I come back to. A major concern is to examine how discussions, debates and decisions among key stakeholders at the 'macro' level reverberate at the 'micro' level and shape the lives of young people as they seek out opportunities in globalised, de-industrialised, precarious labour markets.

The seeds of this project were planted at a time when many of the stalwarts of Geelong's manufacturing sector were finally reaching the end of the line. Although the trends and developments that had delivered places like Geelong and Broadmeadows to this point were a long time in the making, in the years between 2014 and 2016 especially, these places were the subject of intense commentary and reflection, becoming bywords for job losses and the retreat of heavy industry. The economic future of Geelong, and the people within it, faced a great many uncertainties. A series of questions stirred and unsettled my mind. Would Geelong be successful as it attempted to position itself as a node in the globalised, technologised, 'knowledge' economy? What would the possibilities, opportunities and challenges be for young people in this space? Other questions crystallised in discussions with my supervisors, and presented themselves as avenues for investigation. Against a background of sweeping structural changes, why were young people, more than ever, understood as those who should carry the responsibility for their own labour market outcomes? Why, when young

people were spoken about in education, training and labour market discourses, were ‘employability skills’ ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ invariably the parameters of the discussion? How did we come to this point?

Whether the chosen research methods involve interviewing, ethnography, or, in the case of this project, a genealogical analysis of historical and contemporary texts, a range of ethical, methodological, and theoretical dilemmas inhere in the practice of research. For example, a project such as this one, grounded as it is in a particular geographical context that is undergoing transformation, confronts the fundamental theoretical dilemma of how to define a ‘place’ such as Geelong, in a world in which the boundaries and borders of space are increasingly porous? Some dilemmas are more problematic than others, however. While the use of interview methods, for example, can offer a rich and detailed account of lived experience, it confronts the dilemma of which young people should the researcher give voice to, and why? Should they interview marginalised young people, and risk further entrenching them as marginalised? Equally, the decision to interview privileged young people may inadvertently reinforce the marginalisation of the less-privileged. It is a consideration of the balance of risks and benefits inherent in each of the major methodological approaches, as well as a desire to provide a much-needed critical, historical perspective on contemporary, taken-for-granted practices and assumptions, that has informed my decision to pursue a genealogical approach to this topic. What drives this project is an abiding concern to interrogate those concepts which function as ‘truths’ for how we understand the problem of youth employment and unemployment in de-industrialising places such as Geelong.

For a portion of my candidature I was engaged as a ‘Researcher in Residence’ at the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (abbreviated as Geelong Region LLEN or GRLLLEN). The project is also informed significantly by the conversations and experiences I had as part of this role. In 2017, as a member of the ‘Expansive Learning Network’ project team, I contributed significantly to the design and delivery of a series of public forums on the ‘Gig Economy’. My position as a Researcher in Residence at the GRLLLEN provided a window through which to view the operation of the network of local agencies and broader array of stakeholders that the GRLLLEN connects with as it pursues the strategic imperative of preparing Geelong’s young people to participate in labour markets that are increasingly characterised as a ‘gig economy’. This allowed me to gain valuable insights into the ways in which discourses of young people’s ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ operate in the local Geelong context.

# Introduction

## Employability Skills, Innovation and Enterprise: The Solution to the Problem of Youth Unemployment?

When, in a city of 100,000, only one man [*sic*] is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals.

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (2000, p.9), originally published in 1959

The Coalition has always stood by the belief that the best form of welfare is a job, and the PaTH program is delivering opportunities for young Australians to gain the skills and experience they need to move off welfare and into work.

Michaelia Cash, Federal Minister for Employment, 2017

The Australian conservative Coalition (Liberal-National) Government's Youth Jobs PaTH internship scheme, announced in 2016, has brought into the spotlight a range of contemporary concerns about young people in the labour market. Michaelia Cash, Minister for Employment in the Turnbull Coalition Government from 2015 to 2017, understands 'the correct statement of the problem' and 'the range of possible solutions' to youth unemployment in precisely the narrow, individualistic terms that C. Wright Mills warns against. In other words, the problem of youth unemployment, almost self-evidently, resides in the 'personal situation and character' of the individual: the deficient skills, attitudes and experience of the young job-seeker. The Youth Jobs PaTH scheme can be understood as a recent, prominent manifestation of the 'workfare' policy regimes that predominate in many of the industrialised, liberal democracies (and at a later point I will examine, in more detail, criticisms of programs such as the Youth Jobs PaTH scheme). However, as political leaders such as Michaelia Cash seek to describe and justify the scope and aims of such programs, they reveal something of the essence of contemporary attitudes to, and preoccupations with, the young unemployed.

Since the collapse of Australia's full-time youth labour market in the 1970s and 1980s (Denny & Churchill 2016, p.7), youth unemployment has persisted as a seemingly intractable problem. And while it is possible to trace the emergence of this problem to major shifts in economic, social and political institutions, the framing of the problem, and the range of possible solutions proposed by political leaders, policymakers and others working with, and on, sometimes for, young people, typically remain focused on the individual as the locus of concern. Academic and policy literatures demonstrate a concern for the moral fibre and wellbeing of the out of work young person, as they seek to define and describe the alarming consequences and deleterious effects of long-term unemployment on the young, including: 'wage scarring' – in other words, a decreased lifetime earning potential – as well as an increased risk of criminal behaviour and delinquency (Sissons & Jones 2012, p.10); 'long-term ramifications for future employability' and poor physical and mental health outcomes (Cessnock

City Council 2015, p.1); and the risk that unemployed youth will be “becalmed” in education and training that may have no use to their future job prospects’ (Burrows 2013, p.12).

In September 2016, the Sydney newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* invited its readers to cast moral opprobrium on the young ‘NEETs’ (not in employment, education or training) that it suggested were wilfully unemployed (Bita & Houghton 2016; *The Daily Telegraph* 2016). This sensationalist media reporting suggested that ‘an army of young Australians “unwilling to work” spends the day sleeping, watching TV or playing computer games’ (Bita & Houghton 2016). The report featured two young women from the Sydney suburb of Mt Druitt who, it was claimed, ‘would rather spend their days “chilling at maccas” and taking their old Holden Barina on “off-road tracks” than look for a job’ (Bita & Houghton 2016).<sup>1</sup>

From the late 20<sup>th</sup> through the early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, however, the story of youth unemployment has increasingly become entwined with those of de-industrialisation and ‘neoliberal’ globalisation, the key dynamics shaping labour market change. In Australia, the effects of these processes have been felt keenly in those regional areas such as the Illawarra and Hunter regions of New South Wales, Whyalla in South Australia, and the communities of Geelong and Morwell in Victoria, which have traditionally featured a high proportion of industrial employment (Promfret et al. 2008; Cessnock City Council 2015; ABC News 2016a; Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, pp.67-69). In Newcastle, a centre for coal mining and steel production in the New South Wales Hunter region, youth unemployment exceeded 40 percent in the early 1990s, as the local economy struggled ‘after several rounds of layoffs at BHP [steelworks], an earthquake, the loss of major industries like shipbuilding, and recessions large and small’ (Westbury 2015, pp.18-19). At that time, youth employment was also in crisis in a number of other de-industrialising locales, such as the former car manufacturing hub of Elizabeth, on Adelaide’s (South Australia) northern fringe, where youth unemployment soared well above 50 percent (Peel 1995, p.201).

In the new millennium, high rates of youth unemployment are again making headlines, and preoccupying policymakers and researchers. Throughout much of 2014 and 2015, Geelong’s youth (15-24) unemployment rate hovered above 17 percent (Enterprise Geelong 2017). The Brotherhood of St Laurence identified Geelong as one of 20 national youth unemployment ‘hotspots’ in both 2015 and 2016 (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2016, p.3). The twelve-month average of Geelong’s youth unemployment rate to August 2018 was 12.4 percent, a rate roughly commensurate with the Victorian and national averages (City of Greater Geelong [COGG] 2018a). However, a focus on the city-wide average masks the significant variation in the prevalence and rates of youth unemployment and disengagement between and within the suburbs. In the Geelong region, the five areas of Whittington, North Geelong, Corio, Bell Post Hill and Norlane-North Shore have been highlighted as zones of significant economic disadvantage (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2016, p.7; COGG 2016a). Youth unemployment rates in the districts of Whittington, Norlane-North Shore and Corio are consistently at least ten percentage points above the city average, and these areas are home to the highest proportions of people with below Year 11 levels of educational attainment (COGG 2016a).

The 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis and its reverberations saw youth unemployment rates surge, most dramatically in Europe. With youth unemployment rates averaging 23.5 percent across the

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<sup>1</sup> An investigation by television program *Media Watch* revealed the considerable ‘creative license’ taken by the *Daily Telegraph* in producing this report. It confirmed that one of the young women profiled, Amy, is in fact a Year 12 student who works part-time at McDonalds and does not claim any unemployment payments from Centrelink (Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC] 2016a).

European Union in 2013, and exceeding 50 percent in Greece and Spain, political leaders grew concerned about the threat of widespread social unrest (Neate & Wearden 2013). Serrano Pascual and Martín Martín (2017, p.803), for example, argue that in post-GFC Spain, with young people on average 2.4 times more likely to be unemployed than adults (in 2014), the difficulties young people face in securing employment ‘operate as a powerful instrument of precariousness’. Although they are the most highly qualified generation in Spanish history – 53.9 percent of young people aged 16–29 are overqualified relative to the job they obtain, one of the highest rates in Europe – 34.5 percent of those aged 29 or under would accept any job (Serrano Pascual & Martín Martín 2017, p.803). Carbajo and Kelly (2019, p.82) observe that it was in conditions of post-GFC austerity ‘that an entrepreneurial ethos was prioritised as a solution to the precariousness and high unemployment rates among Spanish and Basque young people’.

In the era of ‘neoliberal’ capitalism (I will examine the key concept of ‘neoliberalism’ in some detail in Chapter 2), a range of policy instruments and approaches have emerged to address the crisis of youth unemployment. However, as some commentators observe, many of these ‘solutions’ are overwhelmingly punitive in orientation, and have the effect of legitimating and normalising precarious employment as an increasingly mainstream experience (Standing 2014; Peck & Theodore 2000). Those young people who are unable or unwilling to demonstrate their employability skills, enterprise, and capacity to contribute to cultures of innovation, are likely to fall victim to the unforgiving regimes of ‘activation’ and ‘mutual obligation’ that attach to the receipt of government income support. The ‘active’ labour market policy regimes which rose to prominence in many of the industrialised, liberal democracies in this period have typically featured a ratcheting up of the conditionality of welfare payments. In Australia, the Work for the Dole scheme was introduced by the Howard conservative Coalition Government in 1998, and in its first iteration the scheme was targeted at young jobseekers aged 18-24, seeking to ‘activate’ those who had been on unemployment benefits for more than six months (Smith 2017, p.22).

In their criticism of active labour market policy regimes, Peck and Theodore (2000, p.120) suggest such regimes ‘can be seen as social policy analogues of flexible labour markets, as they serve to individualise employment relations, intensify competitive pressures at the bottom of the labour market and enforce low-paid work’. In the wake of profound changes in the production model in recent decades, the concept of ‘flexicurity’ has come to occupy a central place in European employment discourse, policy and regulation (Keune & Serrano 2014, p.1). Keune and Serrano (2014, p.7) problematise flexicurity’s purported union of ‘flexibility’ and ‘security’, suggesting that the ‘security’ component of the equation is in practice less about social protection, and more about self-insurance: ‘security through self-insurance (the adaptability of the worker) becomes the subjective correlation of flexibility (of the labour market)’.

Throughout history, the unemployed have often been an object of ridicule, and stigmatised as social pariahs - as the notions of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor, that prevailed in a previous era, can attest (Archer 2009). In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, however, under the influence of ideas of social democratic redistribution, a somewhat different attitude prevailed in policymaking circles, one that to a large degree understood the problem of unemployment and its management as a collective responsibility. The policy of ‘full employment’ was, for more than three decades in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, pursued as a key macroeconomic objective by both state and federal governments in Australia (Quirk 2004, p.1; Smith 2017, p.5). The objective of a full employment society, Quirk (2004) and Smith (2017) maintain, emerged at a time when governments were concerned to acknowledge and ameliorate the hardships endured by the working class in the Great Depression of

the 1930s. In the 1940s, as the ‘Keynesian’ approach to economic management rose to dominance, Treasury economists embraced the view that the government should use its fiscal capacity to maintain full employment (Smith 2017, p.12).

A very different state of affairs has, however, predominated in recent decades. Quirk (2004, p.1) suggests that ‘politicians and senior bureaucrats with the ability to eliminate it have deliberately maintained mass unemployment since the 1970s to avoid the profit squeeze and “cost-push” inflation that emerged under conditions of full employment during the 1960s’. Smith (2017, p.15) contends that, occurring against the background of the rise to dominance of neoliberal ‘free market’ ideas, the 1974 oil shock and associated inflation triggered an abandonment of bipartisan full employment policy in Australia and throughout the Anglosphere. Unemployment rose sharply from a 1960s average of less than two percent to over six percent by the end of the 1970s and, after a brief reprieve, continued upwards to ten percent by the early 1990s (Smith 2017, p.14). This change in the political consensus was largely responsible for turning the tide of public opinion on the problem of unemployment, providing the context in which the disciplinary connotations of the ‘dole bludger’ became significant (Smith 2017, p.15; Archer 2009).

A number of commentators suggest that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the key ‘disruptions’ shaping the dynamics of youth employment and unemployment are technological in nature. The recent, rapid rise of the technologically-mediated, precarious forms of employment seen in the ‘gig economy’ caught labour market regulators, unions and others off-guard. And the so-called ‘digital disruption’ currently underway threatens mass technological unemployment, with predictions suggesting that anywhere from nine percent to around 40 percent of jobs are directly at risk of automation (Arntz, Gregory & Zierahn 2016; Frey & Osborne 2013; Durrant-Whyte et al. 2015). While the degree of technological unemployment likely to be experienced remains contested and uncertain, a range of education commentators and youth advocacy organisations predict that young people’s work futures will be characterised by almost constant churn and change, in labour markets fundamentally reshaped by the advance of automation, algorithms and artificial intelligence (Foundation for Young Australians [FYA] 2015a; Payton 2017; McKinsey Global Institute 2017).

The discussion up to this point has revealed that there is a pervasive assumption, particularly among politicians and media commentators, that youth unemployment is an individual-level problem that must therefore attract individual-level solutions. However, what I want to suggest is that the problem, its framing, and the range of solutions proposed, appear to be intimately bound up with ‘macro’ level forces, such as de-industrialisation, neoliberal globalisation, and the structural economic crises (and emerging ‘disruptions’) impacting on the advanced capitalist world.

This research project approaches the study of young people’s labour market experiences from the particular vantage point of a de-industrialising, predominantly working-class community, and in doing so, it follows in the tradition of some important studies of working-class young people as they form their identities in contexts shaped by radical economic restructuring. While I have selected the work of Lois Weis in the US, and Andy Furlong, Fred Cartmel, Tracy Shildrick, Robert MacDonald and colleagues in the UK for closer analysis here, I also recognise that this field of inquiry is shaped by the important contributions of a range of other scholars (see, for example, the work of the Youth Studies Group at the University of Newcastle [Australia]). Although it utilises a perhaps somewhat different methodological approach than has traditionally been employed by those studying the labour market experiences and identities of young people in ‘Rust Belt’ places, this research project is an attempt to engage with and build on some of the concerns and themes identified and explored by



Weis, Furlong and Cartmel, and Shildrick, MacDonald and colleagues, among others. In the following section I will review the contributions of these authors to understandings of youth unemployment and class relations in 'Rust Belt' communities, as a preliminary to outlining in more detail the particular concerns of my own research.

### Youth unemployment, 'Rust Belt' communities, class relations

Sociologist Lois Weis has produced a number of pioneering studies of class relations in 'Rust Belt' communities and their impacts on the identities and aspirations of young people. Her 1985 ethnographic study of processes of identity formation among white working-class youth in secondary school, *Working Class Without Work* (1990), was centred on the American town of 'Freeway' as it underwent social and economic transformation after the closure of its major employer, a steel plant. She found that patriarchal and racist ideologies in this place were a feature of young males' identities in particular. These patriarchal ideologies typically informed the males' attitudes towards work: 'mental labor is not only less valued than manual labor, but it is less valued *because* it is seen as feminine' (Weis 1990, p.39, emphasis in original). The white male identity emerges in relation to the black male 'other', Weis (1990, p.77) observed, and she speculated that this stems from an 'historically based antagonism between the two groups', in which they were pitted against each other in the economic sphere: 'blacks were kept out of well-paid union laboring jobs by white males and, at the same time, used as strike-breakers by white capitalists'.

While Freeway girls did not 'elaborate an identity in relation to blacks in the way boys do', 'the current stress among Freeway girls on a wage labor identity' is nonetheless formed in relation to the expectations placed on them by young males and others (Weis 1990, pp.54-55, 77). Specifically, young women commonly expressed a desire to continue their education and establish themselves in a career or job prior to having a family, rejecting the 'ideology of romance' that would see them prioritise domestic and family responsibilities over participation in the public world of work (Weis 1990, p.63). In the minds of the parents of Freeway High students, education assumed an extreme importance in the context of plant closures, an attitude that signaled, for Weis, the decline of the class consciousness and militancy of the working class:

It is noteworthy that parents are pushing their children in the direction of individual social mobility. There is no sense of struggle for the working class as a whole such as might have been the case in the previous generation. Plants are closing, and parents feel strongly that children must obtain further education so they can establish themselves in the future. In a sense, then, there is, for parents, no envisioned class to fight for any longer. It is only a question of their children's individual survival, and schooling is seen as the only way to survive. This is a far cry from life before plant closings...Parents such as those in Freeway are not able to 'get their sons jobs' as was the case before. Now all they can do is stress the importance of schooling. Beyond stressing its importance, however, there is little of a concrete nature that parents can offer their children. (Weis 1990, pp.160-161).

In her follow-up study, *Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working Class* (2004), Weis reflects on the lives of these (former) Freeway High students, fifteen years later. Here Weis (2004, p.6) argues that 'it is privileges historically associated with whiteness, as well as continuing struggles around gender roles and definitions, that are key to the ongoing struggles of the white working class as it redefines itself as a continued distinct entity amid radical economic restructuring'. Weis observes both changes and continuities in the lives and attitudes of this cohort. The relationship of the white working class to people of colour continues to be characterised by segregation rather than

solidarity (Weis 2004, pp.70-71). Some male interviewees opted to transcend the hegemonic working-class masculinities that were a legacy of the industrial era: 'it is in the reinforcement of and/or pulling away from what is defined within high school peer groups as hegemonic white working-class masculine form that we begin to see how...young men move toward adulthood' (Weis 2004, p.106). In contrast, as the female interviewees moved into adulthood, they continued the critique begun as teenagers, of the 'Domestic Code' and its gendered and patriarchal precepts (Weis 2004, p.109). As teenagers, Freeway females, perhaps presciently, perceived that they could not depend on the shaky foundations of the male 'family wage', an institution that was crumbling in the face of major economic, social and cultural shifts. Freeway females are, as young women coming of age in the late 20<sup>th</sup> - and early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and prioritising postsecondary education as they strive for independence and self-definition, positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that contemporary labour markets present. Weis' findings, on the significance of gender and gendered subjectivities in these labour market transformations, raise significant themes that I will return to throughout this thesis.

In the UK, the work of Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel, and Tracy Shildrick, Robert MacDonald and colleagues has examined the role of post-Fordist economic, social and political change in shaping young people's school-to-work transitions and broader 'life transitions', as well as their experiences of poverty and economic marginalisation. In their book *Young People and Social Change: Individualization and risk in late modernity*, Furlong and Cartmel (1997) consider youth transitions through the lens of the influential work of Ulrich Beck on 'risk society', and Anthony Giddens on the 'reflexive' self, arguing that 'young people today are growing up in a different world to that experienced by previous generations – changes which are significant enough to merit a reconceptualization of youth transitions and processes of social reproduction' (Furlong & Cartmel 1997, p.6). The transition from school to work, for example, 'has become much more protracted...increasingly fragmented and in some respects less predictable' (Furlong & Cartmel 1997, p.27).

Furlong and Cartmel (1997) suggest that the impact of these changes can be conceptualised using the metaphor of a journey by train versus a journey by car. Young people coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s could expect to board one of a number of trains – determined by factors like social class, gender and educational attainment – bound for different destinations (Furlong & Cartmel 1997, p.6). Although the ability to influence the direction of travel was limited, the commonality of experience on board the train bred a sense of social belonging and camaraderie (Furlong & Cartmel 1997, p.6). The societal changes of late modernity are such that there has been 'a wholesale closure of the railways', and 'the journey from class of origin to class of destination is now undertaken by car' (Furlong & Cartmel 1997, p.6). The young car driver, confronted with a much wider variety of routes and speeds, will typically develop a greater sense of their own agency to influence the journey: 'because there are a much greater range of pathways to choose from, young people may develop the impression that their own route is unique and that the risks they face are to be overcome as individuals rather than as members of a collectivity' (Furlong & Cartmel 1997, p.7).

Tracy Shildrick, Robert MacDonald and colleagues have conducted much of their research in Teesside, a conurbation in England's North East. In the post-war period Teesside was renowned as an industrial powerhouse specialising in steel, chemical and heavy engineering industries. However, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the area had rapidly transformed to become 'one of the most de-industrialised locales in the UK' (Byrne 1999, cited in Shildrick & MacDonald 2007, p.592). The post-16 pathways of young people in these de-industrialised, deprived locales typically feature various combinations of 'often low-quality, government training and employability schemes; usually

unfinished, lower level educational courses; low skill, low paid, insecure employment; and recurrent periods of unemployment' (Shildrick & MacDonald 2007, p.599). These fragmented, interrupted, non-linear pathways 'carr[y] little sense of forward motion toward more secure, rewarding employment' (Shildrick & MacDonald 2007, p.599).

In their study of life in 'low pay, no pay' Britain, Shildrick et al. (2012, p.5) suggest that 'poor work' – in other words, work that does not provide stepping-stones to better employment and security – has in recent decades been cemented as a permanent feature of life for economically marginalised groups, and that this is increasingly apparent across the age ranges. Shildrick et al. (2012, p.2) argue that their analysis has relevance well beyond the town of Middlesbrough, where their study is located:

This story – of workers cycling between subsistence-level benefits and low-paid, low-skilled and insecure work, and circulating below and just above the poverty line as they do so – is one, we argue, that is now characteristic of working life in the flexibilised labour markets of late capitalism.

Key to the emergence of the 'low-pay, no-pay' cycle have been the sweeping structural changes to Teesside labour markets across the last 40 years, changes which have seen large numbers of relatively skilled, well paid, secure jobs in the manufacturing industry eliminated, a decline that has only been partially off-set by the growth in service sector employment (Shildrick et al. 2012, p.4). Processes of restructuring not only precipitated an overall decline in the number of skilled manual jobs, but also meant that the jobs that did remain were often 'precarised' through processes of casualisation and a greater reliance on subcontracting arrangements (Shildrick et al. 2012, p.126). Shildrick et al. (2012, pp.3-4) maintain that the low-pay, no-pay cycle has emerged as one of the key consequences of structural economic change in the industrialised democracies:

While persistent, structural unemployment and 'new' flexible forms of working are two well-known corollaries of economic dispossession and deindustrialisation, a third, less well reported but no less significant outcome – tied to the first two – is the emergence of patterns of work that can be characterised as the low-pay, no-pay cycle.

Those cycling between periods of unemployment and precarious employment on the lowest rungs of the labour market often encounter a further challenge in the form of the judgmental attitudes of employment agency staff. As Shildrick et al. (2012, p.5) highlight, it was a common perception among welfare to work agency staff that clients belonged to inherited 'cultures of worklessness'; they understood that the plight of their clients was influenced by individual- and family-level factors, rather than 'reflecting on the local history of decimated labour markets in which individuals have been placed and struggled'. In a 2014 paper, Robert MacDonald, Tracy Shildrick and Andy Furlong sought to put the idea of 'intergenerational cultures of worklessness' to the empirical test. MacDonald, Shildrick and Furlong (2014, p.200) note that, in the UK in recent decades, tabloid newspaper editors, welfare practitioners and politicians have expressed alarm at what they suggest are cultures of 'welfare dependency' passed down through the generations, highlighting the need to address the blight that is 'three generations of families where no-one has ever had a job'. In their fieldwork in some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Middlesbrough and Glasgow they encountered immense difficulty 'in even finding a sample of families that had known very long-term worklessness over two generations in these locales of very high unemployment' (MacDonald, Shildrick & Furlong 2014, p.206). In addition, the attitudes of study participants towards work were characterised not by a poor 'work ethic' or low aspirations, but rather, 'the social, psychological, financial and moral value of

working for a living was very strongly emphasised' (MacDonald, Shildrick & Furlong 2014, p.208). MacDonald, Shildrick and Furlong argue that the idea of intergenerational cultures of worklessness is perhaps best understood as 'a zombie argument': zombie arguments as ones that 'no matter how many times they are shot down in flames or have a stake driven through their heart ... seem to get up again afterwards' (Spicker 2007, cited in MacDonald, Shildrick & Furlong 2014, p.217). While such zombie arguments have little basis in rigorous social scientific evidence, they are nonetheless a key influence on contemporary welfare reform and social policy, and MacDonald, Shildrick and Furlong conclude that it is imperative that these zombie arguments are contested.

Although this project is indebted to the influential work of Weis, Furlong and Cartmel, and Shildrick, MacDonald and colleagues (among many others), it approaches the study of youth unemployment in a 'Rust Belt', de-industrialising locale utilising genealogical, rather than ethnographic and sociological, methods. It is my contention in this thesis that the key concepts of 'employability skills', 'innovation' and 'enterprise' have, in slightly different ways, and in slightly different historical periods (but generally since the 1970s), been understood as central determinants of young people's labour market outcomes. I will also argue that these concepts have particular salience in the 'Rust Belt' cities and regions of the industrialised, liberal democracies. A series of developments at the local, national and global levels is indicative of the shift towards imagining young school-leavers and university graduates, as well as the wider population of job-seekers, as the architects of their own 'opportunity structures'<sup>2</sup>. In Geelong, local news and business publications are among the chief proponents of discourses that celebrate the achievements and drive of individual entrepreneurs. And in these spaces the 'figure' of the young entrepreneur features prominently. Whether that is a local media personality who combines various marketing and modelling engagements while cultivating her 'personal brand' on social media and blogging platforms (Rooth 2016c), or a 23-year-old opening up one of the city's many new cafes (Mayne 2016).

### Defining the terms 'employability skills', 'innovation', and 'enterprise'

In slightly different ways, and in different historical periods, 'employability skills', 'innovation' and 'enterprise' have functioned as 'keywords' that suggest 'this is what the problem of youth unemployment is primarily about'. These concepts are made to function as 'truths' in relation to the

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<sup>2</sup> The concept of 'opportunity structures' is a particular focus of youth studies researcher Ken Roberts' work on young people's careers in and through education, training and the labour market (Furlong, Biggart & Cartmel 1996, p.552). The sense in which I deploy the term 'opportunity structures' in this thesis differs slightly from Roberts' interpretation of the concept. Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel (1996) note that, where the study of young people's transitions from school to work was concerned, Roberts was critical of approaches that he considered placed undue emphasis on the role of young people's individual aspirations and choices in influencing their labour market outcomes. As Roberts (2009, p.362) writes:

Choice is not irrelevant, but it fails to explain enough. It cannot account for the contexts, including the labour market contexts, in which young people make their choices, and it cannot identify the different limits within which different groups of young people choose.

Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel (1996, p.553) build on Roberts' work to suggest that it is in the complex interplay of 'individual attributes (such as gender, class location and educational attainment) and contextual effects (local labour market contexts, neighbourhoods and rurality)' that young people's occupational aspirations are shaped. Following Furlong, Biggart and Cartmel I understand young people's occupational aspirations as shaped by a combination of individual and structural factors, but in suggesting that young people are understood as the architects of their own opportunity structures, my thinking is also informed by the work of authors such as Kelly (2006, 2013), on the role of neoliberal governmentalities in shaping individuals' understandings of themselves as entrepreneurs of their own biographies and portfolios of choice and achievement.

problem of youth unemployment, ‘truths’ which have emerged as particularly significant in the context of the ‘neoliberal’ capitalism predominant in many countries since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet the meanings of these concepts are not fixed and final, but rather are shifting and contested, complex and ambiguous. In recognising this, the project takes its cue from the ‘deliberately social and historical’ analysis of systems of meaning that cultural studies theorist Raymond Williams (1983, p.21) outlined in his influential work *Keywords*. ‘The most active problems of meaning’, Williams (1983, p.22) argued, ‘are always primarily embedded in actual relationships’, and these meanings and relationships are ‘typically diverse and variable’. Not only that, but ‘important social and historical processes occur *within* language, in ways which indicate how integral the problems of meanings and of relationships really are’ (Williams 1983, p.22, emphasis in original). The affinities and overlaps of Williams’ approach with a genealogical critique of key concepts are demonstrated in the following passage:

The kind of semantics to which these notes and essays [in *Keywords*] belong is one of the tendencies within *historical semantics*: a tendency that can be more precisely defined when it is added that the emphasis is not only on historical origins and developments but also on the present - present meanings, implications and relationships - as history. This recognizes, as any study of language must, that there is indeed community between past and present, but also that *community* - that difficult word - is not the only possible description of these relations between past and present; that there are also radical change, discontinuity and conflict, and that all these are still at issue and are indeed still occurring. (Williams 1983, p.23, emphasis in original)

This project will suggest that the key concepts of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ are each the product of an ‘apparatus’ (Foucault et al. 1980, pp.194-195) composed of a distinctive configuration of elements. These elements are both discursive and non-discursive, are political, economic, social, cultural, and ideological in nature and are conditioned by, and in turn condition, spatial and temporal processes of de-industrialisation and labour market change. It is through an historical analysis of epochs, episodes, events and examples (Vucetic 2011) that the diverse elements that relate to each of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ can be identified and analysed. This detailed analysis is the focus of chapters 4, 5 and 6, however, and it is the aim of the following section of this chapter to provide a preliminary sketch of the meaning and significance of these key terms in contemporary discourses, particularly as they apply to questions of youth employment, unemployment and labour market transitions.

### Employability skills

The provenance of the concept of ‘employability’ has been interrogated by McQuaid and colleagues (McQuaid, Green & Danson 2005; McQuaid & Lindsay 2005). While ‘it is over 100 years since “employability” emerged as a concept in debates surrounding unemployment and labour markets’, McQuaid, Green and Danson (2005, p.191) suggest that it was in the 1990s that the concept came to occupy a central place in labour market policy and associated discourses, a development they observe in the European Union, the UK’s New Deal, and ‘elsewhere at national, regional and local levels’. The employability of young people has also become a core concern of the research and policy agendas of organisations with a supranational and/or global focus, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (see, for example, ILO 2011; OECD 2015b).

For McQuaid, Green and Danson (2005, p.191), ‘employability relates to both unemployed people seeking work and those in employment seeking better jobs with their current or a different employer’, and there are both ‘labour supply’ and ‘labour demand’ dimensions of this concept, which give rise to ‘narrow’ and ‘broad’ definitions of employability. A narrowly-defined supply-side focus understands employability as hinging on the skills and attributes possessed by the individual (McQuaid, Green & Danson 2005, p.191). The broader perspective, on the other hand, takes in contextual factors which impact on an individual’s ability to secure or to change employment, such as job search and labour demand conditions (McQuaid, Green & Danson 2005, p.191). However, McQuaid and colleagues observe that it is a ‘supply-side orthodoxy’ which has predominated in many of the industrialised democracies since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century:

‘So-called’ employability policies have too often focused solely on activating the unemployed through a combination of compulsory training and job-seeking activities. That the success of these policies tends to differ significantly across regions and labour markets points to a fundamental weakness—that the concept of employability as currently formulated within many activation policies fails to acknowledge the importance of the geography of labour markets, issues surrounding travel to work, employer attitudes and behaviour, demand within local economies and other ‘context’ factors impacting on the experiences of job seekers. (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005, p.205)

For employability and ‘activation’ policies to be effective in assisting individuals’ transitions into sustainable employment, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005, pp.206-213) assert that policymakers must embrace a broad, holistic model of employability that recognises the full range of supply-side and demand-side factors that influence labour market outcomes. In the employability equation, individual factors (in other words, skills and attributes) and personal circumstances (which McQuaid and Lindsay suggest includes a range of socioeconomic contextual factors related to the individual’s social and household circumstances) are significant alongside external macroeconomic and institutional factors (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005, pp.208-213).

In Australia, the 1992 Mayer Committee report on *Key Competencies* was the first document that sought to codify the key employment-related competencies needed by young people. Ten years later, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia’s (BCA) *Employability Skills for the Future* report sought to investigate ‘possible new requirements for generic employability competencies that industry requires, or will require, in the foreseeable future, since the Mayer Key Competencies were developed’ (ACCI & BCA 2002, p.11). *Employability Skills for the Future* defines employability skills as ‘skills required not only to gain employment, but also to progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one’s potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions’ (ACCI & BCA 2002, p.3). In 2012, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) commissioned a further review of the employability skills framework, the findings of which were published in a report by consultancy firm Ithaca Group (2012). In their 2002 report, the ACCI and BCA explain their semantic preference for the concept of ‘employability’, as opposed to ‘employment-related’ skills:

Employability is more attractive as a descriptor than employment-related since it conveys a greater sense of an individual’s long-term capacity to build a career and to prosper in a dynamic labour market. Employability implies qualities of resourcefulness, adaptability and flexibility, whereas employment-related suggests an orientation to the current state of the labour market. As such, employability has more potential as a term to signal the qualities

needed for success not only in paid employment but also in other domains of life. (ACER 2001, cited in ACCI & BCA 2002, p.4)

In much of the definitional work that these reports undertake, there is a concern to establish ‘employability skills’ as distinct from, and yet at the same time interconnected with, the related concepts of ‘generic skills’ and ‘foundation skills’. As an example of how these different skill sets are positioned, the 2012 *Employability Skills Framework* suggests that employability skills form part of a suite of capabilities necessary for effective participation in society:

For the purposes of this project, we have defined Employability Skills as being ‘the non-technical skills required to effectively participate in the workplace’. Generic Skills are broader and include language, literacy and numeracy skills and other skills required to participate in society. In Australia, the term Foundation Skills is now being used to describe the combination of Core Skills (i.e. reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy and learning) and Employability Skills. (Ithaca Group 2012, p.2)

Figure 1 below appears in the 2012 *Employability Skills Framework* and illustrates the significance of employability skills as one of three interrelated skill sets impacting on ‘work performance’.

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 1: Employability skills in context (Ithaca Group 2012, p.5). ‘Core LLN skills’ refers to the core language, literacy and numeracy skills of ‘reading, writing, oral communication, numeracy and learning’ (Ithaca Group 2012, p.4).

With the April 2017 launch of the Turnbull Liberal-National Coalition Government’s Youth Jobs PaTH internship scheme, employability skills training was cemented as a key component of ‘active’ labour market policy regimes in Australia. Youth Jobs PaTH is targeted at jobseekers aged under 25, and has three elements: ‘Prepare - Trial – Hire’ (Australian Government 2017). The ‘Prepare’ phase sees the jobseeker undergo six weeks of Employability Skills Training (EST), which, according to the Government’s Jobactive authority, ‘gives young people the opportunity to enhance their employability through two different blocks of targeted training. Participating in training will help young people understand the expectations of employers in both the recruitment process and as a new employee in the workplace’ (Australian Government 2017). Jobseekers in the ‘Trial’ phase of the scheme must complete an internship placement of four to 12 weeks duration, during which they will receive \$200 per fortnight on top of their regular income support payment, in return for working 15-25 hours a week, while employers that take on interns will receive an upfront payment of \$1000 (Australian Government 2016b). ‘Hire’, the third and final component of the scheme, involves the provision of a ‘Youth Bonus wage subsidy’ to employers who successfully hire young jobseekers on government income support (Australian Government 2016b).

The Youth Jobs PaTH scheme and its utility in improving the labour market outcomes of young people has been critiqued by a range of commentators (and I will examine some of these criticisms in later chapters). The principles underpinning the scheme are emblematic of the ‘supply-side orthodoxy’ highlighted by McQuaid and colleagues, in which the causes of youth unemployment are understood as residing in the deficient skills, attributes and attitudes of the individual young person.

The imperative of employability is, in a context of significant levels of graduate unemployment and underemployment, an almost ubiquitous feature of contemporary Australian universities' marketing materials and strategic plans. LaTrobe University's *Future Ready: Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017*, for example, identifies 'student employability' as one of four strategic focus areas (LaTrobe University 2015, p.4). Employability – and the work of establishing, maintaining and marketing that employability – becomes one of the core concerns of tertiary education, and is understood as a means for young people to 'future-proof' their careers and maintain the relevance of their skill sets in increasingly uncertain and changeable worlds of work.

The problem of youth unemployment, Serrano Pascual and Martín Martín (2017, p.812) observe, is, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, de-politicised (and subsequently re-politicised) in ways that are consistent with neoliberal logics of individualisation. With the proliferation of employability policies and programmes there has been an increasing 'psychologisation' of social problems (Serrano Pascual & Martín Martín 2017, p.812). 'Social problems are turned into personal deficits – cultural, attitudinal, motivational', and the structural factors that influence worker vulnerability are omitted from contemporary policy understandings of youth employment and unemployment (Serrano Pascual & Martín Martín 2017, p.812).

### Innovation

In discussions of the drivers of future economic growth, 'innovation' and its counterpart 'disruption' (which Boyd and Holton [2017, p.3] suggest 'is regarded positively as the midwife of innovation'), appear to be the current buzzwords favoured by many political and business leaders. However, the idea that innovation is a key driver of economic growth has a long history. Dodgson and Gann (2010, p.20) argue that, 'if any economist lays claim to be the first to include innovation centrally within their theory of development, it is Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), who remains today as one of the most influential thinkers on the subject'. For Schumpeter, processes of innovation unleashed 'gales of creative destruction'; he understood that there were both generative and destructive aspects of the process of bringing a new concept or practice to fruition (Dodgson & Gann 2010, pp.20-21). While in his later writings, Schumpeter modified his theory of innovation to recognise that large companies were spaces in which innovation could take place, his celebration of the entrepreneur as a visionary, daring individual who, in his words, 'seeks out difficulties, changes in order to change, delights in ventures' (Dodgson & Gann 2010, p.47), has a particular resonance in 21<sup>st</sup> century discourses around innovation.

With the launch of the National Innovation and Science Agenda in December 2015, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull aimed to 'usher in the ideas boom' that would 'deliver the next age of economic prosperity in Australia' (Turnbull 2015; Australian Government 2016a). The types of innovation emphasised in the National Innovation and Science Agenda are those that are scientific, technological, entrepreneurial. The centrepiece of the agenda is a raft of measures to encourage entrepreneurial talent and risk-taking, support for start-ups and financial assistance for businesses looking to compete in the fast-paced, dynamic 21<sup>st</sup>-century economy (Australian Government 2016a).<sup>3</sup> Another major plank of

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<sup>3</sup> The image of Australia as a highly derivative society was propounded by social commentator Donald Horne in his 1964 book *The Lucky Country*, and it is perhaps the legacy of Horne's disparaging remarks that informs the Turnbull Government's efforts to foster a national culture of innovation. Australia, Horne (2009, pp.11-13) wrote, is a nation 'inimical to ideas' and lacking in 'a generally accepted public sense of a future'. As Horne (2009, p.11) asserted, 'except in those few fields where it has had a history of enterprise, Australia has not been



the agenda aims to encourage young people to pursue education and careers in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) as these are ‘the skills [that young people] need for the jobs of tomorrow’ (Australian Government 2016a).

In Geelong, the Chief Executive of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, Bernadette Uzelac, contends that entrepreneurialism, innovation and creativity ‘will be critical success factors for the future of our city and for unleashing myriad career opportunities’ (Uzelac 2016, p.32). An insight into how innovation is claimed to be practised in one prominent Australian business is presented in a report in Geelong’s local daily newspaper the *Geelong Advertiser* (Judd 2016, p.14). Alisa Bowen is the Chief Technology Officer at News Corp Australia, the article reports, and was to be a guest speaker at a technology and innovation summit in Geelong, where she was to relate her experience of ‘leading the rollout of a national innovation platform which reaches into every part of the news business’ (Judd 2016, p.14). The article quotes Bowen:

‘At News Corporation we’ve defined innovation as recombining ideas, people and capabilities in new ways to deliver value,’ she says... ‘We decided early in our process not to make innovation the exclusive domain of one small group of privileged technologists or creative types in a corner’. (Judd 2016, p.14)

In this brief survey of the discourse around ‘innovation’, there emerge three points that are particularly instructive. First, innovation appears as an imperative with the ability to transform and remake organisations, societies, cities, cultures, economies, and people. Second, in these examples innovation is useful insofar as it is able to generate economic value and profit via the development of intellectual property. And third, it is individuals, rather than collectivities or groups, that are understood as those primarily responsible for innovation.<sup>4</sup>

The role of young people in facilitating innovation is commonly framed in terms of their potential to bring fresh perspectives and ideas into workplace projects and operations. A burgeoning subgenre of the popular business press, exemplified by such titles as *The Millennial Myth: Transforming Misunderstanding into Workplace Breakthroughs* (Kadakia 2017), seeks to demystify the secrets to managing this technologically-wired generation in the workplace, assisting managers to harness the often untapped ‘strategic advantage’ that young people can bring to the organisation. Jack

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a country of great innovation or originality. It has exploited the innovations and originality of others and much of its boasting is that of a parasite’.

<sup>4</sup> In her book *The Entrepreneurial State: Debunking Public vs. Private Sector Myths*, Mariana Mazzucato (2013) seeks to debunk the idea that it is typically private enterprise and visionary individuals that drive innovation. From mainstream economic theory’s relegation of the role of the State to that of fixing ‘market failures’, to the discursive attacks on the purported inefficiencies of the welfare state – these are key factors fuelling the increasingly common perception that the supposedly bureaucratic, inertial and heavy-handed character of the State prevents it from developing and exercising the kinds of dynamic, proactive, risk-taking capacities that are required to make innovation happen (Mazzucato 2013, pp.1-3). Yet, Mazzucato (2013, p.3) argues that:

Most of the radical, revolutionary innovations that have fuelled the dynamics of capitalism – from railroads to the Internet, to modern-day nanotechnology and pharmaceuticals – trace the most courageous, early and capital-intensive ‘entrepreneurial’ investments back to the State...such radical investments – which embedded extreme uncertainty – did not come about due to the presence of venture capitalists, nor of ‘garage tinkerers’. It was the visible hand of the State which made these innovations happen. Innovation that would not have come about had we waited for the ‘market’ and business to do it alone – or government to simply stand aside and provide the basics.

MacCauley, a young science student from Tasmania, is profiled in the *Geelong Business News* for the technical breakthrough he made while interning at Geelong refinery Viva Energy. As *Geelong Business News* (2017a) reports, 'bitumen products are developing as an important revenue stream at the Geelong Refinery and Viva Energy's General Manager Refining, Thys Heyns, said Jack had helped develop an alternative test to measure bitumen durability that is considered a world-first in the refining sector'. Jack's efforts were recognised at the annual CareerTrackers awards in Sydney (*Geelong Business News* 2017a), and offer an example of the value of the 'intra-preneur', a figure celebrated in contemporary business discourse for their ability to act as a model agent of change, exercising their entrepreneurial and problem-solving capabilities to the benefit of the organisation (Heery & Noon 2008).

Offering a counterpoint to these discourses of young people's innovatory nous, some recent Australian research by Rampersad (2017) suggests that, despite innovation increasingly being framed as an essential employment-related capability, 'there is a lack of consensus on what innovation skills actually are'. Rampersad (2017) interrogated the meanings and perceptions of 'innovation' held by both students and employers, finding a lack of overlap in the predominant understandings of each group. Students 'were found to perceive innovation as a very fluid process that does not require any boundaries or rules', an understanding that 'reflects the loose and creative representations of innovation in popular culture and media' (Rampersad 2017). Employers, on the other hand, viewed innovation as a purposeful, systematic process geared towards clear commercial outcomes through the development, commercialisation and marketing of a new product or service (Rampersad 2017). These perceptual differences, Rampersad (2017) ultimately concludes, 'reflect the lack of preparedness of students for the workplace'. She concludes that it is only with the provision of greater opportunities for experiential learning in industry settings that students will develop innovation skills.

Ball and Exley (2010, p.163, emphasis in original) identify discourses of 'innovation' and 'enterprise' as playing a key role in processes 'of *reformation* of the objects and concepts of social welfare; of change in places or positions in which subjects can form; and of redistribution of expertise and power within policymaking and public service delivery'. They mapped some of the nodes in the policy networks which were an increasing influence on the social and educational policies of UK New Labour Governments (Ball & Exley 2010, pp.151-152). The discursive elements that flowed through these networks gave particular emphasis to 'the role of "social enterprise" and social entrepreneurs in the modernisation of public service provision and in providing solutions to intractable social problems' (Ball & Exley 2010, p.151). In this sense, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is innovation, and those individuals with the capacity to enact it, that are understood as having a unique ability to modernise public service provision, solve pressing social, economic and environmental problems, and to reimagine government itself.

### Enterprise

Of the three key terms of interest here, 'enterprise' has the most varied uses and interpretations. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2016), 'enterprise' has four distinct meanings. It is a noun that describes 'a project or undertaking, especially a bold or complex one'; the capacity of individuals or groups to demonstrate initiative and resourcefulness; a business or company; and entrepreneurial economic activity (Oxford English Dictionary 2016).

It is a capacity for initiative, resourcefulness and innovation, and the development of business acumen, that programs like Geelong's Upstart Entrepreneurial Challenge seek to establish in young people. In the annual Upstart Challenge, which began in 2012 and is open to secondary school

students, the young participants receive the support of local business mentors to develop and ‘pitch’ their startup business ideas<sup>5</sup> (Upstart 2016a; Upstart 2016b, p.3). In fact, Upstart Challenge is just one of a range of entrepreneurial education programs, targeted at both primary school and secondary school students, that have been established in recent years in Australia. These programs aim to usher in a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders, equipped with the skills and attributes that they will need to survive in the labour markets of the future, and with a mindset to address pressing social problems (Ferrier 2016; Upstart 2016b, p.3). It is the demonstration of exceptional enterprise, often in the development of socially-useful goods and services, that one of the country’s most prestigious public awards, the Australian of the Year, and its counterpart, the Young Australian of the Year, seeks to recognise and applaud. An innovative business idea applied to a charitable and socially just cause, Orange Sky Laundry was the brainchild of Nic Marchesi and Lucas Patchett, for which they were awarded the 2016 Young Australians of the Year:

Best mates, Nic Marchesi and Lucas Patchett, built a free mobile laundry in their old van to help the homeless. Orange Sky Laundry began in September 2014 and since then, the world first idea has expanded to five vans in Brisbane, Melbourne, South East Victoria, Sydney and the Gold Coast. (National Australia Day Council 2016)

The recognition of Nic and Lucas’ venture underscores Ball and Exley’s (2010, p.151) observation that ‘social enterprise’ is increasingly prized for its ability to address intractable social problems such as homelessness. The operation of a social enterprise that provides work to those experiencing homelessness and social marginalisation is the focus of Jessica Gerrard’s (2017) ethnographic research among the vendors of street press publications such as *The Big Issue*. Gerrard (2017, p.3) investigates the meaning and experience of enterprise among those excluded from mainstream employment and education, and she seeks to challenge the ‘familiar popular narratives of failure and stigma’ that attach to lives on the margins, highlighting that ‘those who are unemployed and seemingly “unproductive” are in fact highly productive’. ‘Homeless street press sellers’, Gerrard (2017, p.3) explains, ‘engage in a range of enterprising activities in their attempt to feel and be productive and to manage the bleak material reality of poverty and homelessness within wealthy nations and cities’.

The cultural cachet that attaches to youth enterprise is, according to youth studies researchers Kelly (2006, 2013) and MacDonald and Coffield (1991), the artefact of a neoliberal governmentality which understands one of its key tasks as the production of enterprising subjects. Kelly (2013) argues that the ‘self as enterprise’ is an ethical imperative that has particular salience in the context of globalised, precarious labour markets. Neoliberal governmentalities and capitalism require all (would be) labour market participants to imagine themselves as active, self-creating, economically-rational individuals, and to carry the responsibilities for the consequences of their differing abilities to be ‘enterprising’ (Kelly 2006, p.24). Kelly, Campbell and Harrison (2015) consider the ways in which social enterprise-based Transitional Labour Market Programmes targeted at unemployed youth operate as neoliberal ‘technologies of the self’. Such programmes ‘aim not for structural labour-market change, but to transform persons: to educate and re-make marginalised young people in ways that promise to

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<sup>5</sup> The winners of the 2017 Upstart Challenge were Scarlett Moroney and Ella Johns, Year 7 and 8 students at Sacred Heart College Geelong, with their concept ‘Flo’, a positive mindset and mental health app ‘that they are planning to roll out to schools’, the *Geelong Business News* (2017b) reports.

equip them with the behaviours and dispositions that can secure less parlous labour-market participation' (Kelly, Campbell & Harrison 2015, p.560).

In their book *Risky Business?: Youth and the Enterprise Culture* (1991), MacDonald and Coffield consider the attempts by the Conservative Thatcher Government in Britain in the late 1980s to create an 'enterprise culture' as an ideological project targeted particularly at young people. The location of their research was the county of Cleveland in England's North-East. MacDonald and Coffield describe the penchant for 'enterprise' among political elites at the time:

When social historians come to assess Britain in the 1980s, they are likely to emphasize this key word. It has come to stand for a collection of political, economic and social values and, perhaps, more than any other term it summarizes the *zeitgeist* created by the Conservative Government during the last decade. (MacDonald & Coffield 1991, pp.18-19, emphasis in original)

MacDonald and Coffield write that as the area rapidly transformed from an industrial powerhouse to an unemployment 'blackspot' in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, there flourished in Cleveland a plethora of agencies, schemes and professionals whose task was 'to rejuvenate the local economy through enterprise' (MacDonald & Coffield 1991, p.15). MacDonald and Coffield (1991, p.81) sought to understand the activities and experiences of young people across three main types of enterprise projects: enterprise as self-employment in small business, enterprise as co-operative work, and enterprise as community development projects. However, as they engaged with young entrepreneurs and the various agencies and schemes for enterprise training and support, they discovered that 'enterprise', in practice, was predominantly of the first type, concerned with the establishment of commercial, for-profit businesses (MacDonald & Coffield 1991, pp.81-82).

Bailey (2013, p.817) observes the extension of the enterprise form throughout society – 'there has been the extension, in some ways generalisation, of the enterprise form throughout society, from enterprising organisations, policies and practices, to enterprising subjects with entrepreneurial dispositions and compartments' – a process bound up with the shift identified by Ball and Exley (2010), among others, towards networked modes of governance. In making this critique, Bailey follows in the footsteps of Foucault, who suggested that the 'multiplication of the "enterprise" form within the social body' was one of the key aims of a neoliberal art of government:

It is not a matter of constructing a social fabric in which the individual would be in direct contact with nature, but of constructing a social fabric in which the basic units would have the form of the enterprise ... In other words, what is involved is the generalization of forms of 'enterprise' by diffusing and multiplying them as much as possible ... I think this multiplication of the 'enterprise' form within the social body is what is at stake in neo-liberal policy. It is a matter of making the market, competition, and so the enterprise, the formative power of society. (Foucault 2007, cited in Bailey 2013, p.817)

In the context of the 'privatisation' of the policy process and the shift to networked modes of governance, the 'social enterprise', and the enterprising individuals that comprise it, emerge as privileged agents of educational and social reform. Bailey (2013, p.824) suggests that, 'rather than disadvantage being the problem and responsibility of the state, responsibility shifts to the enterprising capacities of individual agents in civil society and, ultimately, to the individual subject'.

## Critical thinking, capabilities and creativity

Proliferating in parallel with ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’, and sharing many of the same concerns, are a range of synonyms and related concepts, which include, most prominently, ‘critical thinking’ and ‘creativity’, as well as ‘capabilities’, ‘collaboration’, ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills’, and ‘lifelong learning’ (Williams, Gannon & Sawyer 2013; Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] 2008; FYA 2016a). The character of this nomenclature suggests that there are fundamentally new challenges and concerns inherent in young people’s education and labour market pathways, which often necessitate a break with the conceptual and discursive categories of the past. For example, what is to distinguish ‘collaboration’ from its predecessor, ‘teamwork’? It appears that ‘collaboration’, unlike ‘teamwork’, has a particular affinity with the flexibility demanded in a ‘portfolio career’, in future working lives characterised by ‘many jobs, with many employers, often at the same time’ (FYA 2015a, p.15).

In recent years there has been increasing consensus among education policy stakeholders that it is through a greater focus on the development of learner ‘capabilities’, that young Australians will be supported to become ‘successful learners’, ‘confident and creative individuals’, and ‘active and informed citizens’ (MCEETYA 2008, p.7). With the 2008 publication of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, the development of these attributes and capabilities was enshrined as a key educational goal for young people (MCEETYA 2008). The ‘general capabilities’ – encompassing literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology capability, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability, ethical understanding, and intercultural understanding – are now recognised as a key dimension of the Australian Curriculum, underpinning and complementing curriculum content in each learning area (Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2016a). In a report for Melbourne-based education policy think tank the Mitchell Institute, Torii and O’Connell (2017, p.3) understand the concept of ‘capabilities’ as broadly commensurate with non-cognitive skills, enterprise skills, and 21st Century skills, suggesting capabilities ‘can bridge the academic and vocational divide’. ‘There is a growing evidence base for the power of capabilities’, the authors argue, with employers increasingly seeking them in young people, and they are the essential skills and dispositions that young people will need if they are to thrive in the ‘complex education and employment settings’ of the future (Torii & O’Connell 2017, p.3).

It is increasingly claimed that complex problem solving, critical thinking and creativity are becoming the most significant and in-demand skills and capabilities, in the context of an impending Fourth Industrial Revolution in which ‘developments in genetics, artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, 3D printing and biotechnology, to name just a few, are all building on and amplifying one another’ (World Economic Forum [WEF] 2016, pp. v-23). At the same time, we cannot, apparently, be too confident of the immunity of these key skills to the effects of technological disruption. The WEF (2016, p.20) reports that, ‘on average, by 2020, more than a third of the desired core skill sets of most occupations will be comprised of skills that are not yet considered crucial to the job today’.

The capacity for creativity, according to one of its foremost advocates Richard Florida (2014, p.7), resides within each and every individual. However, with the tendency towards organisational conformity and regimentation that was a feature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial model of productivity, the creative potential of human beings in the workplace has often been stifled (Florida 2014, pp.16-17). Creativity is not synonymous with intelligence, Florida is careful to point out, and he highlights Preti and Miotto’s observation that ‘many studies recognise creativity as cognitive ability separate

from other mental functions and particularly independent from the complex of abilities grouped under the word “intelligence” (Preti & Miotto 1997, cited in Florida 2014, p.18). The subversive potential of creativity lies in its ability to disrupt ‘existing patterns of thought and life’ (Florida 2014, p.19).<sup>6</sup> And yet, it appears that opportunities to exercise creativity are often sorely lacking in current education approaches and curricula. Education reform advocate and author Sir Ken Robinson’s (2006) insight that schools are ‘educating people out of their creative capacities’<sup>7</sup> has become the oft-repeated refrain of education practitioners and commentators, echoed for example in an article for *The Guardian* by Ewing and Saunders:

When politicians talk about equipping young Australians to succeed in the 21st century economy, they use buzzwords such as ‘creativity’, ‘collaboration’ and ‘imagination’. Yet our education system often seems to push creativity out of the curriculum, increasing the technical emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and focusing on stressful, high-stakes testing of young students. (Ewing & Saunders 2016)

While there is a purported crisis of creativity in education institutions, there are increasing efforts to quantify the creative industries’ share of Australian jobs and economic output, a share which a number of commentators suggest is growing (Creative Geelong Inc. & Geelong Region Local Learning & Employment Network 2017; Clun 2017). One such commentator is Queensland University of Technology Distinguished Professor Stuart Cunningham (cited in a recent report for *The Age* by Clun [2017]), who emphasises the appeal of creative labour, and its ability to offer ‘food for the soul as well as food for the table’. ‘The social level of meaningfulness, plus high growth, plus labour intensity’, Cunningham continues, means the creative industry sector ‘should be taken much more seriously by decision makers and economic planners’ (Clun 2017). In his criticisms of the creative industries policy vogue, Ross (2008, p.32) asserts that it is no surprise that ‘creatives’, as creative industry workers are now commonly labelled, are upheld as ‘paradigms of entrepreneurial selfhood’. Those making a secure living from culture and creativity have typically belonged to the commercial industries of broadcasting, recording and publishing, or to the design and academic professions, and have been the beneficiaries of ‘fair labor at union rates and conditions’ (Ross 2009, p.21). The noncommercial arts, on the other hand, ‘have long been a domain of insecurity, underpayment, and disposability’ (Ross 2009, p.21). Much of the job growth in the creative industries in recent decades has been in these kinds of nonstandard, non-unionised, flexible forms of work. Indeed, ‘the entrepreneurial paradigm touted by the policymakers defiantly points away from the fair standards commonly associated with a union job’ (Ross 2009, p.21). In this sense, ‘creatives’ are upheld as paradigms of entrepreneurial selfhood because they represent the contingent, self-enterprising labour force desired by the architects of labour discipline under neoliberalism.

### Key objectives of this project

Given the concerns that I have outlined to this point, this project adopts a genealogical approach in order to explore the following research question: ‘How is it that, at the start of the 21st century, we have come to understand the problem of youth unemployment largely in terms of employability skills, innovation and enterprise?’ In seeking to explore the possible answers to this genealogical question this thesis has four key research objectives:

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<sup>6</sup> Florida’s theorising of the vanguard of social and economic change, the ‘creative class’, and its role in the transformation of regional and urban economies will be examined in further detail in later chapters.

<sup>7</sup> At over 47 million views, Sir Ken Robinson’s ‘Do Schools Kill Creativity?’ is, at the time of writing, the most popular TED talk in the history of the series.

1. Identify and analyse how young people’s employability skills, innovation and enterprise are conceived in a variety of contemporary discourses in de-industrialising regions such as Geelong.
2. Identify and analyse the historical conditions – the material and discursive ‘conditions of possibility’ - that give rise to contemporary discourses of young people’s employability skills, innovation and enterprise in de-industrialising regions such as Geelong.
3. Identify and analyse the ways in which different understandings of employability skills, innovation and enterprise circulate, translate and shift between different contexts, different settings, and different texts.
4. Identify and analyse the class, gender, ethnic and aesthetic dimensions of representations of employability skills, innovation and enterprise in de-industrialising regions such as Geelong.

### Structure of this thesis

This thesis is structured in two parts. Part One, ‘Neoliberalism, capitalism, “Rust Belt” spaces and youth unemployment: A genealogical ethos’ establishes the contextual, theoretical and methodological foundations of the project, and Part Two, “‘Employability skills”, “innovation” and “enterprise”: problematic solutions to the problem of youth unemployment?” is where the detailed genealogical explorations of these key concepts take place.

Chapter 1, ‘What is Genealogy?’ outlines the methodological framework of genealogy that guides the collection and analysis of data in this project. Genealogy is a distinctive historiographic approach – one that Foucauldian scholar Mitchell Dean (1994) characterises as ‘critical and effective history’ – that eschews the possibility of ‘total history’ in favour of a concern with ‘Three Es’: episodes, examples and effectiveness (Vucetic 2011). The genealogical ethos that I will introduce here, with its focus on identifying and analysing key epochs, episodes, events and moments, informs my approach not only to the substantive ‘data’ chapters of Part Two, but also the histories of de-industrialisation, globalisation and ‘neoliberal’ capitalism that I will examine in Part One. At the close of Chapter 1, I will introduce the ‘situational map’, a methodological device developed by sociologist Adele Clarke (2005, 2015), which is a configuration that lays out all the major human, nonhuman, discursive, historical, symbolic, cultural, political and other elements in the research situation of concern, and provokes analyses of relations among them (Clarke 2015, p.100). In this project I have utilised the situational map as a device for mapping some of the key elements and emphases, as well as some of the absences, silences, and subjugated knowledges that relate to each of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’.

Chapter 2, ‘Globalisation, “neoliberal” capitalism and youth labour markets in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ is the first of two chapters that examine the social, economic, political, cultural and governmental ‘conditions of possibility’ that enable employability skills, innovation and enterprise to function as ‘truths’ in relation to the problem of youth unemployment. In this chapter I will explore the transition from a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism oriented towards principles of ‘social democratic’ redistribution, to the ‘neoliberal’ capitalism that has prevailed since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and consider what this and other developments portend for the constitution and regulation of youth labour markets in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Having established the ‘macro’-level background to the local-level developments taking place in the regional city of Geelong, in Chapter 3, ‘Geelong: a “Rust Belt” locale’, I will present an overview of some of the key ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’ that have been instrumental in forging Geelong as a ‘Rust Belt’ city. For much of the 20th century, Geelong was a booming regional

centre, boasting an array of industrial operations that included oil refining, aluminium smelting, car manufacturing and glass making, as well as a significant textile and clothing industry (Johnson 2009a, p.474). This strong industrial economic base afforded high rates of participation across the age ranges in a labour market that became more ethnically diverse with waves of migration, even as it remained gender segregated. In the post war period, dominant social narratives promised that employees of Geelong's major industries, such as the Ford Motor Company and International Harvester, could expect a 'job for life'. However, as I will explore further in Chapter 3, through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the impacts of national- and global-level forces, such as economic recession and industry restructuring policies, fell heavily on industrial towns and cities in Australia, as they did in many of the other industrialised democracies. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, entrepreneurialism, innovation and creativity are vested with the capacity to remake and reimagine 'Rust Belt' locales such as Geelong.

Chapters 4 through 7 comprise Part Two of the thesis. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 tell the historical story of the emergence of 'employability skills', 'innovation' and 'enterprise', each of which is shaped by the concerns of a particular historical moment. These key concepts, each at a particular point in time, have been understood as the 'solution' to the problem of youth unemployment; 'employability skills', from the mid-1980s to the late-1990s, 'innovation' from the late-1990s to the mid- to late-2000s, and 'enterprise', the mid-2000s to the present. However, it should be pointed out that, in reality, the movement from one key concept to the next is not necessarily linear and sequential, and there is considerable fluidity and overlap in these date ranges. Indeed, these discontinuities, ruptures, and continuities are key elements that both shape, and are highlighted by, genealogy as 'critical and effective history'.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are each orientated around a central 'figure', in the sense developed by Donna Haraway. A 'figure', Haraway (2008, p.4) suggests, is a 'material-semiotic node or knot in which diverse bodies and meanings co-shape one another'. In Chapter 4, 'The Emergence of Economic Rationalism and Employability Skills', the 'figure' of concern is a set of three reports: the Finn Review, Mayer Report and Carmichael Report. Released in the early 1990s, these three reports condense, at the national policy level, a variety of concerns emerging around that time about young people in the labour market. Chapter 5, 'Guggenheim Dreaming in a Climate of Innovation', takes as its 'figure' Geelong's bid (which ran from 1998 to 2003) to secure a local franchise of the global Guggenheim museum brand. As its advocates argued, the Guggenheim offered a potent symbol of 'innovation' as Geelong entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the desire to leave the legacies of 20<sup>th</sup> century industrialisation behind and remake the city. In Chapter 6, 'New Work Orders? The Foundation for Young Australians and Young People's Enterprise Skills', the 'figure' is *The New Work Order*, a series of research reports released by Melbourne-based youth advocacy organisation the Foundation for Young Australians, beginning in 2015. The future of work will be characterised by almost constant change and adaptation, the FYA contends, and through the publication of this report series, the FYA has sought to push its concept of 'enterprise skills' to the forefront of the education and training policy agenda.

Through Chapters 4, 5 and 6 there will be a focus on developments in Geelong, on tracing how imperatives and developments emerging in the international (EU, OECD, ILO) and national policy spheres cascade down and inform what plays out in a de-industrialising context, examining the ways in which specific understandings of employability skills, innovation and enterprise do or do not change as they are translated across different settings. So, for example, Chapter 6 considers how the Foundation for Young Australians' efforts, at the national policy level, to influence the discussion and



understanding of young people's enterprise reverberate at the local Geelong level, in the Geelong Region LLEN's 'gig economy' seminar series that began in 2017.

Chapter 7, '*GT Magazine* and the Figure of the Enterprising Young Person: The Gendered, Classed and Aesthetic Dimensions of Enterprise in a De-Industrialising City' addresses research objective number 4, allowing me to identify and analyse the class, gender, ethnic and aesthetic dimensions of representations of employability skills, innovation and enterprise in de-industrialising regions such as Geelong. In this chapter I will utilise techniques of content analysis and discourse analysis to examine the ways in which young people's enterprise is presented and packaged in *GT Magazine*, a weekly, large circulation magazine in Geelong. The analysis raises significant questions about the 'aesthetic' dimensions of the figure of the 'enterprising young person', and the ways in which this figure produces and reproduces classed, gendered and racialised understandings of young people, work and enterprise.

## Conclusion

In this thesis I will argue that, across the last 30-40 years in industrialised countries such as Australia, young people's engagement in education and training has been redefined narrowly around the need to develop their 'human capital'. Even as 'human capital' has been talked about in different ways at different times. For example, as 'employability skills' from the 1980s onwards, and more recently, as '21<sup>st</sup> century skills' or 'enterprise skills'. The genealogical ethos that I will articulate in the following chapter, and that I will put into practice in subsequent chapters, will allow me to analyse discourses of young people's 'employability skills', 'innovation' and 'enterprise' and to critique these individualising, 'human capital' discourses as problematic 'solutions' to problems of youth employment and unemployment. As I will explore further in later chapters, one of the key themes that emerges from these genealogical investigations is that the figure of youth that is found in these discourses is an abstraction: this figure is of no particular gender, from no particular class background or geographical place, and is not encumbered with a physical body. What this thesis argues is that bodies, gender, class and place continue to matter for how it is that youth studies should continue to work with, and through, the challenges and opportunities that structure young people's increasingly precarious engagements with education, training and work – in the present and the future.

## Part One

Neoliberalism, capitalism, 'Rust Belt' spaces and  
youth unemployment: A genealogical ethos

# Chapter One

## What is Genealogy?

### Introduction

Genealogy is a methodological approach most commonly associated with the work of French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault. Genealogy ‘at its best involves a practice of critique in the form of the historical problematisation of the present’, and is concerned with identifying and then analysing submerged problems and subjugated knowledges (Koopman 2013, p.2; Foucault 1980, pp.82-83). The work of Foucault, in particular his historical analyses of systems of rationality, discipline and subjectification, has informed the development of a distinctive methodological approach to the investigation of social ‘problems’. This chapter establishes some of the key features and concerns of the genealogical ethos that will shape the ways in which I tell the ‘histories’ of de-industrialisation, globalisation and ‘neoliberal’ capitalism, and of economic and spatial restructuring and transformation in the ‘Rust Belt’ city of Geelong, histories that are the focus of Chapters 2 and 3. The genealogical ethos that I will outline in this chapter - a chapter that is, in effect, my ‘methodology chapter’ - also informs my approach to the core ‘data’ chapters of Part Two of this thesis, which are concerned with illuminating the ‘conditions of possibility’ that enable ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ to function as ‘truths’ in relation to the problem of youth unemployment.

Foucault approached matters of methodology perhaps somewhat reluctantly, as some commentators have suggested (Megill 1985, cited in Kendall & Wickham 1999, p.vii), but certainly in ways that often depart significantly from more conventional approaches to the study of society and social issues. ‘My work takes place’, Foucault (1991, pp.73-74) once suggested:

Between unfinished abutments and anticipatory strings of dots. I like to open up a space of research, try it out, and then if it doesn’t work, try again somewhere else...My books aren’t treatises in philosophy or studies of history: at most, they are philosophical fragments put to work in a historical field of problems.

The task of defining genealogy’s key functions and features is complicated by the knowledge that Foucault was something of an anti-foundationalist, who in fact described his research tools as ‘non-defined method’ or ‘anti-science’, and frequently insisted that he only wrote *about* methodology, never *a* methodology (Vucetic 2011, p.1298; Garland 2014, p.366). In developing his genealogical method, Foucault sought ‘not a codification of distinctive techniques of inquiry, but an attempt to open the intellectual and political space for resistance to the dominant regimes of truth and the emancipation of marginalised forms of knowledge’ (Vucetic 2011, p.1298). When considering how his methods of investigation might be applied by others, Foucault suggested the metaphor of the toolbox: ‘I would like my books to be a kind of toolbox that people can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they wish in their own area’ (Foucault 1974, cited in Vucetic 2011, p.1299). Vucetic (2011, pp.1299-1300) emphasises that:

If anything unifies this toolbox it is the concept of discourse – an anonymous collective consciousness within the human language through which meaning is given to subjects and objects. In turn, virtually all Foucauldian research tools embody the idea that history is the recovery of discourses and discursive contexts.

Foucault offers some of his most succinct thoughts on what ‘discourse’ is, and what it does, in his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, originally published in 1969. He writes:

Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this ‘more’ that we must reveal and describe. (Foucault 2002, p.54, emphases in original)

Stephen Ball (2015, p.307) suggests that Foucault was interested ‘both in the ways in which discourses are constructed and how they change, but also how they shape everyday existence, that is, in part at least, how they “form the objects of which they speak”’ (Foucault 1974 cited in Ball 2015, p.307). Ball (2015, p.311) acknowledges that, although Foucault uses the term discourse in different ways in his work, ‘most pertinently he was concerned to address the structures and rules that constitute a discourse rather than the texts and utterances produced within it’. In this sense, discourse ‘is not present in the object’ but it “enables it to appear”. Discourse ‘is the conditions under which certain statements are considered to be the truth’ (Ball 2015, p.311).

Foucault’s ‘anti-methodology’ stance requires that genealogists seek out methods and tools that are most pertinent to the particular problem and context under study, and that enable them to conduct ‘critical and effective’ histories of the present (Dean 1994). My decision to adopt a genealogical approach to the investigation of my research questions has been informed by a desire to interrogate the multiple, diverse, non-linear trajectories that comprise the ‘history of the present’, where the ‘present’ signifies an early 21<sup>st</sup> century period in which the problem of youth unemployment is understood largely in terms of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’. In this thesis I utilise genealogy as a critical, problematising approach that allows me to identify and analyse the key historical ‘epochs’, ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’, as well as some of the absences, silences and ‘subjugated knowledges’, that pertain to discourses of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’. The work of bringing these absences, silences and subjugated knowledges to light serves to illustrate that problems of youth employment and unemployment could be ‘thought differently’. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are pervasive assumptions that the responsibility for managing the problem of unemployment should rest primarily with the individual young person, and that the purposes of education and training should be oriented toward the objective of developing individuals’ ‘human capital’. I want to suggest that the value of a genealogical approach, where it is applied to the investigation of complex social problems such as youth employment and unemployment, is its ability to illuminate the complex and varied ‘conditions of possibility’ that enabled the problem to be understood in these particular ways, and in doing so, to challenge the idea that the emergence of this state of affairs was ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’.

Foucauldian scholar Mitchell Dean characterises the practice of genealogy as ‘critical and effective history’, and this chapter will begin by considering how Dean distinguishes the particular epistemological orientation of this approach from those of the predominant historiographic approaches within sociology and social theory. Following this, I will review the roles of archaeology and genealogy in the Foucauldian methodological ‘toolbox’. Although there is some debate over the relationship of genealogy to its forerunner, Foucault ultimately understood both approaches as having utility in the work of bringing subjugated knowledges to light. At this point in the chapter, I will move to define some key features and concerns of a genealogical approach. I will examine the ‘Three E’ model of genealogy and its utility as a framework that assists me to identify and analyse the range of discursive and non-discursive elements that are pertinent to my investigation. Next, I will consider

how Foucauldian historical methods have been adapted and applied in the field of policy analysis, in order to provide an illustration of genealogical methods ‘in action’ within a particular field of inquiry. Toward the conclusion of the chapter, I will focus more practically on the ‘doing’ of a genealogy of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’. I will describe the key methods, tools and devices forming the methodological ‘toolbox’ with which I have collected and analysed ‘data’. The three elements that I focus on here include the selection of an ‘archive’, content analysis and critical discourse analysis, and a device known as a ‘situational map’ (Clarke 2005, 2015) that assists in the analysis of historical discourses.

### The ‘history of the present’ as a *critical* and *effective* history

Genealogy, as a method of examining the ‘history of the present’, employs the ‘use of historical resources to reflect upon the contingency, singularity, interconnections, and potentialities of the diverse trajectories of those elements which compose present social arrangements and experience’ (Dean 1994, p.21). Mitchell Dean situates genealogy in the tradition of ‘critical and effective history’, an approach he suggests differs markedly from the predominant historiographic approaches within sociology and social theory. By way of illustrating this contrast, he offers a sketch of three forms of intellectual practice, and the epistemological implications of each (Dean 1994, pp. 3-4). The first intellectual practice Dean identifies is a ‘progressivist theory’, which, as he explains:

Proposes a model of social progress through the teleology of reason, technology, production, and so on. This is the model that might be called ‘high modernism’, and is exemplified by the narratives of the Enlightenment, by the nineteenth century positivism of Comte...it is a form of theory that seeks to adopt the prestige of the natural sciences, and often gives its statements the form of general causal explanations which have a law-like character. (Dean 1994, p.3)

The second intellectual practice identified by Dean, ‘critical theory’, offers a critique of these modernist narratives and the ‘one-sided, pathological, advance of technocratic or instrumental reason they celebrate, in order to offer an alternative, higher version of rationality’ (Dean 1994, p.3). Here, narratives of progress are replaced with ‘narratives of reconciliation of the subject with itself, with nature, with the form of its own reason’ (Dean 1994, p.3). The third and final approach highlighted by Dean is a ‘problematizing’ one, and it seeks the disturbance of narratives of both progress and reconciliation; it does not seek to prescribe the meaning of history (Dean 1994, p.4). Such an approach aims to unsettle the ‘taken-for-granted components of our reality and the “official” accounts of how they came to be the way they are’ (Dean 1994, p.4). Yet, as Dean observes, this form of critical history is quite a different practice from what is called critical theory; it ‘refuses to submit the critical impulse to both high and critical modernist narratives’. In so doing, ‘it becomes what Foucault, following Nietzsche, called an “effective history”, and sets itself against what might be called the colonisation of historical knowledge by these synthetic philosophies of history’ (Dean 1994, p.4). He ventures that this form of intellectual practice can be considered an exercise in postmodernity, insofar as “postmodernism” is defined as the restive problematisation of the given’ (Dean 1994, p.4). It is in this problematising approach that the practice of historiography is both ‘critical’ and ‘effective’, and therefore capable of illuminating the ‘history of the present’.

It was at the beginning of *Discipline and Punish*, his renowned study of punitive practice, that Foucault coined the phrase ‘history of the present’ to characterise his particular approach. Here, he poses the question of why write such a history: ‘Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing a history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing a history of the present’ (Foucault 1979, p.31). These remarks reveal something of the essence of Foucault’s

historical approach, as one that seeks to challenge the tendencies towards both presentism and teleological notions of social progress, in which there is an assumed inevitability or superiority of modern social objects, institutions and practices. As Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.4) highlight, ‘to use history in the Foucauldian manner is to use it to help us see that the present is just as strange as the past, not to help us see that a sensible or desirable present has emerged...or might emerge’.

### Archaeology and genealogy in the Foucauldian methodological ‘toolbox’

Within the Foucauldian methodological ‘toolbox’, archaeology and genealogy are both historical methods with a focus on the analysis of discourse. There is some ambiguity, however, surrounding how Foucault conceived of the relation between archaeology and genealogy. Garland (2014, p.371) argues that Foucault understood genealogy as the successor to archaeology, observing that the mid-1970s marked his turn to styling his historical methods of critique as ‘genealogical’ rather than ‘archaeological’. Dean (1994, pp.33-35) offers a different perspective, arguing that archaeology and genealogy are positioned in a relation of complementarity, and he proposes that the ‘history of the present’ is an enterprise that ultimately draws on both approaches. In a 1976 lecture, Foucault develops some of his thoughts on archaeology, genealogy, and their relation to subjugated knowledges. He suggests that subjugated knowledges can be of two kinds:

On the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation... subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism – which obviously draws upon scholarship – has been able to reveal. (Foucault 1980, pp.81-82)

On the other hand, those local, popular, naive knowledges ‘that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated’ also represent subjugated knowledges (Foucault 1980, p.82). What emerges out of this concern with subjugated knowledges, Foucault continues, ‘is something one might call a genealogy’:

Or rather a multiplicity of genealogical researches, a painstaking rediscovery of struggles together with the rude memory of their conflicts. And these genealogies, that are the combined product of an erudite knowledge and a popular knowledge, were not possible and could not even have been attempted except on one condition, namely that the tyranny of globalising discourses with their hierarchy and all their privileges of a theoretical avant-garde was eliminated. (Foucault 1980, p.83)

However, archaeological methods also have a place here, for as Foucault later comments:

If we were to characterise it in two terms, then ‘archaeology’ would be the appropriate methodology of this analysis of local discursivities, and ‘genealogy’ would be the tactics whereby, on the basis of the descriptions of these local discursivities, the subjected knowledges which were thus released would be brought into play. (Foucault 1980, p.85)

The distinction between archaeology and genealogy, according to Kendall and Wickham (1999), turns, in large part, on their different approaches to discourse. Archaeologies provide a ‘snapshot’ or a ‘slice’ through the discourse. Whereas genealogy is concerned with the ‘processual aspects of the web of discourse – its ongoing character’ (Kendall & Wickham 1999, pp.30-31). Despite the appearance of complementarity, Dean (1994, p. 34) asserts that genealogy ‘is clearly dominant’. As he explains, ‘if,

from the perspective of the production of a knowledge of discursive formations, archaeology remains the indispensable methodology, from the practical, polemical and strategic perspective of the use of historical analysis, genealogy holds the key' (Dean 1994, pp.33-34). He proposes the 'history of the present' as an overarching approach that is profoundly inspired by Foucauldian methods of archaeology and genealogy, combining elements of both approaches (Dean 1994, p.35). According to Dean, one of the defining characteristics of genealogy is the fact that it is conducted in the light of some contemporary struggle or debate:

A history of the present is concerned with that which is taken-for-granted, assumed to be given, or natural within contemporary social existence, a givenness or naturalness questioned in the course of contemporary struggles. This is certainly the case for madness, incarceration and imprisonment, sexuality, the hegemony of medicine, and so on. This does not mean these 'liberation struggles' give rise to genealogy or that it is conducted on behalf of those affected by some system of domination. It means simply that *genealogy is conducted in the presence of certain issues problematised by contemporary social struggles*. (Dean 1994, p.35, emphasis added)

Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.29) similarly observe that in developing his genealogical approach, Foucault sought to adapt and build on many of the essential ingredients of archaeology, adding to these 'a new concern with the analysis of power'. In fact, Foucault understood the analysis of power as central to the practice of critique. In his 1978 lecture, *What is Critique?*, Foucault (2007, pp.42-43) suggests that the 'critical attitude' emerged in response to the 'governmentalisation' of the societies of Western Europe in a particular historical period: 'from the 15<sup>th</sup> century on and before the Reformation, one can say that there was a veritable explosion of the art of governing men'. In this context, 'critique' is 'the art of not being governed quite so much':

If governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjugated in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself [*sic*] the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth (Foucault 2007, p.47).

In his 1982 essay *The Subject and Power*, Foucault develops his thoughts on the concept of 'power'. The exercise of power, he suggests, is not necessarily that of acting immediately or directly on another person or group, 'instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future' (Foucault 1982, p.789). If we understand the concept of 'government' in the sense that Foucault advocates, where 'to govern' is to structure the possible field of action of others, it is possible to recognise that 'power' is tied in intimate relation to the operations of 'conduct' and 'government':

The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome. Basically power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government. (Foucault 1982, pp.789-790)

While power relations are an unavoidable feature of society – 'power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus,' Foucault (1982, p.791) comments, '...a society without power relations can only be an abstraction' – this fact does not foreclose the possibility of critique and resistance. Indeed, for Foucault (1982, pp.791-792), this task is a political necessity: 'the analysis, elaboration, and bringing

into question of power relations’, including, crucially, an examination of their historical conditions and formation, is not only the remit of the philosopher and historian but ‘is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence’.

### Some key features of a genealogical approach

Despite the fact that Foucault was disinclined to think of ‘genealogy’ as a rigid, ‘rule-bound’ methodological framework in its own right - given the extent and variety of its applications to the study of social problems and other phenomena - it is nonetheless possible to identify some key concerns or emphases of this methodological approach. I want to suggest that there are typically at least four key activities involved in the ‘doing’ of genealogy, and these include: 1) ask ‘how’ rather than ‘why’ questions; 2) map the apparatus (‘dispositif’); 3) select an ‘archive’ of texts for investigation; and 4) look for contingencies instead of causes. In identifying these four key activities, my thinking has been shaped by the work of Kendall and Wickham (2004, p.132) in identifying some of the key features of a genealogical approach. In what follows I will explore each of these key tasks in some detail (with the exception of the matter of selecting an ‘archive’, which will be addressed in a later section of this chapter). This account of some of the key features of a genealogical approach is not intended to be exhaustive; it is a brief account that introduces ideas and concepts that will be further developed in later sections of this chapter.

#### Ask ‘how’ rather than ‘why’ questions

The framing of a genealogical research question is in terms of a ‘how’ rather than a ‘why’ question. Foucault asks, ‘How did such-and-such come to exist?’, or ‘How did such-and-such come to have such an important place in our society?’ (Kendall & Wickham 2004, p.132). Kendall and Wickham (2004, p.132) observe that ‘buried within such an approach is a commitment to constructionism...and a mistrust of anthropological universals’. The second point to be made here is that the Foucauldian method is a ‘problem-based’ rather than a ‘period-based’ approach to history; it involves the selection of a *problem* rather than an historical period for investigation (Kendall & Wickham 1999, pp.22-23). Rather than investigating every element of a specified time period, it is the task of the genealogical researcher to ‘follow your problem back as far as necessary’ (Kendall & Wickham 2004, p.132). This research project takes as its ‘problem’ that of youth unemployment, and seeks to examine the conditions, both historical and contemporary, of its emergence as a quite particular social issue, understood in quite particular, sometimes different, sometimes related, ways. This problem has occupied the attention of governments, business leaders, young people themselves, and a variety of other stakeholders in different, though connected, contexts during the last four decades in Geelong, in Victoria, in Australia, and elsewhere in the liberal democracies of the OECD and EU. So, the ‘how’ question that drives this investigation is: ‘how is it that, at the start of the 21st century, we have come to understand the problem of youth unemployment largely in terms of employability skills, innovation and enterprise?’

#### Mapping the apparatus (‘dispositif’)

Garland (2014, p.379) contends that a genealogy begins with a critical distancing from the present and an analytical description of the *dispositif* within which the object of study is constructed and experienced in the present. Though the term *dispositif* is often translated as ‘apparatus’, Garland suggests that it is actually understood by Foucault in a far more expansive sense; its meaning might better be captured by terms such as ‘power-knowledge regime’ or a ‘regulatory ensemble’ (Garland 2014, p.378). In a 1977 interview with Foucault, Alain Grosrichard sought to understand the methodological significance of the ‘apparatus’ to Foucault: ‘You talk about an “apparatus of sexuality”. What is the meaning or the methodological function for you of this term, *apparatus*



(*dispositif*)?' (Foucault et al. 1980, p.194). In reply Foucault suggests there are three key emphases or functions of the 'apparatus':

What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements.

Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements. Thus, a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely.

Thirdly, I understand by the term 'apparatus' a sort of – shall we say – formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent need*. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function. This may have been, for example, the assimilation of a floating population found to be burdensome for an essentially mercantilist economy: there was a strategic imperative acting here as the matrix for an apparatus which gradually undertook the control or subjection of madness, mental illness and neurosis. (Foucault et al. 1980, pp.194-195, emphasis in original)

In his 2009 essay, *What is an Apparatus?*, Giorgio Agamben (2009, p.1) suggests that 'apparatus...is a decisive technical term in the strategy of Foucault's thought'. In this essay, Agamben subjects the term 'apparatus' to genealogical analysis. In order to explore the interlinked meanings of 'apparatus' ('dispositif' in French), 'positivity', and 'oikonomia', Agamben traces the etymological significance and evolution of these key terms in and through the philosophical works of Hegel, Hyppolite, and Foucault, as well as early theological texts. 'I shall call an apparatus', Agamben (2009, p.14) writes, 'literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings'. Bringing his genealogical analysis into the contemporary period, Agamben (2009, p.15) suggests that 'the extreme phase of capitalist development in which we live' features 'a massive accumulation and proliferation of apparatuses...today there is not even a single instant in which the life of individuals is not modeled, contaminated, or controlled by some apparatus'. This array of apparatuses includes not only:

Prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and – why not – language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses. (Agamben 2009, p.14)

Apparatuses are, by their very nature, concerned with subjectification, in other words, the production of subjects: 'every apparatus implies a process of subjectification, without which it cannot function as an apparatus of governance, but is rather reduced to a mere exercise of violence' (Agamben 2009, p.19). Foucault's genealogies, Agamben (2009, pp.19-20) continues, have brought to light the function of apparatuses in a disciplinary society as aiming to 'create – through a series of practices,

discourses, and bodies of knowledge – docile, yet free, bodies that assume their identity and their “freedom” as subjects in the very process of their desubjectification’. The concepts of ‘apparatus’, ‘positivity’ and the theological concept of ‘oikonomia’, in similar though slightly different ways, describe a set of practices, discourses, and bodies of knowledge that are concerned with governing human beings and seeking to ‘guide them toward the good’ (Agamben 2009, p.13).

In a methodological sense, the apparatus acts as a conceptual, material and discursive device for mapping the heterogeneous elements that are implicated in a particular social object/problem/practice, and the ‘system of relations’ by which they are connected. This project explores an apparatus which has as its ‘dominant strategic function’ the problem of youth unemployment; an issue made particularly significant and urgent in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a time in which the economic crises of the new millennium and their aftershocks, such as those associated with the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis, are occurring in tandem with more chronic, longer-range dynamics, such as the slow wind-down of the long boom of 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism. An important task of this project is to explore and describe the character of this apparatus, its constituent elements, the shifting relationships between these elements, and the strategic focus and functioning of these elements and relationships. The heterogeneous elements of this apparatus are implicated in the production, circulation and translation of the concepts of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’, and the various synonyms and concepts with which they are related (for example, ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills’, or skills in ‘creativity’ and ‘critical thinking’) when they are articulated to and with the ‘problem’ of youth unemployment. The apparatus concerned with the problem of youth unemployment can be understood, following Foucault and Agamben, as a set of practices, discourses and bodies of knowledge that seek to govern and guide the conduct of young people in education, training and the labour market in particular ways. As Foucault noted, in a disciplinary society, apparatuses aim to create docile, yet free, bodies. Likewise, the apparatus associated with ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ involves the creation of particular subject positions. As I will explore further in later chapters, this apparatus is powerfully shaped by assumptions about the *type* of young person who is ideally positioned to acquire the kinds of ‘human capital’ that it is thought will provide them with a degree of ‘insurance’ against unemployment and underemployment, and that will allow them to navigate future working lives that, it is claimed, will be characterised by almost constant churn and change.

### Look for contingencies instead of causes

To look for contingencies is to suspend the inclination or desire to see developments in terms of causes and effects (Kendall & Wickham 1999, pp.5-6). ‘When we describe an historical event as contingent’, Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.5) explain, ‘what we mean is that the emergence of that event was not necessary, but was one possible result of a whole series of complex relations between other events’. To say that events are contingent is not to say, however, that a course of events is the product of pure chance. Rather, it is to acknowledge the role of unintended consequences, that is, of some apparently unrelated change or development, in shaping the history of the object under study (Kendall & Wickham 1999, p.6).

Another inclination that must be suspended is the concern to locate the ‘hidden’ meaning or logic of history (Kendall & Wickham 1999, pp.9-19). The desire to look for the ‘governing principle’ of a civilisation, epoch or society is one of the chief errors of an approach Foucault characterises as ‘total history’ (Foucault 1972, cited in Dean 1994, p.93). To eschew the total history and its teleological tendencies is to instead open up a space for considering ‘series, divisions, differences of temporality

and level, forms of continuity and mutation, particular types of transitions and events, possible relations and so on', and their role in shaping the 'history of the present' (Dean 1994, p.93). Kendall and Wickham (2004, p.133) liken Foucauldian genealogy to detective work, in that each necessitates working backwards from a known outcome. As the researcher digs for precursors to a particular modern practice, they are concerned with piecing together the 'sufficient conditions' for the emergence of this problem, issue or practice (Kendall & Wickham 2004, p.133). Foucault often referred to this type of work as uncovering the 'conditions of possibility' that enabled a knowledge or an historical event to come about (Kendall & Wickham 1999, p.37). By this he means the description of the various elements that had to be in place to allow something else to be possible (Kendall & Wickham 1999, p.37). Foucault's methods, it must finally be noted, 'involve the generation of surprising stories'; the researcher working in the genealogical space must allow for the element of surprise that comes with the discovery of unexpected findings (Kendall & Wickham 1999, p.22).

### The 'Three Es': episodes, examples, effectiveness

In addition to the key features of a genealogical approach discussed above, Vucetic's (2011) 'three E' definition of genealogy suggests that genealogies are driven by the identification of 'episodes', 'examples' and 'effectiveness'. Although Vucetic provides only a brief exposition of this model, I want to suggest that it has utility as a method of engaging with the archive. Indeed, during the earlier phases of this project this model provided a means, a framework, for assisting me to identify, contextualise and make sense of particular programmatic texts. The first 'E' in this model is Episodes. Whether they are termed 'episodes', or historical series, epochs, events, moments (or perhaps the more traditional 'cases', in the terminology of conventional social research approaches), the point is to 'provisionally' periodise, or parcel into discrete moments, the (admittedly partial) history of the object under study (Vucetic 2011, pp.1300-1301). Each episode is narrated through Examples, 'which are themselves reconstructed in a discourse analysis of a range of historical documents ranging from diaries left behind by marginal authors to programmatic or pioneering statements on how to maintain social order' (Vucetic 2011, p.1300). Vucetic (2011, p.1300) suggests that it is in *Discipline and Punish* that Foucault demonstrates an engagement with 'episodes' and 'examples' as methodological devices. Here, Foucault identified the 18<sup>th</sup> century debate between two discourses of punishment – 'disciplinary/corporal' versus 'reformist' – as a key episode in the development of the contemporary 'carceral' society (Vucetic 2011, p.1300). 'The famous example analysed within this episode,' Vucetic (2011, p.1300) continues, 'was Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon* – an essay which prescribed an efficient disciplinary penal regime'.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) analyses the development of Panopticism as a modern disciplinary mechanism. In a text published at the end of the seventeenth century that stipulated the measures to be taken when the plague appeared in a town, Foucault (1979, p.195) found an elaborate description of mechanisms for the confinement and surveillance of individuals and the quarantining of sickness and disorder. These mechanisms, Foucault (1979, pp.197-200) suggests, operated 'by means of an omnipresent and omniscient power', in order to divide, isolate, and 'brand' individuals as 'normal' or 'abnormal'. The Panopticon was an architectural mechanism of surveillance designed by social reformer Jeremy Bentham in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This structure was designed in such a way as to make power 'visible and unverifiable' – unverifiable because the subject of that surveillance was unable to discern whether he or she was or was not being watched at any particular moment (Foucault 1979, p.201). Foucault was interested in the Panopticon as a metaphor for the ways in which surveillance and discipline were administered in modern societies. From the regime of 'exceptional discipline' that attempted to halt the spread of death and disease, to the development of mechanisms

of ‘subtle coercion’ in the form of the panoptic arrangement: Foucault (1979, p.209) understands that these are both important ‘episodes’ in the ‘formation of what might be called in general the disciplinary society’.

Vucetic (2011, p.1301) suggests that the last of the three Es – Effectiveness – ‘is not as straightforward from the perspective of mainstream social science methodologies’. However, he offers a simple interpretation, suggesting that effective genealogies:

Are those that focus on a ‘problem’ – a social phenomenon that appears (seems, feels) normal or true (commonplace, natural, intuitive) and then turns it into a question, that is, it asks how it came about in the light of contingency and power. (Vucetic 2011, p.1301)

What makes Foucault’s historical analyses of European clinics, prisons, asylums and hospitals ‘effective’ is that ‘they each clearly demonstrated how and why some subjects and social items were brought about and not others, what became forgotten and with what consequences for the present’ (Vucetic 2011, p.1302). In many respects, Vucetic’s definition of ‘effectiveness’ echoes Dean’s sentiment that ‘genealogy is conducted in the presence of certain issues problematised by contemporary social struggles’ (Dean 1994, p.35). A genealogy is an effective history that, in the light of some contemporary struggle or debate, critiques a social ‘problem’ or practice otherwise thought to be normal, inevitable or natural, questioning and problematising this ‘givenness’ or ‘naturalness’. While the identification and analysis of Episodes, Examples and Effectiveness represents one possible way to structure a genealogical investigation, a range of other authors have developed and applied Foucauldian historical methods, in different ways, in the analysis of policy. In many cases, these archaeologies and genealogies of policy are driven by a concern to interrogate the processes through which particular social phenomena become defined as ‘problems’ that must therefore be ‘fixed’ through policy interventions. As I will demonstrate in the following section of this chapter, this body of work is of relevance to this project in both a methodological and substantive sense. It provides an illustration of Foucauldian historical methods ‘in action’ within a particular field of inquiry. Not only that, but genealogical analyses of education policy have made a substantive contribution to illuminating the ways in which young people are constructed as particular kinds of subjects in and through education policies and discourses.

### Problematising the representation of social ‘problems’: Foucauldian methods in the analysis of policy

‘Policy genealogy’ and ‘policy archaeology’ are among the various research approaches adapted from Foucauldian genealogical methods, and these approaches have had extensive application in analyses of educational policy. Gale (2001, p.384) asserts that, in the field of critical policy sociology, ‘policy historiography’, ‘policy genealogy’ and ‘policy archaeology’ form a suite of three overlapping historical lenses with which to ‘read’ and ‘write’ policy research. Beginning with policy historiography, Gale suggests that it:

Asks three broad questions: (1) what were the ‘public issues’ and ‘private troubles’ within a particular policy domain during some previous period and how were they addressed?; (2) what are they now?; and (3) what is the nature of the change from the first to the second? (Gale 2001, p.385)

In contrast, policy genealogy asks:

(1) how policies change over time, but it also seeks to determine (2) how the rationality and consensus of policy production might be problematised and (3) how temporary alliances are formed and reformed around conflicting interests in the policy production process. (Gale 2001, pp.389-390).

And finally, Gale refers to the work of Scheurich (1994) in developing and describing 'policy archaeology' as a distinctive historical method. Scheurich (1994) distinguishes policy archaeology from traditional approaches to the analysis of policy. These traditional approaches are underpinned by positivist and post-positivist epistemologies, and thus 'see nothing unnatural or socially constructed about what comes to be labelled or identified as a social problem' (Scheurich 1994, p.298). Policy archaeology, in contrast, 'takes a radically different approach to policy studies in virtually all its aspects, including definitions of problems and problem groups, discussions of policies and policy alternatives, and presumptions about the function of policy studies within the larger social order' (Scheurich 1994, p.299). Scheurich argues that:

Policy archaeology studies the numerous, complex strands and traces of social problems prior to their naming as social problems. It examines the naming process, the process by which problems enter the gaze of the state and policy researchers. It critically probes why and how these strands and traces congeal (become visible) into what is thereafter labelled as a particular social problem. (Scheurich 1994, p.300)

Policy archaeologies also seek to map the grid of 'social regularities', the 'preconceptual glasses or frames through which human actions and categories, including social problems and policy solutions, become socially defined' (Scheurich 1994, p.306). A study by Williams, Gannon and Sawyer (2013), which is inspired by the genealogies of policy networks and educational policy developed by Stephen Ball and colleagues, has a similar focus to the genealogical investigations of my project. These authors investigate how the '21<sup>st</sup> century learner' is understood and conceptualised in educational policy discourses, and as they trace the various incarnations of this figure, their analysis moves historically but also geographically, through policy networks and discourses that are increasingly global in nature:

Our mapping exercise...suggests some of the connections between documents produced at various sites – government agencies, organisations, corporations and think tanks. These constitute the policy networks through which flow policy concepts and discourses of the '21<sup>st</sup> century learner', his/her desired skills, dispositions and capabilities. (Williams, Gannon & Sawyer 2013, p.795)

Williams, Gannon and Sawyer's analysis of these documents revealed a complexification and corporatisation of the skills and values embodied in this figure:

Certainly, we have seen a progression from the kinds of basic employment-related skills outlined in the 1989 *Hobart Declaration* (and that would also soon appear in the *Mayer Key Competencies*) to the skills and dispositions of a more fully 'entrepreneurialised' learner and citizen who takes greater responsibility for his/her own learning and his/her life, apparent in the 2008 *Melbourne Declaration*. (Williams, Gannon & Sawyer 2013, p.798)

As the authors highlight, 'the goal of schooling becomes the production of the ideal neoliberal subject' at the behest of industry-led agendas, geared to the development of the 'self-managing, entrepreneurial individual, lifelong learner and responsabilised citizen of the post-welfare state'

(Williams, Gannon & Sawyer 2013, p.799). However, the '21<sup>st</sup> century learner' is not simply or only a neoliberal construct. As Williams, Gannon and Sawyer (2013, p.799) suggest, these specifications sit somewhat incongruously alongside social democratic discourses and values that emphasise equity, social justice and collective responsibility.

In a similar way to the work of Scheurich, Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the problem represented to be?' approach (abbreviated to WPR approach) departs from conventional approaches to policy analysis and evaluation in its concern to reveal the assumptions and presuppositions that lie behind and shape selected policies. As Bacchi (2009, p.xi) argues:

Policies are problematising activities...policies 'claim' to 'fix' things; hence, by their nature they assume the existence of a 'problem' that needs 'fixing'. It follows that the ways in which issues are problematised – how they are thought about as 'problems' – are central to governing processes. In effect, we are governed through problematisations rather than through policies. Therefore, we need to direct our attention away from assumed 'problems' to the shape and character of problematisations.

In the WPR approach, 'problematisation' has a dual meaning: problematisation refers to the way(s) in which particular issues are conceived as 'problems', while also referring to the task of problematising (interrogating) the problematisations on offer in current policies (Bacchi 2009, p.30). The WPR approach has a distinctly genealogical flavour insofar as it offers scope to trace the movements of particular problem representations across space and time: 'it is useful to think of some of these ideas [particular representations of health/illness, crime/criminal justice, or other social issues, for example] as travelling ideas...or more precisely as travelling problem representations – whose journey needs to be tracked' (Bacchi 2009, p.xx). And there are a number of other ways in which the WPR approach is informed by Foucauldian historical methods and studies of governmentality in the Foucauldian tradition. The WPR approach seeks to identify and analyse the discursive and non-discursive practices that shape a particular problem representation. It brings to light the history of struggle and conflict in which some knowledges, or ways of understanding the problem, came to be institutionally sanctioned, while other knowledges were subjugated (Bacchi 2009, p.36). As Bacchi (2009, p.11, 36) indicates, these institutionally-sanctioned discourses are often sustained by non-discursive practices, such as official statistics, censuses and surveys, that allow specific problem representations to gain dominance. Foucault understood that what is being struggled over here, is, ultimately, the ability to define and designate what counts as 'true' and 'false':

Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault 1980, cited in Bacchi 2009, p.36)

Another key element of the WPR approach is the analysis of the implications and consequences that flow from these problem representations. For Bacchi (2009, pp.16-17), particular problem representations have flow-on material and discursive effects: they shape the ways in which it is possible to think and talk about a problem, they make certain subject positions possible and imply a particular portioning of responsibility for a problem, and crucially, they have lived effects, in the form of material impacts on bodies and lives.

In contrast with the various studies and approaches discussed in this section of the chapter, this research project is concerned with policy discussion as one constituent element of the apparatus that can be identified as emerging in relation to youth unemployment – and its differing attention to things such as young people’s employability skills, innovation and enterprise. Where the present study differs from the work of Gale, Scheurich, Bacchi and others, is that it is underpinned by a genealogical ethos that recognises that there are a multiplicity and variety of discourses that are implicated in the framing of young people’s employability skills, innovation and enterprise. In this sense, the project has identified and gathered a sample of texts (an ‘archive’) from a broad range of policy, media, scholarly and other sources.

### Developing a methodological ‘toolbox’ for doing a genealogy of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’

To briefly recap on the discussion to this point, Foucauldian historical methods do several things. They are a ‘problem-based’ rather than a ‘period-based’ approach to history. They differ from the predominant historiographic approaches within sociology/social theory (progressivist theory, critical theory) in that they reject ‘synthetic philosophies of history’ (Dean 1994, p.4) and teleological notions of social progress. And, finally, they analyse the ‘conditions of possibility’ that allow particular representations of the ‘problem’ to function as ‘truths’. In doing all of these things, Foucauldian historical methods represent a distinctive methodological approach to the investigation of social ‘problems’. So, this project is framed in terms of a ‘how’ rather than a ‘why’ question, looks for contingencies instead of causes, and while it may seek out programmatic texts in the archive, it is also concerned with uncovering subjugated knowledges that are ignored by, are not considered, or are of little interest to these programmatic texts.

Foucauldian historical methods have been conceptualised and operationalised variously in and through practices of: ‘critical and effective history’ (Dean 1994); the mapping of the ‘apparatus’ (Foucault et al. 1980; Agamben 2009); identifying and analysing ‘three Es’: episodes, examples and effectiveness (Vucetic 2011); and interrogating the premises that underpin particular problem representations (in the work of Bacchi and others). And this is a relatively brief and selective account of the wide variety of ways in which Foucauldian historical methods have been interpreted, developed and applied – there are many others that I have not surveyed here. There is not one singular approach that offers *the* definitive method for doing genealogy. Rather, each of these approaches has utility in shaping the genealogical ethos that drives this project. In keeping with Foucault’s suggestion that his researches be understood as ‘a kind of toolbox that people can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they wish in their own area’, the genealogical approach requires that the researcher seek out methods and tools that are most pertinent to the particular problem and context under study.

In previous sections of this chapter, I established the epistemological and theoretical foundations of the genealogical approach, and considered its application in the area of policy analysis, in order to provide an example of genealogical methods ‘in action’ within a particular field of inquiry. In this final section of the chapter I will focus more practically on some of the key methods, tools and devices that form the methodological ‘toolbox’ with which I have been able to collect and analyse ‘data’ in this project. The three elements that I focus on here include the selection of an ‘archive’, content analysis and critical discourse analysis, and a device known as a ‘situational map’ that assists in the analysis of historical discourses.

## Selection of an archive

According to Kendall and Wickham (2004, p.132), Foucault was relatively silent on the matter of the selection of his archive. However, it has been suggested that the selection of an archive for genealogical analysis is typically informed by the desire to identify and explore ‘programmatically texts’ or ‘paradigmatic cases’ (Kendall & Wickham 2004, p.132; Flyvbjerg 2001, pp.79-80).

‘Programmatic’ texts are ‘writings that try to impose a vision or spell out most clearly a new way of conceptualizing a problem’ (Kendall & Wickham 2004, p.132). Flyvbjerg (2001, p.80) argues that Foucault’s work, and in particular, his focus on European prisons and the ‘Panopticon’, demonstrates a concern with the identification of paradigmatic cases, that is, cases that highlight more general characteristics of the societies in question.

The ‘archive’ of documents that I have collected and analysed in this project is comprised of a variety of different types of sources across a variety of locations. In many cases I have sourced these various texts electronically, through the use of internet search engines and academic research databases, and in other cases I have conducted archival research among hard-copy historical documents and archived newspapers on microfilm. In order to identify and analyse some of the key ‘epochs’, ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’ in the stories of labour market change, de-industrialisation, globalisation and neoliberal capitalism, particularly as they apply to ‘Rust Belt’ places such as Geelong, in Chapters 2 and 3 my archive consists of key policies and policy discourses produced at the international, national, state and local government levels in the areas of economic policy, industry policy, and urban planning and regional development policy. In these chapters I also analyse a range of historical and contemporary documents and texts produced by non-government, media, business, and academic/research actors and organisations. In Chapter 3, the work of identifying and analysing some of the key ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’ in the history of the ‘Rust Belt’ city of Geelong required that I seek out special collections of historical documents, and archived editions of local newspaper, the *Geelong Advertiser*, held at the Geelong Heritage Centre and the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library at Deakin University.

In Chapter 4, my focus is on three ‘programmatically texts’ - the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports – the key policy documents setting the direction of reform of post-compulsory education and training in Australia in the 1990s. In this period, key documents such as *Australia Reconstructed* (Australian Council of Trade Unions & Trade Development Council 1987), and the 1983 *Statement of Accord by the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions Regarding Economic Policy* were also instrumental in establishing the climate in which ideas of ‘human capital’ and ‘employability skills’ became significant, and they also form part of my ‘archive’ in Chapter 4. While Geelong’s turn-of-the-21<sup>st</sup>-century bid to secure a Guggenheim museum is a key focus of my analyses in Chapter 5, this event is significant in the context of a wider ‘climate of innovation’. In order to explore some of the ways in which network logics and networked approaches were conceptualised and enacted in this climate of innovation, the Kirby Report on post-compulsory education and training arrangements in Victoria (DEET 2000), and annual reports, newsletters and other key communications produced by the Smart Geelong Region LLEN were among the key texts I examined in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, the Foundation for Young Australians’ (FYA) *New Work Order* research report series is the central focus of my analysis, and at the time of writing this series comprises six titles. In that chapter, I also survey some of the key sources that the FYA has drawn on in developing its ‘enterprise skills’ agenda. These sources include reports and communications produced by Australian business groups and market research firms, such as the Australian Industry Group, the Business Council of Australia, AlphaBeta and McCrindle Research. In Chapter 7, the process of selecting an archive was informed by a desire to interrogate the ways in which young people are



represented as ‘figures’ of enterprise in contemporary media publications and sources. In that chapter, my ‘archive’ consists of all issues of *GT Magazine* – a large-circulation ‘lifestyle’ magazine published weekly in Geelong – for the year 2016.

In this project, the work of selecting an archive was aided by the use of a methodological and analytical device known as the ‘situational map’, a device developed by sociologist Adele Clarke (2005, 2015) that I will describe in more detail below. This device has assisted me to map the range of historical ‘episodes’, ‘events’, ‘examples’ and ‘moments’, as well as ideas, concepts and sources more broadly, that are pertinent to each of the key concepts being investigated in this thesis – ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ – which are the focus of Chapters 4, 5 and 6, respectively.

### Content analysis and critical discourse analysis

Having selected an archive, the next task is to select techniques that will allow me to systematically analyse this collection of texts. The techniques of content analysis and critical discourse analysis represent a productive methodological fit for the aims of my project, as they provide scope to analyse not only texts and their constituent elements, but also images and other forms of symbolic communication, the contexts of their production and dissemination, and their wider social, cultural, economic and political significance.

The practice of discourse analysis, Gee (2014, p.20) suggests, examines ‘how speakers and writers use clues or cues (namely, syntax and discourse) to shape the interpretations and actions of listeners and readers’. Discourse analysis can also have a political dimension, insofar as it is an inquiry into the ‘relations between discourse and other elements of the social process’, into the ways in which systems of meaning are shaped by, and in turn shape, relations of power (Fairclough 2010, pp.8-10). It is this political dimension that is highlighted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which, according to two of its foremost proponents, Fairclough (2010) and Wodak (2001), calls attention to the role of language in the production and reproduction of power asymmetries and structural inequities. Wodak (2001, p.3) suggests that three concepts figure indispensably in all CDA: the concept of power, the concept of history, and the concept of ideology. CDA has particular value in scrutinizing the language of the mass media ‘as a site of power, of struggle and also as a site where language is apparently transparent’ (Wodak 2001, p.6). It challenges the assumption that media institutions provide a neutral platform for public discourse, that they reflect states of affairs disinterestedly, and that they give the perceptions and arguments of the newsmakers (Wodak 2001, p.6).

CDA scholar Norman Fairclough (1989, 1995 cited in Janks 1997, p.329) suggests that there are three interrelated dimensions of discourse, the first of which is the object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts); the second, the processes by which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking/designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects; and the third, the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes. He proposes a three-part method of critical discourse analysis for capturing each of these dimensions and their interlinkages, the three ‘levels’ or ‘stages’ of which include: text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation), and social analysis (explanation) (Fairclough 1989, 1995 cited in Janks 1997, p.329). Ruiz Ruiz (2009, p.5) further explicates some of the key tasks at each of these three levels of analysis, and suggests that it is common for the researcher to move back and forth across all three levels, allowing a continuous dialogue, or cycle, between the levels (see Figure 2 below).

Ruiz Ruiz (2009, pp.7-8) suggests that the first level, textual analysis, can involve the specific tasks of content analysis and/or semiotic analysis. Content analysis has a long history as a method of media or documentary analysis, and ‘consists of breaking down or fragmenting the text into pertinent units of information for their subsequent coding and categorisation’ (Ruiz Ruiz 2009, p.8). The second level, the contextual level, involves the description of the circumstances in which the text has been produced, but it also opens up a space for considering the intertextual properties of a discourse – the way in which a discourse dialogues with other discourses (Ruiz Ruiz 2009, pp.9-11). Rounding out the cycle of analysis, the sociological interpretation of discourse ‘involves making connections between the discourses analysed and the social space in which they have emerged’ (Ruiz Ruiz 2009, p.16).

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Figure 2: Process of sociological discourse analysis (Ruiz Ruiz 2009, p.6)

### Situational maps in genealogical research

Sociologist Adele Clarke (2015, 2005) suggests that a ‘situational map’ can be a particularly valuable tool in the mapping of historical discourses. A situational map is a configuration that attempts to lay out all the major human, nonhuman, discursive, historical, symbolic, cultural, political and other elements in the research situation of concern, and provokes analyses of relations among them (Clarke 2015, p.100). This definition of a ‘situational map’ appears quite similar, in some respects, to that of Foucault’s ‘apparatus’. The construction of a situational map, or series of maps, may therefore go some way towards mapping the heterogeneous elements of an apparatus which has, as its ‘dominant strategic function’, that of responding to the ‘urgent’ problem of youth unemployment. The ‘situational map’ allows me to visualise each of the key concepts – ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ – as the product of a contingent configuration of elements.

According to Clarke, situational maps can perform several important functions in the research process. Situational maps are ‘excellent research design tools’ (Clarke 2015, pp.100-101). A series of situational maps, each drawn at a particular interval in the research journey, allows for the making of historical comparisons and ‘vividly demonstrates the reconfigurations that have occurred – as well as helping us to see the relatively unchanging elements’ (Clarke 2005, pp.280-281). Maps, for Clarke (2005, p.281), are a provocation to further analysis in ways that simply constructing a narrative are not: the act of drawing a map ‘can help rupture our own premature and/or ill thought through analyses’. Furthermore, in historical research, ‘getting lost in the interesting details is an ongoing risk’, and maps can prompt the researcher to return to the ‘big picture’ view (Clarke 2005, p.289). In essence:

Situational maps and analyses do particular kinds of work through mapping and framing historical as well as contemporary materials. Together they lay out the key actors and actants, key social worlds and arenas, key discourses, and key axes of conflict, specifying the positions taken and not taken in the data, implicated actors, silent actors, missing discourses, and so on. While potentially useful in most if not all research, situational maps and analyses can be distinctively helpful in taking on understudied or unstudied larger historical projects. (Clarke 2005, p.289)

In developing the concept of the ‘situational map’, Clarke draws on traditional grounded theory analyses that centre on action, seeking to build on and refine Anselm Strauss and Julie Corbin’s ‘conditional matrix’, as well as taking inspiration from Donna Haraway’s feminist theory of ‘situated knowledges’, among other influences (Clarke 2015, p.99). Clarke’s situational map differs from Strauss and Corbin’s ‘conditional matrix’ in that it understands the context for action as part of the situation, rather than external to it:

There is no such thing as ‘context’ ...the fundamental assumptions are that everything in the situation both constitutes and affects most everything else in the situation in some way(s). Everything actually in the situation or understood to be so ‘conditions the possibilities’... of interpretation and action. (Clarke 2015, pp.98-99)

Another key strength of the situational map is its ability to illuminate dynamics of power, through a focus on the implicated, silent actors and actants that pertain in the situation. While ‘there are generally multiple discursive constructions circulating of both the human and nonhuman actors in any given situation’, the analysis of power recognises that some actors may be denied a voice and/or self-representation in the situation by other, hegemonic actors (Clarke 2015, p.94). ‘Analysing power,’ Clarke (2015, pp.94-95) contends, ‘involves analysing whose constructions of whom/what exist? Which are taken as “the real” constructions—or the ones that “matter” most in the situation by the various participants? Which are contested? Whose are ignored? By whom?’. This analysis of hegemonic and subjugated actors/actants and their constructions echoes the concerns of Foucault in uncovering ‘subjugated knowledges’, which, he suggests, are those ‘historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation’, as well as those local, popular, naive knowledges ‘that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated’ (Foucault 1980, pp.81-82).

Clarke (2015, p.100) suggests that there are two basic types of situational maps. In the ‘messy situational map’ (see Figure 3 below), the researcher sketches their initial ideas on paper, and in doing so, seeks to ‘capture the messy complexities of the situation in their dense relations and permutations’

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Figure 3: Example of Messy Situational Map (Clarke 2015, p.100)

In the next iteration of the map, the ‘ordered situational map’ (see Figure 4 below), the researcher can use a series of subheadings as a guide to further analysis. Clarke (2015, pp.101-102) stresses that the categories that appear on this Ordered Situational Map template are intended as a guide only. The researcher can, and should, modify, add and/or subtract categories depending on what appears in their particular situation of inquiry.

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Figure 4: Example of Ordered Situational Map (Clarke 2015, p.102)

In this project I argue that the key concepts of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ are each the product of an historical ‘apparatus’ composed of both a generalised and more particular configuration of elements. These elements are both discursive and non-discursive, are political, economic, social, cultural, and ideological in nature and are conditioned by, and in turn condition,

spatial and temporal processes of de-industrialisation and labour market change. At an earlier stage of this project, I drafted an ordered situational map for each of the three, core ‘data’ chapters of this thesis – which are focused on ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ respectively – as a preliminary to constructing a narrative, and in order to provide an initial, visual representation of the diverse elements that have a role in the framing of each key concept. Please refer to Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of this thesis for examples of Ordered Situational Maps that map the diverse elements informing the concepts of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’.

## Conclusion

The work of French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault has informed the development of the distinctive methodological approach of genealogy. Genealogy attempts to problematise and unsettle the taken-for-granted components of our present social reality. Foucauldian historical methods have been conceptualised and operationalised variously in and through practices of: ‘critical and effective history’ (Dean 1994); the mapping of the ‘apparatus’ (Foucault et al. 1980; Agamben 2009); identifying and analysing ‘three Es’: episodes, examples and effectiveness (Vucetic 2011); and interrogating the premises that underpin particular problem representations (in the work of Bacchi and others). As the discussion in this chapter has highlighted, there is not one singular approach that offers *the* definitive method for doing genealogy. Rather, each of these approaches has utility in shaping the genealogical ethos that drives this project. In keeping with Foucault’s suggestion that his researches be understood as ‘a kind of toolbox that people can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they wish in their own area’, the genealogical approach requires that the researcher seek out methods and tools that are most pertinent to the particular problem and context under study.

While genealogy should not be understood as a codified technique of inquiry, it nonetheless represents a distinctive approach to the investigation of social ‘problems’, and it is possible to identify some key features that distinguish this approach from other forms of historiography. Genealogy is a ‘problem-based’ rather than a ‘period-based’ approach to history, and it seeks to analyse the ‘conditions of possibility’ that allow particular representations of the ‘problem’ to function as ‘truths’. The genealogical ethos that I adopt in this thesis allows me to interrogate the multiple, diverse, non-linear trajectories that comprise the ‘history of the present’, where the ‘present’ signifies an early 21<sup>st</sup> century period in which the problem of youth unemployment is understood largely in terms of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’. While in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these individualising, ‘human capital’ discourses are understood as the ‘solution’ to problems of youth employment and unemployment, the value of a problematising, genealogical approach is its ability to suggest that the problem could be ‘thought differently’, and that the emergence of this state of affairs was by no means ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’.

The genealogical ethos that I have articulated in this chapter will shape the ways in which I tell the ‘histories’ of de-industrialisation, globalisation and ‘neoliberal’ capitalism, and of economic and spatial restructuring and transformation in the ‘Rust Belt’ city of Geelong, histories that are the focus of Chapters 2 and 3. This genealogical ethos also informs my approach to the core ‘data’ chapters of Part Two of this thesis, which are concerned with illuminating the ‘conditions of possibility’ that enable ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ to function as ‘truths’ in relation to the problem of youth unemployment. It is to a consideration of some of the key ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’ in the stories of de-industrialisation, globalisation and ‘neoliberal’ capitalism that I now turn.

# Chapter Two

## Globalisation, ‘neoliberal’ capitalism, and youth labour markets in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

### Introduction

From the late 20<sup>th</sup> century into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, de-industrialisation, the emergence of ‘neoliberal’ capitalism, and the reconfiguration of ‘space’ and ‘place’ associated with processes of globalisation have fundamentally reshaped the industrialised democracies. The ‘social democratic’ political consensus that emerged in many of the industrialising democracies after World War II was the consequence of post-Depression, post-war contests and struggles between diverse interests and forces (state, labour, capital). This consensus saw governments take a much more interventionist role in the welfare of the working class, securing and/or supporting their access to housing, employment, insurance against infirmity, and other elemental needs. For a relatively brief period before the ‘long boom’ of 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism began to dissipate in the 1970s, the post-war settlement would play an instrumental role in boosting the economic fortunes of many Australian towns and cities, and those of their inhabitants.

The ‘conditions of possibility’ that had allowed this social democratic ethos to function as the dominant art of government began to change, disperse and unravel in the 1970s. At the global level, the accelerating financialisation of capital in the 1970s was a response to the crisis of overproduction in global manufacturing and declining capitalist profitability (Harvey 2005; Srnicek 2017). The Bretton Woods Agreement that had fixed exchange rates during the long boom was abandoned in 1971-73, a development which generated significant instability of exchange and interest rates and spurred the growth of international financial markets (Lapavitsas 2013, p.793). The spatial reorganisation of production saw the ‘offshoring’ of manufacturing to locations with lower labour costs, and the late 20<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed profound changes in production methods, with ‘mass production’ principles replaced by flexible specialisation and ‘just-in-time’ production methods (Watkins 1994, p.13). At the Australian Federal government level, the Hawke Labor Government, with Paul Keating as Treasurer, floated the Australian dollar in 1983 and reduced tariff protection of domestic industries, signalling a definitive move away from the precepts of economic policy associated with the social democratic consensus, in favour of the ‘monetarist’ approach associated with the ascendant political consensus of neoliberalism (or ‘economic rationalism’ as it was frequently termed in Australia). The liberalisation of trade, the privatisation of key industries and enterprises, and the deregulation of the economy (though some scholars assert that ‘re-regulation’ is a more apt characterisation of the neoliberal approach to regulation) are key pillars of the neoliberal economic paradigm (Steger & Roy 2010, p.40), and these tenets have been pursued, to greater or lesser degrees, by all Australian Governments from the early 1980s onwards.

A series of changes in the sphere of industrial relations and employment policy also impacted on the fortunes of workers, including the abandonment, in the early 1970s, of the policy of ‘full employment’ which had predominated in Australia for several decades through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the progressive deregulation of labour markets through the 1980s and 1990s, and the move from centralised wage-fixing to collective bargaining at the enterprise level (Smith 2017, p.15; Briggs & Buchanan 2000). What I have offered here is not an exhaustive account of the many forces and developments that made their impacts in this period (the oil price shocks of the early 1970s, for

example, were also instrumental here) but it illustrates that the consequence of these various crises and challenges was that, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, industrialised democracies such as Australia were, for better or worse, ‘opened up’ to global forces. More recently, the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis and its aftershocks have illustrated some of the particular risks and vulnerabilities to which domestic economies are exposed as a consequence of their entanglement in global economic systems in which deregulated finance capital plays an enhanced role.

Rather than attempting to ‘tell the whole story’ through a detailed, linear and/or complete history, in this and the following chapter, I will focus on key historical ‘epochs’, ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’ in the histories of globalisation, ‘neoliberal’ capitalism and youth labour market change, particularly as they relate to the experiences and trajectories of industrialised democracies such as Australia. My aim is to map the space in which the overarching genealogical question emerges – in which the problem of youth unemployment emerges in the way that it does – as well as the key concepts that are the ‘solution’ to this problem. The first three sections of this chapter – ‘Space, place and global flows’, ‘Neoliberal capitalism’, and ‘Digital disruption and the coming of the robots’ – sketch some of the key processes and developments evident in regimes of globalisation, neoliberal capitalism, and automation and wider technological change. The fourth and final section of the chapter, ‘Youth labour market change in the neoliberal era’, considers the impacts of these various social, political, economic, governmental, and technological changes in shaping the labour market experiences of young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, I will turn now to the first section of the chapter, where I will consider how a selection of theorists (sociologist Manuel Castells, geographers Doreen Massey and David Harvey, and youth studies researcher David Farrugia, among others) have responded to the challenge of defining and understanding ‘place’, in a world in which some of the boundaries and borders of space have become increasingly porous<sup>8</sup>. The sketch that I will offer here is a necessarily selective engagement with the vast literatures on globalisation, and will be developed in greater detail in later chapters.

### Space, place and global flows

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people, capital and ideas are moving in novel and increasingly complex ways. The logics of networks, mobilities, scapes, and the architecture of flows and nodes, are among the spatial metaphors and analytical tools utilised in sociological understandings of globalisation (Urry 2000; Büscher & Urry 2009; Castells 2010). The concept of ‘flows’ is central to Manuel Castells’ monograph *The Rise of the Network Society* (2010). Modern society, he asserts, is:

Constructed around flows: flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organizational interaction, flows of images, sounds, and symbols. Flows are not just one element of the social organization: they are the expression of processes *dominating* our economic, political, and symbolic life. (Castells 2010, p.442, emphasis in original)

‘Nodes’, another key component of the network infrastructure, are the ‘location of strategically important functions that build a series of locality-based activities and organizations around a key function in the network’ (Castells 2010, p.443). Castells (2010, p.409) argues that the distinctive,

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<sup>8</sup> An obvious exception here is US President Donald Trump’s efforts to fortify the borders of the United States in both a physical and metaphorical sense. In the run-up to his election victory, Trump promised to build a wall along the entire 2,000-mile length of the US-Mexico border, with the goal of preventing illegal crossings, and construction of the fortified barrier is currently underway (Rodgers & Bailey 2019). Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign also focused on ‘making America great again’ through a return to protectionist trade policies.

networked geography that is the ‘space of flows’ is replacing the ‘space of places’ as the ‘dominant spatial manifestation of power and function in our societies’. In a 2003 interview Castells reveals that in developing his theory of the space of flows, he drew on a philosophical tradition that conceptualised space ‘as the material construction of time simultaneity, which is what brings human practice together in time’:

Throughout history in most human practice, simultaneity depended on vicinity, on territorial proximity. Now, what happens when we can do things together in real time, but from very distant locations? There is simultaneity, but the spatial arrangement that allows it is a different one. It is based on telecommunications, computer systems, and the places from where this interaction takes place. This is the space of flows: not just the electronic/telecommunications circuits, but the network of places that are connected around one common, simultaneous social practice via these electronic circuits and their ancillary systems. (Castells & Ince 2003, p.56)

The late Doreen Massey (1994, 2005) probed the difficulty of thinking about ‘space’ and ‘place’, and the meaning of ‘locality’, in the context of the socially varied time-space changes associated with globalisation processes at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As she observed:

The imagination of space as a surface on which we are placed, the turning of space into time, the sharp separation of local place from the space out there; these are all ways of taming the challenge that the inherent spatiality of the world presents. (Massey 2005, p.7)

In her work Massey took issue with the assumption in much academic and policy discourse of the identity of place as singular, fixed and unitary, instead advocating a ‘progressive’ sense of place which recognises that places are processes, rather than static entities, constructed out of shifting constellations of social relations (Massey 1994, pp.154-156). In developing the concept of the ‘power geometry’ of time-space compression, Massey (1994, p.149) sought to describe the ways in which:

Different social groups, and different individuals, are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections...different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.<sup>9</sup>

In some understandings of globalisation, local places are assumed to have no agency, in other words, place is figured as the inevitable victim of globalisation (Massey 2005, p.101). However, in the ‘relational understanding’ of neoliberal globalisation advocated by Massey, “‘places’ are criss-crossings in the wider power-geometries that constitute both themselves and ‘the global’” (Massey 2005, p.101). Scholars of de-industrialisation highlight the contributions of Massey, and fellow geographer David Harvey, in theorising the ‘uneven geography’ of capitalist development and its role in the production of ‘place’ (see for example, Mah’s [2012] work on landscapes of industrial decline and ruination). Harvey (1989, p.4) observes that a profound ‘reorientation in attitudes to urban

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<sup>9</sup> It should also be acknowledged that the work of the late John Urry, and others, on mobilities, and on ‘mobility’ as a key analytical concept could also have been with engaged here (Urry 2000, 2007; Büscher & Urry 2009). Indeed, the ‘mobilities turn’ has been an influential moment in recent geographies and sociologies in general, and of youth and children’s geographies and sociologies in particular (see for example, Cuzzocrea 2018; Cuzzocrea & Mandich 2016; Farrugia 2016; Cuervo & Wyn 2017).

governance', beginning in the 1970s, has been one of the fundamental forces shaping the dynamics of place in the era of neoliberal globalisation. This development appears to have its roots in the crisis of the nation state. As Harvey (1989, p.5) suggests:

The greater emphasis on local action to combat these ills [of de-industrialisation, widespread unemployment, and fiscal austerity at both the national and local levels] also seems to have something to do with the declining powers of the nation state to control multinational money flows, so that investment increasingly takes the form of a negotiation between international finance capital and local powers doing the best they can to maximise the attractiveness of the local site as a lure for capitalist development.

“Governance” means much more than urban “government”, Harvey (1989, p.6) stresses: the former is much more ‘entrepreneurial’ in its aims and scope. He suggests that, traditionally, it was the local chamber of commerce, industrialists and merchants, business leaders and property developers that were understood as the key stakeholders where matters of civic boosterism were concerned. Increasingly however, educational and religious institutions, different arms of government, local labour organisations, as well as political parties and social movements ‘also play the game of local boosterism though often with quite different goals’ (Harvey 1989, pp.6-7). Harvey (1989, p.6) suggests that ‘urban government and administration have only a facilitative and coordinating role to play’ within this broader coalition of forces. The fact of inter-urban competition means that the ‘speculative construction of place’ is a central concern of urban entrepreneurialism; the city must aggressively promote itself as an ‘innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in’ (Harvey 1989, pp. 8-9). Although ‘urban entrepreneurialism has opened up the urban spaces of the advanced capitalist countries to all kinds of new patterns of development,’ the ‘net effect’, Harvey (1989, p.11) asserts, has often been ‘the serial reproduction of science parks, gentrification, world trading centres, cultural and entertainment centres, large scale interior shopping malls with postmodern accoutrements, and the like’, so that the cultural and spatial characteristics of places increasingly converge in an homogenised urban form.

The work of Harvey in describing the enhanced role of creativity, culture and spectacle in the new urban development agenda is an important precursor to Florida’s (2014, pp. 228-265) theory of the ‘creative class’, in particular the latter’s emphasis on cultures of open-minded bohemianism and creativity and their role in attracting the creative capital necessary to local economic development. The fundamental reorientations in urban governance that Harvey identifies, which were themselves informed by the emergence, in the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century, of new global flows and interconnections, establish the grounds on which the activities of Florida’s ‘creative class’ become productive of new patterns of development in different spaces and places.

In the field of youth studies David Farrugia (2014, 2015) has drawn on Doreen Massey’s concept of power geometries, and Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the ‘production of space’, in order to explore some of the spatial inequalities shaping young people’s lives. Space and place have historically been marginal to the dominant theoretical perspectives in the disciplines of sociology and youth studies, Farrugia maintains, and he highlights two possible reasons for this marginalisation. The first is the tendency to understand children and young people in terms of universal developmental processes and transitions towards adulthood, often resulting in disembodied and disembedded views of childhood and youth (Farrugia 2015, p.610). The second is the inherent ‘metrocentricity’ of sociological theorising, which equates modernity with the process of urbanisation, and implies that the rural is less sociologically significant than the urban (Farrugia 2014, p.295). A spatialised youth sociology,



Farrugia (2014, p.300) argues, must be ‘attendant to the macro-level processes that create both urban and rural environments, as well as the specific histories of different localities and the way that this structures the transitions of young people from these places’:

The lives of urban and rural young people are connected by social changes which, while represented as homogeneously influencing all young people, have changed urban and rural economies in different ways. The geographies of inequality being negotiated by young people across late modernity are outcomes of the local and global dynamics of contemporary capitalism, an intrinsic aspect of which is the production of space. (Farrugia 2014, p.300)

The ‘spatial turn’ in youth studies opens up new fields for investigating processes of economic and spatial restructuring and their impacts on the life chances and patterns of labour market transition for young people in spaces and places such as Geelong. A series of studies has examined the ways in which class, gender, geographical location and other variables interact to shape the employment pathways and subjectivities of young people in both regional and urban areas (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006; Ball, Maguire & Macrae 2000; Allen & Hollingworth 2013; MacDonald et al. 2005; Thompson, Russell & Simmons 2014). Peter Kelly and Jane Kenway (2001), for example, examined how young people’s vocational and educational training (VET) pathways are structured, as well as how Local Government Areas (LGAs) identify and position themselves in relation to networks that are connected regionally, nationally and globally. Kelly and Kenway’s case study was of a rural locality whose economy is underpinned by the dairy industry, and they sought to understand how it is that students from the local technical school ‘have no opportunities for VET work placements at [the dairy factory] site, and fewer opportunities for a post-school transition “across the road” and into employment’ (Kelly & Kenway 2001, p.26). The dominance of flows over places has the potential to create ‘infinite social distance’ between people and places that may, indeed, exist in close physical proximity to each other (Castells 1996, cited in Kelly & Kenway 2001, pp.26-27).

The dynamics of globalisation are, it can be argued, ‘neoliberal’ in character, insofar as they are underpinned by a political consensus which understands ‘free markets’ and private enterprise as the principal driver of economic change and growth. In the following section of this chapter I will explore the emergence of neoliberalism, ‘a governing rationality generating distinctive kinds of subjects, forms of conduct, and orders of social meaning and value’ (Brown 2018, p.12), which can be understood as the dominant discursive and material political-economic story of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

## Neoliberal capitalism

The diverse implications and effects of neoliberalism have been extensively examined from Marxist, Foucauldian, post-structural, and critical theory perspectives, by scholars within the discipline of sociology and many others outside it. In much of this literature there is a consensus that neoliberalism (or ‘neoliberalisation’) works by ‘commodifying everything’ and extending market logics to all areas of human activity (Brown 2015; Harvey 2005; Prechel & Harms 2007). Prechel and Harms (2007, p.4), for example, assert that ‘neoliberalism goes beyond classical liberalism by embracing *market fundamentalism*...for classical liberals like [Adam] Smith, markets were efficient means for producing and distributing goods. In contrast, neoliberals assume that markets are morally good in themselves, and thus should be applied to all aspects of life’ including social relationships and identity. Kelly and Pike (2017, p.12) suggest, however, that neoliberalism takes on a slightly different meaning in the governmentality literature that has developed around the work of Michel Foucault, where it is imagined ‘as an art of government, a mentality of rule’:

Here, neo-Liberalism is much more than economic theory, or political discourse, or public policy. In this sense neo-Liberalism signals the emergence, development and deployment of a range of *political rationalities* and *governmental technologies* (Rose and Miller 1992) that seek to make the ‘real’ knowable and governable through the behaviours and dispositions of autonomous, rational, choice making, risk aware, prudent and enterprising individuals. Individuals who find a home in, and remake, the relationships between the State, Civil Society and the Economy: relationships that have been profoundly remade, though in different ways and with different consequences, in an array of national settings around the globe since the late 1970s.

Brown (2015) expresses a similar view when she suggests that neoliberal rationalities seek to create ‘ideal subjects’ in the mould of ‘homo economicus’. According to these neoliberal rationalities:

All conduct is economic conduct; all spheres of existence are framed and measured by economic terms and metrics; even when those spheres are not directly monetized. In neoliberal reason and in domains governed by it, we are only and everywhere *homo oeconomicus*...an intensely constructed and governed bit of human capital tasked with improving and leveraging its competitive positioning and with enhancing its (monetary and nonmonetary) portfolio value across all of its endeavors and venues. (Brown 2015, p.10)

As I suggested in the introduction to this chapter, the post-war ‘long boom’ of capitalism, and the social democratic consensus with which it was associated, was sustained through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by a confluence of particular economic, political, social, cultural, and governmental conditions. For a variety of reasons, these conditions began to dissipate and transform in the 1970s. At this time the neoliberal approach to economic management came to be understood as the solution to the conditions of ‘stagflation’ (slow economic growth occurring simultaneously with high rates of inflation) which plagued the economies of industrialised nations. Critics of neoliberalism have drawn attention to its early 20<sup>th</sup> century origins in the theories of economic management propounded by Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and other thinkers associated with the pro-free market Mont Pelerin Society, its implementation, some decades later, in the form of ‘Thatcherism’ in the UK and ‘Reaganism’ in the US, and its export to the ‘developing’ world through the economic ‘shock therapy’ programs (officially termed ‘structural adjustment’ programs) imposed on countries by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (see for example Klein 2007).

Harvey (2005) and Steger and Roy (2010) have also foregrounded the political and economic dimensions of neoliberalism. From a Marxist position David Harvey suggests that neoliberalism is a political project waged by and on behalf of the economic and political elite, a project concerned with reversing the redistributive tendencies of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century welfare-state capitalism. Harvey (2005, p.15) notes that ‘one condition of the post-war settlement in almost all countries was that the economic power of the upper classes be restrained and that labour be accorded a much larger share of the economic pie’. In contrast, the redistributions of late 20<sup>th</sup> century neoliberal capitalism were concerned with shoring up the wealth and influence of the ‘one percent’. The World Economic Forum (2017a, p.11) observes that, since the 1980s the share of income going to the top one percent of the population has increased in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland and Australia (‘although not in Germany, Japan, France, Sweden, Denmark or the Netherlands’). The neoliberal project has overseen dramatic increases in economic inequality and social polarisation within and between countries.

Steger and Roy (2010, p.40) suggest that deregulation, liberalisation (of trade), and privatisation are signature features of a neoliberal approach to economic policy. In Australia, the scale of privatisation of state-owned enterprises in the 1990s was such that the Reserve Bank of Australia noted in 1997 (pp.7-8): ‘in recent years, Australia has had one of the largest programs of privatisation among OECD countries...the value of privatisations in Australia during the 1990s ranks second after the UK; it also ranks second, after New Zealand, relative to GDP’. In this period, all of Australia’s major public enterprises that provided essential public services such as air transport, communications, electricity generation and distribution, and banking and financial services were sold off to the private sector (Reserve Bank of Australia 1997).

The work of authors such as Harvey, and Steger and Roy, highlights an understanding of neoliberalism as an economic theory guiding the actions of governments. In this understanding, neoliberalism has formed the ‘commonsense’ body of ideas underpinning the approaches to policy (particularly economic and social policy, but also a range of other policy domains) taken in many of the industrialised democracies since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, as authors such as Kelly and Pike, and Brown have highlighted with reference to the work of Foucault, neoliberalism can also be understood in a more expansive sense. Neoliberalism is an art of government that seeks to make and remake individuals (with the creation of particular ‘ideal subjects’), and their relationships with the state, civil society and the economy. Following Foucault, we can understand neoliberalism as an approach to the ‘conduct of conduct’: one that shifts the responsibility for managing the risks and contradictions of late modernity onto the shoulders of individuals. In this way, the individualisation of risk (Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002) represents one of the key dynamics of neoliberalism in its transformation of the social fabric.

While neoliberal capitalism is individualised, deregulated, and globalised, it is also, increasingly, automated. Where globalisation and de-industrialisation were previously understood as the key forces driving contemporary processes of labour market change, in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century labour market discourses have become increasingly preoccupied with what they suggest are emergent forces of technological disruption. There are now a plethora of online quizzes and tools inviting workers to calculate the probability that their job will be taken by robots. This is not the first time that the industrialised democracies have confronted the issue of technological change reshaping production processes, and the role of human labour within those processes – in fact, it could be argued that issues such as these have been central to all prior industrial revolutions. In Australia in the early 1980s, labour market commentators observed that the emergent forces of ‘computerisation’ and ‘mechanisation’ were reducing the demand for labour in particular economic sectors. However, there is much evidence to suggest that 21<sup>st</sup> century processes of technological change are of a different magnitude to those earlier processes of computerisation. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is the increasingly complex interactions of artificial intelligence and machine learning, algorithms and Big Data that represent the key technological forces that are shaping not only the interactions of workers with the labour market, but more and more domains of life in the advanced capitalist countries.

### Digital disruption and the coming of the robots

‘Disruption’, the ‘midwife of innovation’ (Boyd & Holton 2017), is regarded by many commentators as the key force shaping the dynamics of capitalist accumulation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Advanced algorithmic analytics and Big Data increasingly energise and underpin the worlds in which people live, interact, work, consume and play. In fact, sociologist David Beer (2009, cited in Mazzotti 2017) suggests that algorithms have ceased to represent merely a set of precise instructions for performing mathematical calculations. Indeed, Beer suggests that they have become expressions of a new

rationality and form of social organisation. As Mazzotti (2017) argues, there are now very few areas of societal functioning that are outside the purview of algorithms:

Algorithms have...become agents, which is partly why they give rise to so many suggestive metaphors. Algorithms now *do* things...They generate new forms of subjectivity and new social relationships. They are how a billion-plus people get where they're going. They free us from sorting through multitudes of irrelevant results. They drive cars. They manufacture goods. They decide whether a client is creditworthy. They buy and sell stocks, thus shaping all-powerful financial markets. They can even be creative; indeed, according to engineer and author Christopher Steiner, they have already composed symphonies 'as moving as those composed by Beethoven'.

In 2013, two researchers from the University of Oxford, Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael Osborne, released a report which 'has become something of a touchstone for discussion about the future of work' (Dunlop 2016, p.78). The report categorises 702 occupations as at either low, medium or high risk of being automated, predicting that around 47 percent of total employment in the US labour market is at high risk of automation 'over the next decade or two' (Frey & Osborne 2013, p.44). In modelling performed for the Australian context, Durrant-Whyte et al. (2015, p.58) estimate that '40 per cent of jobs in Australia have a high probability of being susceptible to computerisation and automation in the next 10 to 15 years'. Frey and Osborne (2013, p.44) highlight that robotics and computerisation are now being applied in domains that were previously thought to be unsuitable for automation, including non-routine cognitive tasks, and manual tasks requiring advanced dexterity.<sup>10</sup>

A more recent report published by the OECD suggests that the particular methodology used by Frey and Osborne is liable to overstate the degree of future technological unemployment likely to be experienced. The 'occupation-based approach proposed by Frey and Osborne', Arntz, Gregory and Zierahn (2016, p.4) observe, 'assume[s] that whole occupations rather than single job-tasks are automated by technology', potentially leading to 'an overestimation of job automatability, as occupations labelled as high-risk occupations often still contain a substantial share of tasks that are hard to automate'. Utilising a task-based approach, which takes into account the heterogeneity of workers' tasks within occupations, Arntz, Gregory and Zierahn (2016, p.4) conclude that, 'on average across the 21 OECD countries, nine percent of jobs are automatable'. They add the caveat that:

Low qualified workers are likely to bear the brunt of the adjustment costs as the automatability of their jobs is higher compared to highly qualified workers. Therefore, the likely challenge for the future lies in coping with rising inequality and ensuring sufficient (re)training especially for low qualified workers. (Arntz, Gregory & Zierahn 2016, p.4)

*The Automation Advantage*, a 2017 report by consultancy firm AlphaBeta on the significance of automation for the Australian economy suggests that if processes of disruption are managed correctly – with the establishment of a strong policy framework to ensure workers at risk of being displaced are redeployed – the Australian economy has much to gain and little to lose from automation. As

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<sup>10</sup> In his address to Universities Australia's Higher Education Conference, former US Ambassador to Australia, Jeffrey Bleich, mused on the dramatic acceleration of technology. He recounts a conversation he had with Astro Teller, the director of Google X, Google's research and development institute. Teller, when asked what he feared about technology, replied, 'it is simply going so fast now that no one can control where it is taking us' (Bleich 2017). However, young people are not particularly concerned about the threat of technological unemployment, if the results of the World Economic Forum's (2017b, p.25) Global Shapers Survey are anything to go by: An overwhelming number of young people (defined as 18-35 in this survey) think technology is 'creating jobs' (78.6 per cent) as opposed to 'destroying jobs' (21.4 per cent).

AlphaBeta (2017, p.7) argues, ‘history shows that past waves of technological disruption have ultimately led to increased prosperity, productivity and employment’. AlphaBeta (2017, p.8, emphasis added) asserts that ‘as machines take over our most dangerous, most tedious and least valuable tasks, *human work will become more human*’. The firm’s optimistic forecasts suggest a future in which work is safer, more satisfying and capable of attracting a much higher level of remuneration (see Figure 5):

Assuming past automation trends continue, the amount of sick days due to accidents involving physical work in Australia could be 11 per cent lower by 2030...low skill workers will take on more stimulating and satisfying human tasks at work, and as many as 62 per cent of them would be happier in their jobs by 2030 compared with today. (AlphaBeta 2017, p.21)

### <Image removed due to copyright restrictions>

Figure 5: Infographic from *The Automation Advantage* report (AlphaBeta 2017, p.3)

There are echoes and continuities across AlphaBeta’s discussion of automation and late 20<sup>th</sup> century discourses around the technological changes reshaping the nature of labour and production (I will examine the latter in more detail in Chapter 4). A former assistant secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Laurie Carmichael, was a key voice in those earlier debates and discussions in Australia. In 1993, Carmichael confidently asserted that processes of technological change and work reorganisation would usher in an almost utopian future in which all workers could expect to participate in the labour market in highly-skilled and highly-fulfilling roles. However, as Mazzotti (2017) points out, ‘scientific knowledge and machines are never just neutral instruments. They embody, express, and naturalize specific cultures — and shape how we live according to the assumptions and priorities of those cultures’. In regarding processes of technological change in rather optimistic and unproblematic terms, the accounts of AlphaBeta and Laurie Carmichael tend to obscure the fact that the rollout of automation and digital disruption occurs unevenly, and in ways that typically reinforce and complement the existing social relations of production, rather than transforming them.

Far from that putative world in which ‘human work [has] become more human’, a series of recent exposés has revealed the experiences of employees in feeling dehumanised and exploited in a workplace where human workers have become an extension of an algorithm (Burin 2019; see also *The Guardian*’s 2018 ‘Amazon Diaries’ series written by an anonymous insider). Headed by CEO Jeff Bezos, who, at the time of writing, is the richest individual in the world, Amazon’s rapid rise to one of the biggest corporations on the planet has been enabled by a ruthless corporate strategy of cornering the consumer goods market and a business model which eschews ‘bricks and mortar’ stores in favour of online-only sales. In recent years, the retailer has established a number of large ‘fulfillment centres’ on the outskirts of several Australian capital cities. This is a model, and mode of operating, that is repeated around the globe.<sup>11</sup> As reporter Margaret Burin (2019) writes, employees here are a small

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<sup>11</sup> Amazon has not been given the ‘green light’ in all of the cities in which it has sought to establish operations. Stone (2019) notes that the corporation has faced increasing animosity in its home town of Seattle, and in recent years has sought a second home for its corporate headquarters. New York City officials were sold on Amazon’s promise that it would bring 25,000 high-paying jobs over 10 years to the city, in exchange for close to US\$3 billion in tax breaks and subsidies. However, after encountering stiff local opposition from anti-Amazon activists and progressive politicians, in February 2019 Amazon walked away from its plans to build a second corporate headquarters in New York City (Stone 2019).

cog in a huge machine in which algorithms determine how many items should be moved, stored, picked and packed within the hour. Rather than being employed by the firm directly, all of Amazon's Australian warehouses are staffed exclusively by casual labour hire workers who are subject to a punitive regime of performance targets, micromanagement and surveillance. As one Amazon 'associate' reveals, 'I feel dehumanised...I feel like they resent the fact that I'm not a robot and that I'm made of flesh and bone' (Burin 2019).

Although it is commonly asserted that technological innovation is rapidly transforming the economic and social fabric of the industrialised democracies in unprecedented ways, there is a lack of consensus around which nomenclature ('late capitalism', the 'Third Industrial Revolution', the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution', and the 'Second Machine Age' are but a few examples) most effectively captures the ethos of the times. In his influential work, published in 2011, Jeremy Rifkin saw in the emergence of the Internet of Things and the advance of green energy technologies the makings of the Third Industrial Revolution (Kelly 2018, p.9). The First Industrial Revolution, Kelly (2018, p.8) explains, 'emerged in England at the end of the eighteenth century and was powered by steam; the Second Industrial Revolution emerged in the US at the start of the twentieth century and was powered by electricity ... the Third Industrial Revolution, it is argued, emerges globally, will be digital, bio-genetic and post-carbon'. For Rifkin (2011, p.37), the five pillars of the Third Industrial Revolution are:

1. Shifting to renewable energy;
2. Transforming the building stock of every continent into micro-power plants to collect renewable energies on site;
3. Deploying hydrogen and other storage technologies in every building and throughout the infrastructure to store intermittent energies;
4. Using Internet technology to transform the power grid of every continent into an energy-sharing intergrid that acts just like the Internet...;
- and 5. Transitioning the transport fleet to electric plug-in and fuel cell vehicles that can buy and sell electricity on a smart, continental, interactive power grid.

Just five years after the publication of Rifkin's watershed work, the World Economic Forum (WEF) released its report *The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, which suggests that 'we are today on the cusp of a Fourth Industrial Revolution. Developments in previously disjointed fields such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, robotics, nanotechnology, 3D printing and genetics and biotechnology are all building on and amplifying one another' (WEF 2016, pp.5-8). Founder and executive chairman of the WEF, Klaus Schwab, writes that:

There are three reasons why today's transformations represent not merely a prolongation of the Third Industrial Revolution but rather the arrival of a Fourth and distinct one: velocity, scope, and systems impact. The speed of current breakthroughs has no historical precedent. When compared with previous industrial revolutions, the Fourth is evolving at an exponential rather than a linear pace. Moreover, it is disrupting almost every industry in every country. And the breadth and depth of these changes herald the transformation of entire systems of production, management, and governance. (Schwab 2016)

In Chapter 6 I will explore how key agencies such as the OECD at the international scale, and the Foundation for Young Australians in the Australian context, have sought to shape education and training policies and reforms in this context of 'digital disruption'. These agencies seek to foster individuals who can adapt rapidly to the emergent occupational niches created by the globalising and rapidly changing circuits of capitalist accumulation and technological innovation. I will now turn to

the final section of this chapter, where I will consider what the dynamics of globalisation, neoliberal capitalism, and the digital disruptions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century portend for the constitution and regulation of youth labour markets.

### Youth labour market change in the neoliberal era

In this final section of the chapter, I will offer a sketch of some of the key ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’ shaping the experiences of young people in 21<sup>st</sup> century labour markets – a sketch that will be revisited in greater detail in different ways in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. Among the key episodes, events and moments that I will examine here are the rise in rates of underemployment in the youth cohort as a corollary of rising casualisation, a diminishing ‘graduate premium’ (MacDonald 2011, p.434), the growth in unpaid internships, falling rates of unionisation, the development of ‘workfare’ as a punitive instrument targeted at young people not in employment, education or training, and the proliferation of ‘on-demand’ forms of employment, as characteristic of a ‘gig economy’. It must be noted that my discussion is focused here predominantly on Australia and the Anglophone countries – a different configuration of episodes, events and moments would likely apply in other spaces.

The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century concern to establish some level of collective responsibility for the welfare of the working class contrasts strongly with the neoliberal, individualising rationalities of labour market regulation and welfare provision in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The individualisation of risk is evidenced by such key developments as the withering of trade union representation among the working class. Kelly (2001, p.23) argues that processes of individualisation ‘visit new forms of responsibility on young people and their families to prudently manage individual reflexive biographical projects in increasingly uncertain settings’. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, labour markets are ‘uncertain settings’ *par excellence*.

Research conducted by the Foundation for Young Australians (2014, p.8) suggests that today’s young people are three times more likely to be in part-time and casual work than their parents were at the same age, and they are 3.5 times more likely to be underemployed. Indeed, based on its analysis of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, the Brotherhood of St Laurence (2017, p.2) suggests that ‘young people are far more likely to be in casual and part-time jobs than at the beginning of this millennium’. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, underemployment appears to have displaced unemployment as the most significant challenge facing young people in the labour market. The youth underemployment rate reached 18 percent in February 2017, the highest level in the 40 years since records began in Australia (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2017, p.2). According to the Brotherhood of St Laurence (2017, p.2), in the past 15 years the average gap has widened between the actual working hours of young underemployed people and the hours they would like to work. They note that ‘the growing number of young people combining study with work does not explain the rise in underemployment, as the rise in the percentage of casual and part-time jobs has mostly been among young workers who are not studying’ (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2017, p.2).

In fact, youth studies researcher Ken Roberts (2009, cited in MacDonald 2011, p.436) suggests that ‘underemployment is the 21<sup>st</sup> century global normality for youth in the labour market’. However, the rise of underemployment as an increasingly mainstream experience is largely ignored by policymakers and other stakeholders in their focus on NEET young people (not in employment, education or training) (MacDonald 2011, p.429). The slackening of the labour market is being felt by young people across social classes. ‘Quite simply,’ MacDonald (2011, p.439) asserts, ‘limited “opportunity structures” unite the more and less disadvantaged in the experience of

underemployment'. There is a tendency on the part of policymakers to read all transitions through extended education as 'successful'; young people in these 'slow-track' transitions are implicitly positioned as being on unproblematic social and economic tracks (MacDonald 2011, p.433). MacDonald (2011, p.433, emphasis in original) observes that 'this is in part explained as a hang-over from earlier decades when these *were* solidly middle-class, elite routes to professional occupations'. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century these assumptions are increasingly challenged by the reality that slow-track transitions are faltering (MacDonald 2011, p.439).

Graduate unemployment is now much more significant in the context of the mass participation in higher education, and has seen steep increases since the Global Financial Crisis (MacDonald 2011, pp.433-434). MacDonald (2011, p.434) asserts that the "double whammy" of rising tuition costs and declining labour market returns obviously raises questions about whether there remains a clear financial incentive for university study (especially for poorer prospective students)'. While MacDonald's analysis of young people's education-to-work transitions is focused on the UK context, Côté (2014) suggests that, in the US, the 'college premium' effect is similarly waning. The notion of a college premium, in other words, the idea that the attainment of higher credentials will translate into a higher earning potential, increasingly only applies to those young people with postgraduate and professional degrees, and not the undergraduate degree (Côté 2014, pp.533-534). In an historical analysis of the annual incomes of young adults, Sum and McLaughlin (2011, cited in Côté 2014, p.534) found that:

Between 1979 and 2009, the annual earnings of 20- to 29-year-old males (not enrolled in educational institutions) on average declined by 15%, but those with a Master's degree or higher experienced a 31% increase. Yet, those with a Bachelor's degree show only a 5% increase.

Postgraduate credentials are 'far more likely to be awarded to students from more affluent backgrounds, and the more affluent gain more career advantage and income from those degrees' (Côté 2014, p.534). Another key development impacting on the earning potential of young people has been the decline in youth wages through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Côté 2014, pp.531-532). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the share of wages going to young workers is significantly lower as a proportion of the total wages bill. In addition, where young men once enjoyed a 'male advantage' in the labour force – in the US in 1973, for instance, young males earned about one third more than young females – young males and young females now share a similar fate (Côté 2014, p.532). This is 'not because female prospects improved; rather, both genders have experienced a loss in earning power to the point where their economic prospects are now about equally poor' (Côté 2014, p.532).

According to Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2012, p.6), a major factor bearing on the labour market outcomes of young graduates is the globalisation of the workforce: 'the competition for jobs has shifted from one largely restricted within clearly defined national boundaries to a global auction open to competition across borders'. The 'education explosion' has also been observed in emerging economies, with China and India now offering high-skill, low-wage workforces capable of competing successfully for 'hi-tech', high-value employment (Brown, Lauder & Ashton 2012, pp.3, 7). Brown, Lauder and Ashton (2012, p.9) argue that companies are now in a position to identify and recruit a cadre of top talent from across the globe.

Internships, Standing (2014, p.129) argues, 'are becoming a *rite de passage* for middle-class youth in some countries'. Recent research on the prevalence of unpaid work experience suggests that it 'is very



common in Australia' (Oliver et al. 2016, p.5). In 2016, a team of researchers from the University of Adelaide, Queensland University of Technology and University of Technology Sydney surveyed 3800 Australians, finding that more than half (58 percent) of respondents aged 18-29, and just over a quarter of respondents (26 percent) aged 30-64, had participated in at least one episode of unpaid work experience in the last five years (Oliver et al. 2016, p.5). Although more than one in four respondents (27 percent) were offered paid employment by the host company or organisation following their period as an intern, the researchers concluded that 'on the face of it, the data does not give any clear indication as to whether or not participating in work experience improves the chances of finding a job' (Oliver et al. 2016, p.9). Standing (2014) offers a critical assessment of the worth of internships for young people:

Old style probationary employment at least led to stable jobs in principle, as did apprenticeships. Internships do not. They are presented as a way of gaining useful experience intended to provide, directly or indirectly, a potential gateway to a regular job. In practice, they are used by many employers as a means of obtaining cheap dispensable labour. Yet youths are competing fiercely for these unpaid or very low-paid internships, in the hope of staying busy, gaining skills and experience, expanding networks and, just perhaps, landing that elusive job. (Standing 2014, p.128)

The neoliberal era has witnessed a dramatic decline in levels of unionisation, diminishing the bargaining power of labour vis-à-vis capital. From August 1992 to August 2016, the proportion of Australians who were trade union members in their main job fell from 40 percent to 15 percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016a). In 2016, only four percent of employed people aged 15-19 years and seven percent of those aged 20-24 were trade union members (ABS 2016a). In addition, the number of private sector workers in Australia covered by enterprise bargaining agreements has dropped by 34 percent since 2013, a decline that some commentators suggest has contributed to the lowest wage growth in Australia in at least two decades (Janda 2018). Research conducted by the Centre for Future Work at the Australia Institute, an independent research institute, has found that the wage share of economic output has fallen from 58 per cent just after World War II to 47 per cent in 2017, with about 90 per cent of this captured by an increased profit share (Janda 2018).

Standing (2014, pp.16-17) argues that representation security (the possession of a collective voice via independent trade unions) is one of seven forms of labour-related security that the emerging class he terms the 'precariat' lack in the neoliberal era. The 'industrial citizenship' agenda pursued by social democrats, labour parties and trade unions after the Second World War, Standing (2014, pp.16-17) maintains, afforded the working class 'labour market security', exemplified by adequate income-earning opportunities, 'employment security', which includes protection against arbitrary dismissal, and 'job security', such as opportunities for upward mobility. In contrast, the 'precariat', a class with youth at its core, is defined by the shared experience of marginalisation and insecurity in the labour market. Members of the precariat are particularly vulnerable to 'the four A's – anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation', suggests Standing (2014, p.33).

The theoretical and empirical underpinnings of Standing's 'precariat' thesis have been analysed and critiqued by a range of scholars and commentators. Many of these critiques take issue with Standing's argument that the precariat constitutes a new 'class' (Wright 2016; Frase 2013; Munck 2013). Standing (2011, pp.7-8) suggests that seven distinct classes can be identified in the 'global market system of the 21<sup>st</sup> century', and he proposes that the precariat is a class distinct from the 'old working class'. Wright (2016) argues that there is a lack of clarity in Standing's work around precisely what

may distinguish the precariat from the working class, and that it may make more sense to understand the precariat as a *segment* of the working class. Breman (2013) and Frase (2013) suggest that Standing's account lacks historical depth. Rather than treating the 'standard employment relationship' (SER) of the postwar period as a contingent form that emerged and persisted in particularly narrow limits of time and space, Standing assumes that the SER is the historical constant or benchmark from which precarious labour has diverged. As Frase (2013, p.12) argues:

Stable employment and rising wages have been the exception rather than the rule in capitalist societies, and the condition of American or European workers in the nineteenth or early-twentieth centuries appears at least as precarious as that facing contemporary labour.

Munck (2013) interrogates Standing's suggestion that the precariat constitutes 'the new dangerous class'. He highlights that 'the notion of a "dangerous class" has a long history in the racist construction of the Southern "Other"' (Munck 2013, p.759). Munck argues that these racist underpinnings make the concept untenable as the basis of a progressive social transformation politics. For Munck, these shortcomings are symptomatic of the wider issue of Standing's Eurocentric bias. He asks:

Is the term ['precariat'] novel or even relevant, for the millions of workers and urban poor in the global South for whom precariousness has always been a seemingly natural condition?... the term...can become a new political distraction if it is not rigorously deconstructed and reconstructed from a historical and majority-world perspective. (Munck 2013, pp.747-748)

It is in these precarious, deregulated, de-industrialised and de-unionised labour market contexts that the vision of the future of work as a 'gig economy' is gaining currency with a range of labour market commentators, and in line with employer and corporate sector interests. The emergence of digital 'talent' platforms (as apps such as Deliveroo, Airtasker and Uber are frequently termed in business literatures) has facilitated the delivery of goods and services across new technologically-energised platforms, and according to some commentators, represents a fundamental shift in the way in which workers interact with the labour market. For example, the Australian Industry Group (2016, p.5) argues that the rise of these independent, task-by-task forms of employment is being driven by workers, who are 'expressing an increasing demand for autonomous and flexible work'. 'This is particularly evident amongst youth,' and signals a 'generational shift towards greater freedom and entrepreneurship' (Australian Industry Group 2016, p.5). This view is supported by the Foundation for Young Australians (2015, p.8), whose research suggests that around 70 percent of Australians under 34 are open to using a digital talent platform, such as Airtasker, Freelancer, or Uber to source income in the next year. However, this line of analysis tends to overlook the reality that young people are often turning to 'gig' work in the absence of other options. In the post-Global Financial Crisis era, full-time employment is out of reach for a growing number of people (OECD 2015a, p.146).

A profound 'de-synchronisation' attends the rise of 'gig' working arrangements. Woodman and Wyn (2015, pp.126-130) suggest that the temporal de-synchronisation seen among current generations of young people is the product of processes of individualisation and the institutionalisation of greater fluidity in employment patterns, and is a factor with the potential to impact on the quality of a young person's relationships with friends and family. This de-synchronisation is cast into sharp focus when compared with the rhythms and routines of industrial society, and the commonality of experience observed among its workforce. A survey of Australian automotive industry workers undertaken by a team of researchers at Australian Catholic University underscores the stability and standardisation that

characterised the working and employment conditions of this group (average 40 hours a week in a permanent full-time position they had held for around 20 years), as well as many of their demographic and biographical attributes (typically male, average age 50, with a mortgage and dependent children) (Barnes et al. 2016). This commonality of experience bred a strong sense of ‘family’ and community among those who lived and worked in industrial cities and towns such as Geelong. In the early 20th century, workers at Geelong’s textile mills, for example, established inter-factory sporting leagues in cricket and soccer, with women’s basketball and football teams. The Geelong Girls Unity Club operated from 1924 to 1965, and offered support, education and social events to women mill workers (Rice 2009, p.51). At the Valley Worsted Mill, workers and their families could partake in a thriving social calendar featuring dances, picnics and games nights (Rice 2009, p.51).

The work of Oinonen (2018) among young university students in Finland and Spain, and the insights produced by the longitudinal Life Patterns study conducted by researchers at the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, offer a powerful critique of the assumption that current generations of young people value flexibility and mobility over stability and security when making their career choices. The young participants in the Life Patterns study continue to rate ‘job security’ as more important than other factors such as ‘[the job] pays well’ or ‘has flexible hours’ in influencing their choice of career or employment (Crofts et al. 2015, p.9). Oinonen’s (2018) research is suggestive of a number of important insights. The young people in Oinonen’s study strove for employment that was secure, fulfilling, and that enabled a sense of ‘work-life balance’. As two of the young women interviewed by Oinonen (2018, p.1355) commented: ‘I don’t want my work to be completely my life’, and ‘although work is important to me I don’t want it to be the centre of my life - there has to be place also for my partner and other close relationships’. Alongside this distaste for demands to be always ‘on’, many of these students expressed a desire to ‘stay put’ rather than be mobile. The prospect of ‘life as an expert-nomad who creates her working career following job opportunities around the European Union or world does not seem to attract students’ (Oinonen 2018, p.1356). For these young people, connection to people and place is valued for providing them with the ‘material and, most of all, immaterial (emotional, social and cultural) resources’ that enable resilience and wellbeing to be maintained (Oinonen 2018, p.1357). Finally, Oinonen (2018, pp.1357-1358) suggests that while many of these university students have bought into the promises of the ‘human capital’ model of education – in other words, the assumption that an investment in education will be rewarded with secure employment, high incomes, and possible upward social mobility - they are simultaneously aware of the limitations of this model. She ventures that, despite being cognisant of the reality that ‘the human capital model no longer works in the way it used to’, these young people exercise what Berlant (2011, cited in Oinonen 2018, p.1358) understands as ‘cruel optimism’, in which they pursue a vision of the future that perhaps remains always slightly out of reach.

Some final comments must also be made about the rise of ‘workfare’ in neoliberal arts of government. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, ‘active’ labour market policy regimes rose to prominence in many of the industrialised democracies, as a corrective to the purported ‘crisis of welfare dependency’ and associated cultures of ‘worklessness’ (Standing 2014, pp.246-247; Considine et al. 2015, pp.19-20). Alan France (2016, p.160) suggests that ‘such regimes...have a strong connection to the moral economy of neoliberalism that shifts the responsibility (and blame) from the state to the individual in very clear ways’. Job-seekers must comply with logics of ‘activation’ and ‘mutual obligation’ (Considine et al. 2015, pp.20, 39). In Australia, the Turnbull Government’s Youth Jobs PaTH (Prepare-Trial-Hire) scheme, which places young job-seekers in internships, and which provides financial bonuses to both the employers and the job-seekers who participate, has been criticised by unions as amounting to ‘\$4-per-hour jobs for young people’ (Australian Government 2017; ABC

News 2016b). And in the 2017 budget, the Federal Liberal-National conservative coalition government announced its proposal to trial mandatory drug testing of Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients, with quarantining of welfare payments for ‘repeat offenders’ (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2017). As of June 2019, the *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Drug Testing Trial) Bill 2018* remains before the Senate (Knaus 2019).

A key contradiction of workfare regimes, Standing (2014, pp.248-249) observes, is that they engage participants in low-skill, low-productivity, ultimately unappealing jobs that do little to promote ‘good working habits and labour commitment’. The main intention of these schemes, according to Standing (2014, p.249), is to ‘massage the level of unemployment down, not by creating jobs but by discouraging the unemployed from claiming benefits’. Peck and Theodore (2000, p.120) similarly observe that, ‘there are...some senses in which workfare programmes can be seen as social policy analogues of flexible labour markets, as they serve to individualise employment relations, intensify competitive pressures at the bottom of the labour market and enforce low-paid work’.

## Conclusion

This chapter has mapped some of the key ‘epochs’, ‘episodes’, ‘events’, and ‘moments’ in the stories of globalisation, ‘neoliberal’ capitalism, digital disruption and youth labour market change in the industrialised democracies. While the conjunction of the post-war ‘long boom’ and the ‘social democratic’ consensus had buoyed the fortunes of industrial towns and cities across Australia and the OECD economies through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the crisis of overproduction in global manufacturing, declining capitalist profitability, and the ‘stagflation’ plaguing the industrialised economies in the 1970s provided the ‘conditions of possibility’ in which the neoliberal art of government could emerge – even as this emergence was not inevitable.

In advocating a reduced role for the state in the operation of the market, neoliberalism had the effect of deepening economic inequality through the reversal of the redistributive tendencies of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century welfare-state capitalism. While neoliberalism is often framed specifically as an economic theory or approach to public policy, the work of authors in the governmentality tradition suggests that neoliberalism can be understood in a more expansive sense. Neoliberalism is an art of government that seeks to make and remake individuals (with the creation of particular ‘ideal subjects’), and their relationships with the state, civil society and the economy. Following Foucault, we can understand neoliberalism as an approach to the ‘conduct of conduct’: one that shifts the responsibility for managing the risks and contradictions of late modernity onto the shoulders of individuals. In tandem with these developments, the new global flows and interconnections that began to emerge in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century have been instrumental in the reconfiguration of ‘space’ and ‘place’. In light of these changes, the challenge for social scientists has been to define and understand ‘place’, in a world in which some of the boundaries and borders of space have become increasingly porous. The emergent ‘spatial turn’ in youth studies seeks to understand the significance of processes of globalisation in shaping the identities and life chances of young people across urban, regional and rural areas.

In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, digital disruption has emerged as a key material and discursive force shaping the New Work Orders that structure the opportunities available to young people in contemporary labour markets. Technological disruption is joined by a complex array of forces shaping the development of youth labour markets that are increasingly precarious, deregulated, de-industrialised and de-unionised. Among the other key ‘episodes’, ‘events’, and ‘moments’ that have been particularly significant in the transformation of youth labour markets are the rise in rates of underemployment in the youth cohort as a corollary of rising casualisation, diminishing rates of return

on higher education, the growth in unpaid internships, falling rates of unionisation, and the development of 'workfare' as a punitive instrument targeted at young people not in employment, education or training. The various forces of 'neoliberal' capitalism, de-industrialisation, economic restructuring, globalisation, and the remaking of 'space' and 'place' have had significant local impacts on 'Rust Belt' places such as Geelong. In Geelong, the closure of International Harvester in 1982 was an event that signalled the beginning of the period of significant de-industrialisation. This event and the many other developments that have been instrumental in forging Geelong as a 'Rust Belt' city will be explored in the following chapter.

# Chapter Three

## Geelong: a ‘Rust Belt’ locale

### Introduction

Geelong, a city of over 250,000 people in Victoria, Australia, was, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, renowned as a centre for industrial manufacturing. However, one of the key outcomes of more than four decades of economic and spatial restructuring has been to radically transform the accessibility of work, and the skill requirements of employment, in labour markets in which the services and ‘information’ sectors are increasingly dominant, and in which manufacturing employs fewer and fewer workers. From the late 20<sup>th</sup> century into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, de-industrialisation, the emergence of ‘neoliberal’ capitalism, and the reconfiguration of ‘space’ and ‘place’ associated with processes of globalisation fundamentally reshaped the industrialised democracies. In this chapter, I will tell a story about Geelong’s industrial development from the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and its subsequent de-industrialisation beginning in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of the more particular detail about key social, political and economic events and episodes in Geelong’s recent history, and their impacts on young people, will be taken up in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. In keeping with the genealogical ethos that guides this work, and in a similar vein to the work in the previous chapter, it is not my intention to provide a detailed, linear and/or complete story of Geelong’s historical development. Rather, my intent is to examine some of the key ‘epochs’, ‘episodes’, ‘events’ and ‘moments’ which have shaped the character of this regional city and the labour market opportunities available to those who call it home.

The modern history of Geelong’s industrialisation began in the 1860s with the establishment of the city’s first textile mills, and this is where the chapter will begin. By the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Geelong had established a reputation as one of the preeminent textile producers of the Anglophone world, and as the local textile sector expanded it was joined by an array of other industries: car manufacturing, oil refining, and aluminium smelting, among others. In the mid-1950s, employment in manufacturing peaked at almost 50 per cent of the local labour force, and in this mid-20<sup>th</sup> century period, it was thought that workers in the city’s major industries could be assured of a ‘job for life’. The historical dynamics of industrial development and decline in Australia, and their spatial impacts, are the focus of the following section of the chapter, where I will explore some of the commonalities and contrasts across Geelong’s experience of development and those of other industrial locales in Australia. In these places, the investment decisions of multinational companies, in conjunction with the economic, social, and urban planning policies of governments, have been responsible for the creation of distinctive physical and social landscapes. As I will also demonstrate in this section, in these communities, processes of industrialisation were associated with particular configurations of class, gender and race: in the post-World War II period, the composition of Geelong’s workforce became much more ethnically diverse even as it remained segregated by gender.

Next, the chapter will chart processes of de-industrialisation in Geelong through an examination of two key ‘events’: the first of which considers the historical transformation of the city’s northern suburbs – a concentrated area of public housing and low-skilled manual employment – and the second, the wind-down of Australia’s car manufacturing industry, the impacts of which have been locally significant. From this point, the chapter will consider responses to restructuring. Contemporary dynamics of capitalist accumulation are inscribing a very different story on this regional city. As a

self-consciously 'post-industrial', 21<sup>st</sup> century city, Geelong is attempting to move towards an economic base in which healthcare, services, and the 'knowledge' sector feature much more prominently. The influential though contested ideas of the mobile 'creative class' as the driver of local economic development are a central feature of the urban development agendas pursued by business and civic leaders. While the development of advanced manufacturing capabilities and methods in some local industries ensures that Geelong is still a 'place where things are made', manufacturing in Geelong is no longer the mass participation, mass production activity that it was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Geelong's industrial heritage

Geelong was first gazetted as a town in 1838, and 'originally came into existence to service the needs of squatters in the hinterland', historian Ian Wynd (1986, pp.3, 19) suggests. Its early development was shaped in large part by the wool and sheep trade, and the Victorian gold rush of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The town became colloquially known as the 'Pivot' after local masthead the *Geelong Advertiser* declared in the late 1840s that Geelong was the pivot on which the commerce of Port Phillip District turned (Wynd 1986, p.2). The nickname was forged in the context of the competition between Geelong and Melbourne to be recognised as the administrative capital of the state. The moniker would later be utilised in the naming of a number of local businesses, with residents of the town and sporting teams referred to as the 'Pivotonians' (Wynd 1986, p.2).

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Geelong was a booming regional centre, boasting an array of industrial operations that included oil refining, aluminium smelting, car manufacturing and glass making, as well as a significant textile and clothing industry (Johnson 2009a, p.474). This strong industrial economic base afforded high rates of labour market participation; in 1986 historian Ian Wynd noted that 'of all Victorian regions, Geelong has the lowest level of youth unemployment' (Wynd 1986, p.3).

Geelong's textile industry was established in the 1860s, and underwent significant expansion in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wynd 1986, pp.54-56). In the 1930s and 1940s, Geelong's textile industry appeared untroubled by the aftermath of the Great Depression, with textile workers in demand locally, and production booming across the city's eight woollen mills in order to supply the war effort (Rice 2009, pp.27-31). As Rice (2009, p.28) highlights, the July 1934 issue of a leading textile industry journal 'reported that nearly all local mills in the Geelong district had been advertising for worsted menders, weavers, spinners, loom tuners and other skilled artisans'. Output was on a par with the centre of woollen and worsted cloth production in Bradford, Yorkshire (UK), earning Geelong the title of 'Bradford of Australia' (Rice 2009, p.ix). Roughly 30 percent of Geelong workers were employed in manufacturing in 1933 (ABS 1933), rising to 43 percent in 1947, and peaking at 46 percent in the mid-1950s (ABS 1947; ABS 1954), before a period of significant and sustained decline that continues to the present day (see Figure 6).

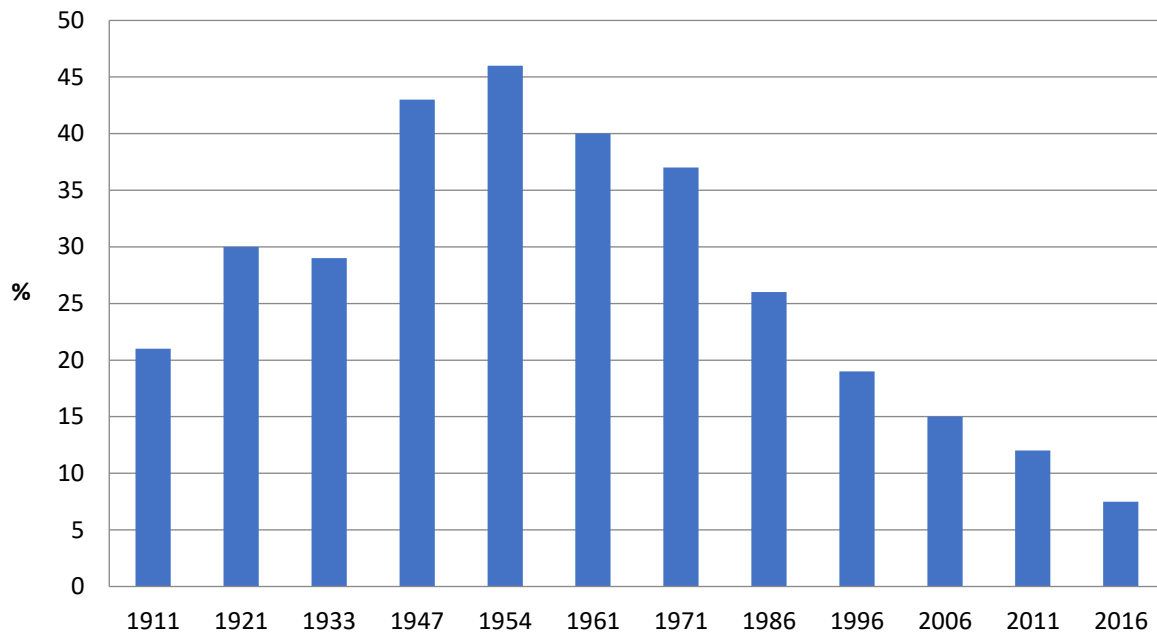


Figure 6: Employment in manufacturing in Geelong 1911-2016, expressed as a percentage of the total workforce. Source: ABS Census. Data for 1911 are for county of Grant, Victoria.

The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of peak optimism for Geelong’s manufacturing sector. At this time it was thought that employees of companies such as International Harvester and the Ford Motor Company could be assured of a ‘job for life’. International Harvester, a manufacturer of agricultural machinery, opened its Geelong plant in 1939, and went on to employ over 2500 people by 1966, out of a total of 4500 Australia-wide (Medson 1988, p.10). In addition, the company engaged many local businesses in the manufacture of parts to its requirements.

It is important to note that the buoyancy of Geelong’s manufacturing sector was made possible by the conjunction of the long boom of 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism with the ‘social democratic’ political consensus which predominated in many of the industrialising democracies after World War II. Driving the development of the Australian manufacturing sector was the strategy of ‘import-replacing industrialisation’, which Fagan and Webber (1999, pp.51-52, 140) suggest was a goal ‘supported by political parties of both the right and left of the political spectrum and by organised labour’. Tariff protection of domestic industries was the centrepiece of industry policy after 1950, with Australian manufacturing protected against imports by a regime of tariffs and quotas (Fagan & Webber 1999, pp.140-141).

These national policies were complemented by a wide range of social policies maintained by governments at both federal and state levels (Fagan & Webber 1999, p.140). As I explored in Chapter 2, the social democratic consensus saw governments take a much more interventionist role in the welfare of the working class, securing and/or supporting their access to housing, employment, insurance against infirmity, and other elemental needs. For a relatively brief period before the long boom began to dissipate in the 1970s, this confluence of forces would play an instrumental role in boosting the economic fortunes of many Australian towns and cities, and those of their inhabitants. In the following section I will situate the story of Geelong’s industrialisation in the context of these wider currents of change.



## The changing fortunes of Australia's industrial towns and cities

While there are significant local particularisms that distinguish the story of Geelong's industrialisation (and subsequent de-industrialisation), this story is, in many important respects, comparable to those of other industrial towns and cities in Australia and the OECD economies. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century industrialisation of Australia's towns and cities, Eklund (2002, p.2) argues, was associated with the creation of distinctive physical and social landscapes. Industrial towns:

Are places where the global and local collide in an often tumultuous fashion. In Australia, Britain and the United States these towns have distinctive images among outsiders; they bear witness to the power of investment decisions made in distant boardrooms; and they experienced rapid population influx through immigration in periods of growth and expansion. Yet these towns also exhibit powerful moments of collective mobilisation and generalised place-based loyalty, where a sense of locality sharpened the edges of local culture while mediating the forces of the outside world. (Eklund 2002, p.3)

Industrial society was associated with a set of distinct rhythms and routines which 'infused every household and every social and religious event' (Eklund 2002, p.164). The rhythms and routines that Eklund suggests predominated in the steel-producing town of Port Kembla in New South Wales could just as easily be those of Geelong in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century:<sup>12</sup>

Company time structured local time. Throughout Port Kembla sirens, hooters and whistles announced the beginning and end of every shift. Religious and other community groups took care to plan their fundraisers for the day or weekend immediately after pay Thursday. Local retailers learnt to expect the fortnightly fluctuations in their business as customers came in after pay Thursday, and the week before payday was characterised by little trade. (Eklund 2002, p.164)

The scale and pace of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century industrial development was particularly remarkable in the state of Victoria. Eather (1988, p.70) highlights that Victoria's post-war population growth was the largest of all Australian states, increasing by 41 percent between June 1946 and June 1950, and that this growth was due, predominantly, to a rapid expansion in manufacturing. Figures from the 1962 *Victorian Year Book* (cited in Eather 1988, p.70) reveal that the number of factories increased from 10,195 in 1945-46 to 16,979 in 1959-60. The extra 6784 factories, plus expansion in the established factories, created a further 125,265 jobs in the same period. The population of the Barwon region, which encompasses Geelong and surrounding districts, rose by 23,764 between 1947 and 1954 (Eather 1988, p.88). The robust industrial development and associated population growth seen in regional Victoria boosted the economic fortunes of the state, and this general mood of confidence is reflected in a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century publication, *Spotlight on Australia*, in which the Australian Publicity Council (n.d., cited in Wixted, Zahra & Reeves 2008, p.16) boasts that 'Melbourne itself, and the

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<sup>12</sup> As suggested by the recollections of people known to the author who were residents of Geelong at this time, and the oral histories of former employees of Geelong's textile industry which are featured as part of a multi-media exhibit at the National Wool Museum in Geelong. As Rice (2009, p.50) writes, 'the mill whistle... was a call for the mill workers to commence and finish work, but the citizens of Geelong regulated their lives by the mill whistles heard over long distances... as one observer commented in 1924: "When the factories dismiss hands at five o'clock the array of bicycles is simply astounding. The thousands of work people making their way to their homes is a sight not easily forgotten"'.

principal provincial cities of Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Dandenong, all contribute to the state's title as the "workshop of Australia".

This rapid post-war population growth triggered a housing shortage, Eather (1988, p.71) observes, with families sometimes 'forced to live in overcrowded and substandard dwellings or in tents, garages, caravans or single rooms when they could be found, with in-laws or in emergency camps'. It was in this context that the governments of several Australian states embarked on an ambitious program of housing reform, seeking greater powers to construct, sell and rent out low cost housing for workers, in many cases with the associated goal of clearing the unsightly and unsanitary 'slums' which had come to characterise many inner-city working-class neighbourhoods since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Harris 1988, p.2). The two dominant schools of early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century planning – one the Garden City movement founded by Englishman Ebenezer Howard, and the other, architectural modernism – were borne out of concerns that the city was a site that fomented working class unrest, through its propensities for overcrowding, disease and pollution (Rogers 2018). Ebenezer Howard's 1902 publication, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, offered a template for well-ordered and pleasant urban design featuring accessible open spaces and parklands for recreation and sporting pursuits (Lewi 2010, p.146). This wariness of high-density living, Rogers (2018) maintains, 'infected government policy across much of the world in the post-war decades, with city leaders encouraging the demolition of dense working-class neighbourhoods and the construction of industrial parks, suburbs, motorways and cars'.

In early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Geelong, property developers also sought to capitalise on the appeal of the Garden City in marketing their new housing developments. A promotional booklet produced in 1924 by the Melbourne Subdivisions Company (reproduced in Wynd 1979) showcases the attractions and locational advantages of the 'Garden Suburb of Corio'<sup>13</sup> planned for the city's north. The prospective suburb had already secured key pieces of infrastructure, including 'railways, roads and educational advantages'; it therefore promised to be 'better in its lay-out and in its provisions than any previous design in Australia' (Melbourne Subdivisions Company 1924, cited in Wynd 1979, pp.23-24). This 'magnificent location', boasted the advantages of a 'daily railway service, excellent motor roads, beach and plantation frontages, large area (609 acres), educational, social and industrial activities' (namely the Geelong Grammar School and the Ford Motor Company) and was located within five to seven-and-a-half miles of 'the established and growing City' (Melbourne Subdivisions Company 1924, cited in Wynd 1979, p.24). However, the Garden Suburb of Corio ultimately failed to prosper, for 'less than a quarter of the 2555 allotments were sold and by 1931 there were only six houses on the estate' (Wynd 1981, p.196). The development of Corio would eventually occur some decades later, in large part due to the Housing Commission of Victoria's construction of large housing estates in the area.

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the regional focus of the Housing Commission of Victoria's housing construction programs was underpinned by the Commission's mandate to facilitate the decentralisation of industry (Eather 1988, p.73). This policy had been initiated by the Dunstan Country Party Government in 1943, and was carried through by the Cain Labor Government of 1945-47 and the Bolte Liberal-Country Party Government of 1955-1972 (Eather 1988, p.73). The imperative of industry decentralisation also informed the activities of the South Australian Housing Trust at this time. It was thought that low cost housing, in conjunction with Adelaide's relatively

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<sup>13</sup> The Corio Garden Suburb estate was later renamed Grandjean Park, in honour of P.W. Grandjean, who, as the secretary of Ford Canada, 'had selected Geelong as the company's headquarters' (Wynd 1981, p.195).

lower wages bill, would magnify the state's competitive advantage. In this sense, these ideas were a central element of the 'Playford Plan', the policy of industrialisation mounted by South Australian Premier Thomas Playford with the aim of attracting industrial investment that would otherwise gravitate towards the eastern states (Peel 1995, p.33). The township of Elizabeth, on Adelaide's northern fringe, was conceived as a 'city for tomorrow', and at the time of its establishment in 1955 was regarded as a triumph of the town planning efforts of the South Australian Housing Trust (Peel 1995, pp.14-15). Its layout and design were inspired by the Garden City ideal so in vogue in the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Peel 1995, p.25). The growth and evolution of Elizabeth entered a new phase with the decision of General Motors-Holden to establish car manufacturing operations there in the early 1960s, and the 'model town' became a 'workers' city' (Peel 1995, p.4, 69).

The gender composition of the manufacturing workforce in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was unmistakably male-dominated. Figure 7 below utilises census data for Geelong in 1961 to illustrate the size of the male and female workforces, and the major sectors of employment for each gender. In 1961, Geelong's male workforce numbered 26,817. There were 11,809 males employed in manufacturing, 4210 in commerce, 3270 in building and construction, and 1858 in transport and storage. In contrast, there were a total of 8732 women in the workforce, and, although they were more likely to be employed in non-manual roles, the predominant sector of employment for women was also manufacturing (2634), with the majority of these jobs in textile and clothing production. This was followed by community, professional and business services (2079), commerce (2019), and 'Amusement, Hotels, &c' (944) (ABS 1961, pp.88-89).

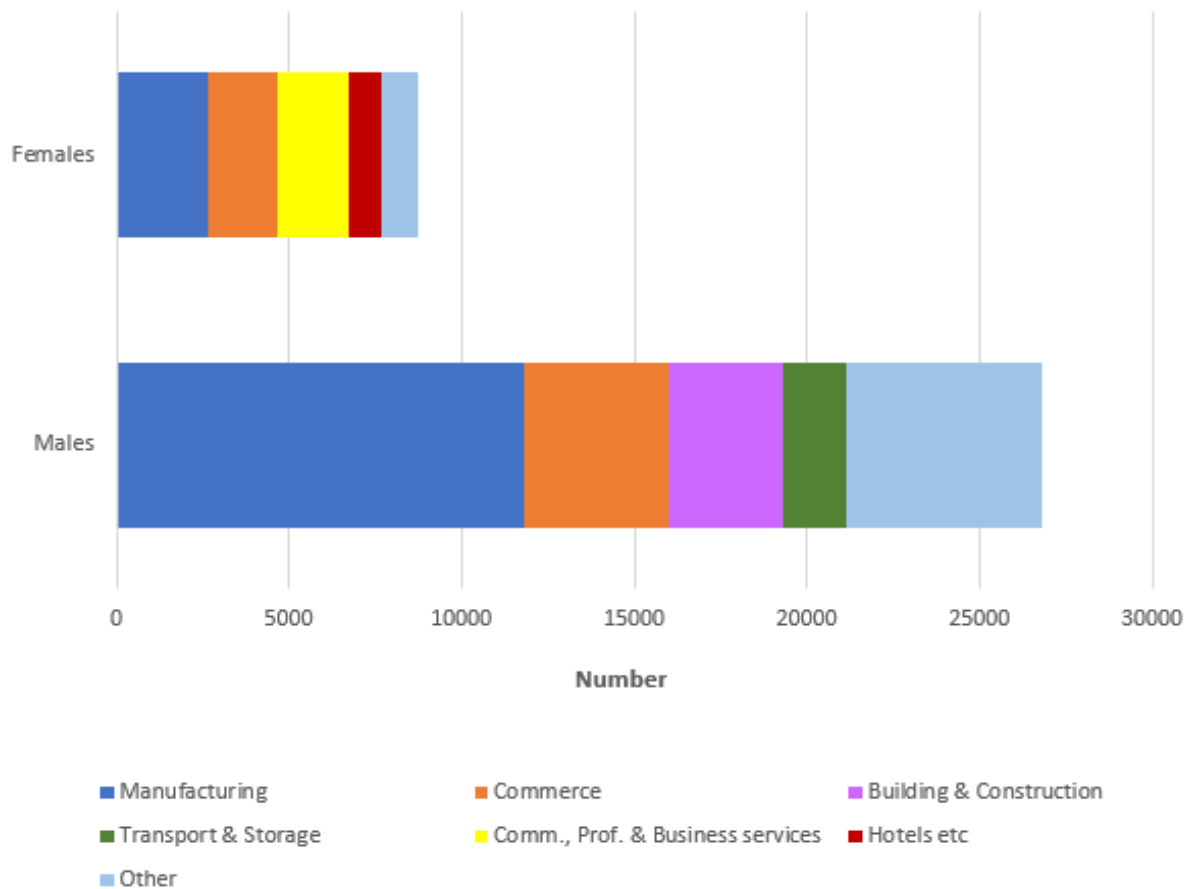


Figure 7: Male and female workforces in Geelong 1961, segmented by major sectors of employment. Source: Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1961. Figures are for Geelong urban area.

While the gender structure of the industrial workforce was predominantly male, with post-World War II waves of migration, there was a broadening in the mix of ethnicities. In the post-war period, the Commonwealth Government’s Displaced Persons Resettlement Scheme stood at the intersection of industry policy and immigration policy. Johnson (2009b, p.199) argues that, ‘while initially explained in terms of the humanitarian acceptance of war refugees, the systematic encouragement of European immigration was carefully linked to the expansion of Australia’s industrial base’. In the Displaced Persons camps of Occupied Europe, the Australian Government aggressively marketed the lifestyle attractions of Australia as ‘the best country in the world’, and the Scheme successfully attracted more than 180,000 migrant-labourers to Australia’s shores between 1947 and 1952 (Balint 2014, pp.102-104). By signing a two-year labour contract, each person who enlisted in the Australian resettlement scheme agreed to go anywhere and undertake any job allocated by the Commonwealth. As Balint (2014, p.110) notes, ‘in practice this usually meant rural locations, in unskilled labouring work’. Eklund (2002, p.179) observes that by 1975 four out of every ten workers in the Australian manufacturing industry had been born overseas, and these workers were overwhelmingly concentrated in low-paid, unskilled jobs.

With the end of the long boom of 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism and successive economic recessions, many of Australia’s industrial towns and cities became unemployment blackspots. ‘Elizabeth was a quintessential “long boom” landscape,’ Peel (1995, p.84) asserts, ‘and that left it savagely exposed as

that long boom eventually wound down and petered out in the 1970s'. By the 1980s, the popular image of Elizabeth was of a slum, a 'place made poor' (Peel 1995, pp.1,58). In 1992, Elizabeth's youth unemployment rate soared well above 50 percent, Peel (1995, p.201) observes, a trend seen in other de-industrialising centres such as Newcastle in New South Wales (Westbury 2015, pp.18-19).

As I will discuss in greater detail in Part Two of this thesis, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century was also a time of unfolding transformation and restructuring in Geelong. Although the Ford automotive factory was the leading employer in a local economy still heavily reliant on manufacturing (Wynd 1990, p.703), 'Geelong began the process of re-inventing itself' in the 1980s, planning for a future in which it would be less economically-dependent on heavy industries (Johnson 2012, p.6). A key 'event' in the story of Geelong's de-industrialisation occurred in 1982, when major employer International Harvester faced insolvency due to a combination of factors, including a saturated market and cheaper imports (Medson 1988, pp.14-16). At the time of the plant's closure, the workforce had dwindled to 600 loyal employees (Medson 1988, p.14).

The 1990s opened inauspiciously: the locally-based Pyramid Building Society collapsed with debts of \$2 billion, leaving thousands of depositors and shareholders out of pocket (Mills & Cannon 2015, p.4). Having once boasted that 'Driving a Ford drives Geelong', the Ford Motor Company began its long wind-down, as new technologies and international rationalisation signalled the end of car manufacturing in the region (Johnson 2012, p.6).

More recently, during 2012-2016, Geelong has been harder hit by more job losses: aluminium production at Alcoa's Point Henry smelter was stopped at the end of 2014, leaving more than 800 workers out of a job; Ford announced that it would close its Geelong and Broadmeadows plants by 2016; three hundred jobs were cut at Avalon airport with the closure of Qantas' maintenance facility; Boral Cement shed 100 jobs in 2013 (Paul 2014). And in April 2016, retailer Target announced its decision to relocate its headquarters to Melbourne, spelling an uncertain future for 900 employees, and the end of Target's 90-year association with Geelong (Tyler 2016).

Having briefly surveyed the impacts of the end of the long boom of 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism on Geelong and a selection of other key regional manufacturing centres, I will now turn to look in some detail at two key 'events' which are illustrative of the impact of global and local processes of restructuring in shaping the economic and social fabric of Geelong. The first of these considers the historical transformation of Geelong's northern suburbs, and the second, the local impacts of the growth and subsequent decline of Australia's car manufacturing industry.

### Geelong's northern suburbs: from 'Garden Suburb' to pocket of disadvantage

Feminist geographer Louise Johnson argues that Geelong has 'register[ed] on its urban and social fabric some of the more dramatic changes in the recent economic geography of the nation', and perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the former industrial powerhouses of Geelong's northern suburbs (Johnson 2012, pp.6-7). In order to grasp the reasons behind the ghettoisation and stigmatisation of Geelong's northern suburbs from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards ('the Bronx of Geelong' is how one respondent in Warr's [2009] study, a resident of Corio, described the area), it is first necessary to examine their origins as predominantly working class suburbs, and to consider the factors that have produced disinvestment and disadvantage in these spaces.

The 1920s and 1930s were periods of considerable growth in the North Geelong-North Shore area. The Ford Motor Company established its Geelong plant, and a range of other industries also

commenced operation, including Cresco Fertilizers Limited, the Phosphate Co-operative of Australia Limited, Corio Distillery, Shell Oil Refinery, International Harvester, as well as a constellation of firms supplying goods or services to Ford (Wynd 1981, pp.104-105). In this early 20<sup>th</sup> century period, the northern suburbs were promoted, in ambitious plans for the Garden Suburb of Corio, as Geelong's 'city for tomorrow'. Perhaps more significant than the largely unrealised plans of property developers was the fact that Geelong would later become the site of one of the largest housing projects completed by the Housing Commission of Victoria. It was this combination of affordable housing and ample employment opportunities in the burgeoning industrial hub in Geelong's northern suburbs that allowed a great number of migrants to start their lives in a new country (Wynd 1981, pp.204-209).

In response to the housing shortage precipitated by Geelong's rapid industrial development, the Housing Commission of Victoria constructed more than 5000 houses in the northern suburbs of Geelong over a thirty-year period (Wynd 1981, p.202). Norlane was the Commission's largest country estate, and the majority of its 2348 houses were built between 1951 and 1957 (Eather 1988, p.72; Wynd 1981, p.200). From the late 1950s to the 1970s, the Commission also constructed a series of large housing estates in Corio (Wynd 1981, pp.200-202). Winter and Bryson (1998, p.62) argue that the enhanced, interventionist role that Australian governments took in the construction of housing in the post-war period was something of an historical anomaly. From 1945 to 1970, about 36 per cent of all new houses and flats completed in Australia were directly financed by governments, primarily through the state housing authorities (16 percent) and War Services Homes Scheme (13 percent) (Jones 1972, cited in Berry 1988, p.99). This figure was comparable with the lower end of development occurring in European social housing schemes in Britain, the Netherlands, West Germany and Denmark (Winter & Bryson 1998, p.62).

The new post-war suburbs represented a distinctive urban form that Winter and Bryson (1998) term 'Holdenist suburbia', a form which they maintain was the product of the particular conjuncture of the interests of the state and capital that predominated in Australia in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. For Winter and Bryson (1998, p.60), the 'measures the state has adopted in relation to economic change and housing provision have, in conjunction with the forces of economic restructuring, actually forged particular suburban spaces as sites of urban poverty'. The defining features of Holdenist suburbs, which have in later years contributed to their disadvantage and stigmatisation, include that they were: built by government; of a large scale and uniform appearance; constructed of poor quality, cheap materials; home to relatively high percentages of public renters; comprised of predominantly working-class families; and adjacent to manufacturing employment (Winter & Bryson 1998, p.61). Winter and Bryson (1998, p.70) also highlight the lack of maintenance programs for the upkeep of public housing stock.

This claim resonates with the experience of Geelong's northern suburbs, which, as a concentrated area of relatively low-skilled employment and public housing, is a space left particularly vulnerable to the effects of economic restructuring and disinvestment. The northern suburbs feature a higher proportion of manual and manufacturing employment. While only 11 percent of the city's workforce are engaged in manufacturing, in the northern suburbs of Corio and Norlane close to 20 percent are employed in this sector (Johnson 2016, p.17). In public perception, however, Norlane and Corio have transformed from 'working' into 'workless' suburbs (Warr 2009, p.289). The status of the northern suburbs as a pocket of disadvantage has been reinforced in research mapping the geographic distribution of social disadvantage in Australia, undertaken by Tony Vinson and colleagues (Vinson, Rawsthorne & Cooper 2007; Vinson et al. 2015). In the 2015 *Dropping Off the Edge* report, the 3214 postcode, which encompasses Corio, Norlane and North Shore, recorded an average ranking of 45 — the third worst in

the state — across 22 indicators of disadvantage including internet access, income, education level, literacy and numeracy, long-term unemployment, unskilled workers, juvenile offending and criminal convictions (Crane 2015).

There has been a range of local, place-based initiatives concerned with mitigating the disadvantage experienced in the northern suburbs. Northern Futures, established in 2007, is an organisation which aims to create education, training and employment opportunities to assist the unemployed to secure long-term sustainable employment (Northern Futures n.d., p.8). The Northern Bay Challenge, a program offering an education and training guarantee for students of Corio's Northern Bay College, aims to dramatically improve the post-secondary school prospects of young people living in the 3214 postcode (Shying 2018, p.11). In recognition that the birth rate for women aged 15-24 in the northern suburbs was well in excess of the national average for this age group, the Young Parents' Access Program commenced in 2002 at Corio Bay Senior College (now Northern Bay College) to support the educational outcomes of young mothers (Angwin et al. 2004, p.6). The program remains in operation, under the title of Supporting Parents' Access to Childcare and Education (SPACE).

### The wind-down of Australia's car manufacturing industry

The Ford Motor Company produced cars in Geelong for a total of 91 years, and in its manufacturing heyday, the workforce of the Geelong plant numbered over 5000 (ABC 2016b). A veteran Ford employee reflects that, 'we couldn't really produce enough cars, in the good days' (ABC 2016b). Nicholas Heath of the Geelong Motoring Museum asserts that, 'if you bought a Ford between the '20s and the '60s, it had either been assembled or made in Geelong' (ABC 2016b). However, the future of Australian car manufacturing began to appear increasingly uncertain with the rise of Japanese and Korean producers in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, who established their competitive advantage through the use of novel methods of production. In addition, the impacts of the 1973 oil price shock increased the demand for smaller and more fuel-efficient cars (Fagan & Webber 1999, pp.124-125).

Fagan and Webber (1999, p.144) also cite the move away from the policy objective of tariff protection of domestic industry and the increasing integration of Australia into the global economy after 1980 as factors bearing on the fortunes of the Australian car industry. Tariff reductions were instigated by the Whitlam Labor Government of 1972-1975, and accelerated in the 1980s as part of the Hawke Labor Government's economic reforms (Capling, Considine & Crozier 1998, pp.34, 47-48). As Minister for Industry and Commerce in the Hawke administration, John Button argued that the structure of the Australian car industry 'encouraged too many manufacturers to chase too small a market', and that Australian industry more generally lacked an 'export culture' (Button 1998, p.292). In 1984 Button announced the Motor Industry Development Plan, which intended to rationalise the number of manufacturers and the number of models produced (Button 1998, p.303). This restructuring process, arguably, helped to sustain the Australian car industry for a limited period of time.

The death knell of the industry sounded in the 2013-14 period, when, within months of each other, Australia's three remaining car manufacturers – Ford, General Motors-Holden, and Toyota – announced their decisions to cease production in the country by 2016-17 (Barnes 2016, p.6). Calculating the total number of retrenchments associated with the closures is difficult, Barnes asserts. The structure of the automotive industry is complex and multi-layered, with the majority of workers employed in the supply chain rather than directly employed by the carmakers (Barnes 2016, p.7). However, modelling conducted in 2014 by researchers from the University of Adelaide and the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) predicted that Australia would suffer a

fall in national employment of around 200,000 as a result of the planned closures, with up to half of these job losses occurring in Victoria (Barbaro, Spoehr & NIEIR 2014, p.1). A more modest estimate of 40,000 direct and indirect job losses nationally by 2018 was offered by the Productivity Commission in 2014 (Barnes 2016, p.8).

In industrial towns and cities such as Geelong and Broadmeadows (Australia), Detroit (US), and Birmingham (UK), the growth of car manufacturing through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shaped the patterns of development, the identities, the social and spatial characteristics of these communities in particular ways. With a road-dominated cityscape inspired by American car cities such as Detroit, in the post-war period Birmingham became a city of ‘flyovers and underpasses’ (Parker & Long 2004, pp.37,43). As had occurred in Geelong around the time of the closure of the Ford plant, an emerging crisis at Birmingham’s largest car factory at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century proved the catalyst for a moment of reflection on the city’s past and future identities:

With the future of one of its biggest employers at the mercy of corporate strategy, venture capitalists, national and European grant aid, the question of just what Birmingham should be and do as a city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century was posed with startling clarity. How much of its manufacturing and motor industry past should be preserved? How far can a[n] historic industrial city depend on service sector jobs in the new economy? And...what politics underlie the images of Birmingham’s past and present in play in the debate over its possible futures? (Parker & Long 2003, pp.160-161)

Parker and Long (2003, p.163) observe that in official and popular accounts of Birmingham’s history, there is a tendency to represent the city’s past as ‘a place of settled and knowable community’. This is a history in which the role of ethnic minorities in shaping the development and character of this industrial city is frequently ‘written out’ (Parker & Long 2003, pp.164-165). In this way, the politics of memory risks becoming a politics of exclusion: ‘community is by implication here the property of the [white] working classes who inhabited this milieu, “hard-working and neighbourly folk” who gave areas “a strong sense of identity” (Chinn 1999, cited in Parker & Long 2003, p.163).

In 1973, a full 75 percent of the workers at Ford’s factory at Broadmeadows, in Melbourne’s north, were born overseas, and in the 1980s, more than half of Geelong’s Ford workforce was from a migrant background (Wallman 2016). While the erasure of racial difference appears to be less of an issue in the histories of Australia’s car manufacturing communities, these histories are often ‘sanitised’ in other ways. In reconstructing the ‘golden age’ of industrial capitalism through the lens of nostalgia there is a risk that the fine-grained realities of what it meant to labour in these spaces, realities characterised by ambivalence and struggle, will be lost, or glossed over. In many accounts of the wind-down of car manufacturing in Australia, there is a tendency to romanticise industrial labour that was, in a large number of cases, physically grueling and relatively unskilled. Strangleman and Rhodes (2014, p.417) observe that many of the tropes of de-industrialisation ‘critically juxtapose the “good jobs” of the past versus the “poor jobs” of the now’. The prosaic reality of industrial labour is highlighted by Cowie and Heathcott (2003, cited in Strangleman & Rhodes 2014, p.417), who suggest that it was ‘tough work that people did because it paid well and it was located in their communities’. The recollections of former Ford employees are bittersweet as they reflect on many years spent in work that punished their bodies even as it provided them with occupational and financial stability. ‘The job ruined my body’, a former employee says, ‘It was such hard work. But I don’t regret it. Look at my son, he is an accountant. I didn’t have an education, and now my son is an accountant’. Former Ford employee Darren expresses a similar sentiment: ‘It was a place I could work even though I never



went to school. You didn't have to have an education - as long as you were there on time, you could make a living' (Wallman 2016)<sup>14</sup>.

### Responses to restructuring: 'Rust Belt' cities and the aesthetics of the post-industrial

Emerging in the 1980s, the appellation 'Rust Belt' originally described a distinct economically-depressed area of North America, stretching from New York to Chicago (Neumann 2016, p.5). However, at this time the manufacturing centres of the Canadian heartland were also in decline, as was Western Europe's steel and coal country, 'from Lille to the Ruhr to Sheffield and Glasgow' (Neumann 2016, p.5). The 'Rust Belt' has therefore more recently come to symbolise a more generalised pattern of de-industrialisation that implicates numerous places/spaces in the industrialised democracies. Neumann also interrogates the provenance of the concept of the 'post-industrial society', suggesting it was the 1973 publication of *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* by sociologist Daniel Bell that brought the concept to prominence. In this work, Bell outlined some of the structural changes evident in the shift towards an economy based on the provision of services rather than the production of goods (Neumann 2016, p.8). Although the "'post-industrial society"' rapidly became part of the popular and professional lexicon' at the behest of journalists, pundits and politicians (Neumann 2016, p.8), it was a term freighted with distinct political connotations:

On the ground in economically troubled cities, 'deindustrialization' and 'post-industrial society' functioned as rhetorical devices through which urban constituencies articulated competing visions for cities after the decline of manufacturing. Planners and politicians embraced the positive connotations of the forward-looking 'post-industrial society'. Labor activists preferred the term 'deindustrialization,' which evoked powerful place-based imagery of abandoned factories and boarded-up buildings in a way that 'post-industrial' did not. (Neumann 2016, pp.9-10)

As 'Rust Belt' cities such as Geelong and Newcastle in Australia, and Pittsburgh and Detroit in the US seek to position themselves in the globalised, technologised, knowledge economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the aesthetics of particular kinds of enterprise and economic development are understood by political and business leaders as key to the post-industrial fortunes of these places. Urban redevelopment and place marketing become central strategies in the (re-)branding and marketing of these places as centres for economic investment, production and consumption that appeal particularly to members of the 'creative class'. The work of urban studies theorist Richard Florida has been influential here. Florida develops his theory of the 'creative class' and its role in processes of urban development in his works *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2014), originally published in 2002, and *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005). He argues that there are '3 Ts' involved in the economic development of cities: talent, technology and 'tolerance'. In a globalised, networked society, resources like talent and technology do not settle too long in any particular geographical location, rather they 'are highly mobile factors, flowing into and out of places' (Florida 2005, p.6). In order to mobilise and attract the creative talent and technology necessary for economic growth, places must demonstrate a culture of 'openness, diversity, and tolerance' (Florida 2005, p.7). As Florida explains:

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<sup>14</sup> The reflections of Darren and other former Ford employees are featured in *Winding Up the Window: The End of the Australian Auto Industry*, a story told in the form of a comic by cartoonist Sam Wallman (2016), which can be viewed here: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/feature/winding-window-end-australian-auto-industry>

Places that are open to immigrants, artists, gays, and racial integration... are the kinds of places that, by allowing people to be themselves and to validate their distinct identities, mobilize and attract the creative energy that bubbles up naturally from all walks of life. Such places gain an economic advantage in both harnessing the creative capabilities of a broader range of their own people and in capturing a disproportionate share of the flow. (Florida 2005, p.7)

I will survey some of the many criticisms of Florida's work in Chapter 5, however at this point it is important to note the traction that Florida's ideas have gained among political and business elites in Geelong, as in other former industrial centres. In 2016, the Committee for Geelong, one of several groups which pursue the strategic economic and business interests of the region, commissioned an international study tour to examine what makes so-called 'Second Cities' – such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh in the US, and Sheffield and Liverpool in the UK – successful (Correia & Denham 2016). In their final report, Correia and Denham note that in such places as Dundee, Cleveland and Pittsburgh, 'there is...a recurring emphasis on creating vibrant city centres as an attractor of new residents and businesses, particularly millennials' (Correia & Denham 2016, p.3). Florida's 'creative class' theory has a central place in the recommendations they propose for the 'Branding of Geelong':

The lifestyle and amenity attributes of Geelong can be used to attract new residents to the city...the continued development of [the] city centre as a place for shopping, culture, entertainment and dining can build on this appeal, particularly for what Florida (2004) refers to as "the creative class". The marketing and improvement of Geelong as a place to live is an ongoing priority. There should be continued investment in Arts, Culture and Sport to foster new creative talent, attract new people to the region and build on the international profile of Geelong. (Correia & Denham 2016, p.81)

Although Florida's work has been a particularly compelling contemporary influence on the 'place branding' strategies adopted by aspiring global cities, both large and small, the key elements of the economic development strategy that Florida advocates – urban redevelopment, place marketing, creativity-led economic growth – typically have much longer histories in Rust Belt places such as Geelong. Johnson (2009a, p.474) observes that Geelong's post-industrial reimagining was underway by the 1980s, when the city began looking to the arts, tourism and recreational industries for its future. As I will explore further in Chapters 4 and 5, beginning in 1981, when the *City By The Bay* plan was released, the redevelopment of Geelong's city centre and waterfront areas have been conceived as core priorities, as far as local regimes of 'manufacturing of place' are concerned. The joint vision of the Geelong Regional Commission (GRC) and the Geelong City Council, *City By The Bay* was the first comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of Geelong's city centre and waterfront areas. It identified the series of disused wool stores lining the city's waterfront, relics of Geelong's industrial heyday, as standing in the way of a more effective integration of Geelong's Central Activities Area and bay front (GRC 1981). However, for reasons I will explore further in Chapter 4, progress towards the objectives of the *City By The Bay* plan stalled in the early 1990s. The 'Steampacket Place' waterfront redevelopment project of the late 1990s, and the 'City Centre Reactivation' that the 2014 *G21 Region Economic Development Strategy* identified as a 'game changer' strategic economic goal (COGG & Steampacket Waterfront Geelong Development Board 2000; G21 2014, p.7) are more recent examples of the significance attributed to the development and redevelopment of central Geelong in local economic and urban planning agendas.

In Geelong, as elsewhere, the city centre is a canvas on which the prosperity or decay of the wider city is writ large. The dynamism and vibrancy of the CBD expands and contracts as the vicissitudes of local and global flows of capital make their impact on the urban fabric. The Renew Newcastle (Australia) project, launched in 2008 by writer, broadcaster and Newcastle native Marcus Westbury, has inspired similar revitalisation schemes in a variety of places including Geelong, and has highlighted the role of more than four decades of de-industrialisation and economic restructuring in precipitating the urban decay witnessed in many of Australia's regional towns and cities (Renew Newcastle 2016; Westbury 2011; Sully 2015; Zappone 2011). The 'solution' that the Renew franchise offers is to reactivate vacant commercial spaces through the brokering of short-term leases for creative enterprises (Renew Newcastle 2016).<sup>15</sup> This recipe for economic renewal is part of the broader 'Cultural Capital' agenda which Johnson (2009b) suggests a range of Rust Belt spaces, Geelong among them, have pursued from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. A Cultural Capital, Johnson (2009b, p.6) explains, is 'a city which has recently and consciously made the arts (and often related Cultural Industries) central to its society, economy, urban form and place identity'. Johnson's interest is not so much with metropolises such as London, New York and Paris, which are readily identified as centres of culture, but in:

Those cities which have been in decline; which have been industrial centres and are dealing with the agonies of spatial and economic restructuring by attempting to rebuild their economies and societies through the mobilisation of the arts. It is an ambitious and potentially progressive social and economic agenda which has and continues to offer a model to others. (Johnson 2009b, p.6)

In imagining Geelong as a world city, city leaders have sought to establish the region as a hub for cultural and heritage tourism. As Johnson highlights, in the late 1990s, this involved an unsuccessful campaign to secure a southern hemisphere Guggenheim museum for Geelong's waterfront, a campaign that used the Basque city of Bilbao as its point of reference (Johnson 2009b, p.218). In Chapter 5 I will discuss Geelong's Guggenheim campaign in relation to the imperative of/for 'innovation'. Two other key events also have their genesis in the climate of innovation that characterised local economic development regimes in Geelong at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the 'Geelong: Smart Move' campaign, and the establishment of the G21 as a networked, regional 'solution' to the challenge of local economic development in a globalising world.

### The 'Geelong: Smart Move' campaign

The 'Geelong: Smart Move' campaign to attract businesses and members of the public to live, invest in, and visit the city was launched in 1997 by the City of Greater Geelong (COGG 1998a). The campaign, including its distinctive logo (see Figure 8 below), was featured across several different sites and media platforms, with the highlights including: an Ambassador program, in which Geelong personalities were recruited to spread the 'Smart Move' message around Australia and the world; a partnership with the real estate sector which sought to incentivise people living outside the region

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<sup>15</sup> In more recent times, this creative revitalisation agenda has focused its attention on the revival and repurposing of Geelong's disused industrial spaces, such as the site of the former Barwon Paper Mill in Fyansford which operated from the 1870s until the 1920s, and today serves as a mixed-use space for art and industry. After a 2016 crowdfunding campaign, the short documentary series 'Hubcaps to Creative Hubs' was launched, the product of a collaboration between two Deakin University researchers and local organisation Creative Geelong, which showcases the industrial past and the creative potential of the old Paper Mills in Fyansford and other key sites (Hubcaps 2 Creative Hubs n.d.).

(namely Melbourne) to make the switch and relocate; a 'Buy Local, Create Jobs' campaign; the erection of 40 'Smart Move' flagpoles along the Northern entrance to the city; television advertisements; and a website (COGG 1998a; COGG 1998b; COGG 1998c; COGG 1998d; COGG 2000).

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 8: The 'Geelong: Smart Move' logo (COGG 1998b)

The 'Smart Move' campaign is significant as the first 'place branding' campaign waged by Geelong as it attempted to define a modern, 'post-industrial' identity. Place branding, Khamis (2012, pp.49-50) explains:

Points to the various ways which nations [or cities, regions] 'speak' and 'behave' or the range of contact points that link consumers with a place, and how these encounters affect perceptions of it, or its 'strategic equity'. It requires a marketing message to be sustained across multiple fronts, aims and agendas to be synergised across several industries, and various stakeholders to commit to a common vision.

The concept of 'place branding' rose to prominence throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In business and marketing literatures it came to be understood as the next step in the evolution of the place promotion activities traditionally utilised by the tourism sector (Papadopoulos & Heslop 2002; Kaplan et al. 2010, p.1289). The turn to place branding strategies has also been evidenced in other 'Rust Belt' spaces and places across the OECD and EU during the last two decades. One such place is the former car manufacturing centre of Birmingham, in the UK. Efforts to define a new brand identity for the city intensified after Birmingham failed in its bid to win the title of the 2008 'European Capital of Culture' (Parker & Long 2004, p.53). Parker and Long (2004, p.53) note that these place branding activities included the debut, in 2003, of a new logo for the city – the letter b – that was featured across city buildings, the City Council website, and local newspapers. In marketing materials produced for the campaign – a campaign that would 'driv[e] forward the renaissance of Birmingham' – it was suggested that this logo would 'provide a framework for the presentation of Birmingham's visual identity over the next decade' (Parker & Long 2004, pp.53-54).

'Geelong: Smart Move' aimed to project a sense of dynamism through its reference to mobility, and, with businesses and potential future residents as its two key target markets, sought to highlight Geelong's competitive advantages, its 'liveability' (particularly vis-à-vis the bustling metropolis of Melbourne nearby), and its proximity to natural attractions, such as beaches and mountains. Here, the Kennett Government's 'Victoria on the Move' branding, 'a slogan which was meant to encapsulate the new, enterprising and forward-looking energy of the state' (Glow & Johanson 2007, p.175), was clearly a key referent. Kelly and Kenway (2014, p.172) observe that the impact of regimes of economic restructuring on Australia's regional areas was such that, in the 1990s, many locales once renowned as 'places of manufacturing' were now engaged in a 'manufacturing of place'. For those regions that remained reliant on an industrial economic base, it became essential for place marketing agendas to emphasise the inter-linkages of local industry with global commodity chains. As Kelly and Kenway (2014, p.173) illustrate, with reference to Melbourne's Western region:

This accessibility to various important nodes in transport networks figured prominently in the region's promotional material. It appeared that if you intended to promote the region for its

manufacturing industrial base, then you had to be able to demonstrate its connections to transport networks that can move manufactured products into global markets. This process was different from promoting an information-age economy because in that context one needed only to demonstrate access to information networks. In the context of three decades of de-industrialisation, there was an attempt to reposition the region as an industrial zone that had access to global transport networks (for export/import activities), and which compared favourably to other industrial zones in global manufacturing economies/markets.

For its advocates, the utility of the ‘Geelong: Smart Move’ campaign lay in its ability to capture the various capacities and aspirations – old and new, industrial and post-industrial – that were at play in this regional city at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It demonstrated Geelong’s aspirations for the dynamism and agility that would project it into the ‘information age’, while also recognising the continued, albeit diminishing, contribution of manufacturing to the local economic base. In Geelong, as in Melbourne’s West, economic development authorities continue to highlight the region’s substantial transport infrastructures – from roads and sea ports to rail and airports - and its position in networks for moving goods, people, capital and information (G21 2014).

### The G21: a networked, regional solution to the challenge of economic development in a globalising world

In the early 2000s, the G21, an alliance of five local councils and community and business agencies emerged as a new, networked political entity that promised to more effectively advocate for the strategic economic interests of the Geelong region at higher levels of government. Today, the five Local Government Areas (LGAs) that comprise the G21 – City of Greater Geelong, Colac Otway Shire, Surf Coast Shire, Golden Plains Shire, and the Borough of Queenscliff – are distinguished by different geographical and commercial characteristics, while remaining economically interdependent.

As the G21 explains in *Our Region, Your Future* (2003, p.5), a document outlining its strategic plan, the ‘G’ of G21 stands for Group, Geelong and Goals, and ‘21’, the 21st Century. *Our Region, Your Future* projects an aspirational vision of the future: ‘in 2020, the Geelong Region is Australia’s most desirable destination for living, visiting and investing; it is renowned for its vibrant, cohesive community, exceptional physical environment and vigorous economy’ (G21 2003, p.4). In many respects, the Geelong Regional Commission (GRC), one of several regional commissions established in the 1970s and 1980s to manage the planning and development of selected growth centre regions, as well as other regions of significance in Australia (McLean 2005, p.1), was an important precursor to the G21, though the latter is significantly different in scope and composition. The GRC itself replaced the Geelong Regional Planning Authority (GRPA) which ceased to operate in 1977 (McLean 2005, p.3). The early-1990s rationalisation of LGAs and their responsibilities by the Victorian Kennett Government saw the number of local governments in the state fall from 210 to 78, and from 12 to 5 in the Geelong region. As part of this process of amalgamation, regional planning commissions, structures that provided an opportunity for local governments to engage in co-ordination (of which the Geelong Regional Commission was one), were terminated (OECD 2013, p.160).

By the end of the decade, however, there was a pressing need for an entity that could negotiate and leverage competitive state and Federal grants, and that would offer a coordinated, regional ‘solution’ to the challenge of spatial and economic planning in a world in which global flows of capital and ideas were increasingly dominant, and the borders and boundaries of spaces and places increasingly porous. The OECD (2013) notes that the G21 is one of a number of ‘rural-urban partnerships’ that have proliferated across the world, with a variety of purposes and motives. Soon after its

establishment, the G21 founded a series of ten ‘Pillar groups’ through which the priorities and projects of the alliance would be mapped and delivered. These Pillars included: Arts, Culture and Heritage, Community Safety and Security, Economic Development, Environment, Health and Wellbeing, Lifelong Learning, Research, Sport and Recreation, Telecommunications, and Transportation (G21 2003, p.6). As I will explore in later chapters, the emergence of networked approaches to local problem solving, of which the G21 is an example, reveals something of the shift in the nature of governance in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This shift sees a variety of non-state actors (with business actors often foremost among these) increasingly bringing their influence to bear on processes of local decision-making and policy formulation, alongside and in cooperation with different levels of government.

### Towards the future? Geelong as a ‘global city’

Against Geelong’s recent history of de-industrialisation and job losses, much of the projected economic and employment growth in the region is clustered around the three sectors of Knowledge, Healthcare, and Services (G21 2013, p.30).

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Figure 9: Employment by industry in Geelong 2018. Source: G21 Economy Profile (G21 2018), utilising REPLAN data. Figures are for the G21 region, encompassing the City of Greater Geelong and the Colac Otway, Golden Plains, and Surf Coast Shires

Figure 9 (above) represents the Geelong labour market in 2018, segmented by industry, in order of largest to smallest employer. When this distribution is compared with the composition of Geelong’s workforce in 1961, it is possible to observe some continuities, as well as some dramatic changes. While manufacturing remains one of the leading sectors of employment, it is interesting to note that, compared with the predominantly male industrial workforce of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a feminisation of the Geelong workforce, insofar as several of the leading sectors of employment, including Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Education and Training, are those with predominantly female workforces (Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2016, p.2). The 2016 Census of Population and Housing revealed that males were outnumbered by females in Geelong’s labour force: there were 51,549 males in the workforce, compared to 55,920 females (ABS 2016b). Despite this, fewer women were employed on a full-time basis, and were much more likely to be ‘away from work’ (in other words, did not work any hours in the week prior to Census night) (ABS 2016b). While Geelong’s contemporary labour force is characterised by a low degree of cultural and linguistic diversity (in 2016, 82 per cent of workers were born in Australia), among those born overseas, European expatriates are joined by small numbers of migrants from a wide range of areas, including Asia, the Americas, the Middle East and the Pacific (ABS 2016b). In 2016, 76.2 per cent of Geelong residents were employed locally, with 23.8 per cent of residents travelling outside of the area to work (COGG 2016b). These proportions remained relatively static between 2011 and 2016 (Skillling the Bay n.d., p.16).

A number of commentators, noting the recent relocation of several State and Federal Government agencies to Geelong, including the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), WorkSafe and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), suggest that this emerging ‘social insurance cluster’ may form the basis of Geelong’s regional specialisation (Casson 2016; Correia & Denham 2016, pp.43, 78), and is a development which has boosted the image of Geelong as a future ‘knowledge

economy' (Lyons 2015, p.2). In conjunction with this idea of Geelong as the national capital of social insurance, a number of other visions for the future of the city have emerged, including: Geelong as a 'clever and creative city-region' (the outcome of a community consultation initiative facilitated by the City of Greater Geelong [2017b]); and as a hub for advanced manufacturing and 'smart tech' innovation (Deakin University, G21 & COGG 2017; Siemens 2017).

The political consensus which underpins these various models and visions for Geelong's future understands innovation, creativity and enterprise as the building blocks of economic growth. The emergence of this consensus is particularly apparent in those 'Rust Belt' cities and regions – such as Newcastle (Australia), Birmingham (UK), and Detroit and Pittsburgh (US) – that are being reshaped by the dynamics of de-industrialisation and globalisation, and which have greater pressures to adopt a more self-consciously 'global' approach to economic growth.

The city of Detroit 'is perhaps *the* global exemplar of industrial decline' (Barnes 2015, p.iii). Its experience of economic hardship, which has been compounded by such factors as persistent racial and class division, and the bankruptcy of its municipal government, is arguably much more dramatic than anything observed in Australia (Barnes 2015, pp.iii-5). Nonetheless, Barnes asserts that the story of Detroit and its post-industrial rebuilding and reimagining is in many ways comparable to that of Victorian cities and regions in which car manufacturing is in decline. The move towards advanced manufacturing and a diversification of the regional economy to support entrepreneurship (Barnes 2015, pp.14-19) are two features that are particularly relevant to Geelong's experience of economic restructuring. In the southeast Michigan region, foundations and nonprofits have provided extensive philanthropic assistance to support the 'New Economy Initiative' (NEI), an economic development initiative which has seen the development of an 'entrepreneurial ecosystem' providing more than 225 resourcing and support services for businesses, both emerging and established (NEI 2019, p.8). American business publication *Barron's* suggests that the NEI has successfully 'interrupt[ed] the downward spiral of structural disinvestment' in Detroit (Clark 2018).

Two financial assistance packages established in the aftermath of the Ford Motor Company's announcement of the closure of its Australian operations were designed around the goal of facilitating the economic diversification of the communities hardest hit (Barnes 2016, p.25). The Melbourne North Innovation and Investment Fund (MNIIF) and the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund (GRIIF), were jointly funded by the Victorian and Federal Governments, providing a program of competitive grants for projects and businesses that supported job growth and the economic diversification of the region (Barnes 2016, p.25; Australian Government n.d.). Despite the move away from heavy industry in Geelong, manufacturing still constitutes a major proportion of the region's value-added production (G21 2013, p.8). The decision of Carbon Revolution, a manufacturer of carbon fibre automotive components (and a recipient of GRIIF funding in its first round) to commence operations in Geelong, and more recently, the establishment of a carbon fibre research and development facility at Deakin University's Waurin Ponds campus are developments that a number of stakeholders suggest will help launch Geelong as a hub for advanced manufacturing (G21 n.d.).

## Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the impact of more than four decades of economic and spatial restructuring, at global, national and local levels, in shaping the character of the regional Australian city of Geelong and the labour market opportunities and experiences available to those who call it home. It has explored some of the key 'epochs', 'episodes', 'events' and 'moments' in the stories of Geelong's industrial development from the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and its subsequent de-industrialisation

beginning in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the height of industrialism in Australia, there were abundant employment opportunities for young (albeit predominantly male) people and migrant populations in the newly-established factories. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, the dynamics of de-industrialisation and ‘neoliberal’ globalisation combine to make young people’s labour market experiences and pathways precarious, fragmentary, non-linear and uncertain. Geelong is increasingly entangled in networks and flows that are global in nature, and the city’s business and civic leaders seek to harness these new global interconnections to attract the mobile ‘creative’ capital that is understood as necessary for economic growth in the new millennium. Across this chapter and the preceding chapter, I have established some of the key elements of the social, economic, political, cultural and governmental ‘conditions of possibility’ that have enabled the ‘truths’ about young people’s ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ to become powerfully articulated with particular understandings of the ‘nature’ of employment, unemployment, labour market changes and opportunities, and New Work Orders. I will now turn to the first chapter of Part Two of this thesis, where I will undertake a detailed genealogical exploration of the emergence of the concept of ‘employability skills’.



## Part Two

‘Employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and  
‘enterprise’: problematic solutions to the problem  
of youth unemployment?

## Chapter Four

### The Emergence of Economic Rationalism and Employability Skills

#### Introduction: the collapse of Australia's full-time youth labour market and the emergence of the problem of youth unemployment

In Australia in the early years of the 1980s, youth employment was in crisis, yet official reporting on unemployment statistics betrayed only the faintest trace of a turbulence that was, these reports suggested, largely a thing of the past. The 1980-81 Annual Report of the Department of Employment and Youth Affairs (1982, pp.5-7) suggested that the growth in teenage employment was one of the key factors behind the general upswing in employment: 'teenage employment increased by 29,300 (4.5 per cent) in 1980-81. This followed an increase of 13,300 (2.1 per cent) in the previous year and continued the reversal of the declining trend in evidence during the preceding decade'. That the number of 15-19-year-olds looking for a full-time job was in fact falling appeared to indicate further evidence of a robust youth labour market: 'the average number of 15-19-year-olds looking for their first full-time job fell by 4800 to 37,700 during the year. The number of other teenagers and adults looking for full-time work fell by 2600 and 1200 respectively' (Department of Employment and Youth Affairs 1982, p.8). Although close to 20 per cent of 15-19-year-old females were unemployed, the highest proportion of any cohort, the 'strong seasonal nature of unemployment', the Department indicated, was behind much of the variation in Australia's unemployment rates, with 'sharp seasonal rises in December and January of each year, as school leavers enter the labour force', and again in February, 'with the entry into the job market of married women seeking part-time employment at the end of the school holidays' (Department of Employment and Youth Affairs 1982, pp.8-9).

These reports belie the fact that across the previous decade, Australia's full-time youth labour market had effectively collapsed. Alarmed by a fourfold increase in youth unemployment, education studies scholar Peter Watkins observed in 1984 that 'over the last ten years the employment situation for young people and their movement from school into the workplace has become a matter of extreme concern' (Watkins 1984, p.4). A particularly telling statistic was that the average length of unemployment among young people had risen dramatically, from 7-8 weeks in 1973 to 25.4 weeks in 1981 (Watkins 1984, p.4). And for a variety of reasons, young women were bearing the brunt of unfolding labour market changes. In the early 1980s, the Australian labour market remained highly segregated by gender, with women concentrated in low-skill, low-wage occupations – such as clerical and retail work – in sectors that appeared increasingly vulnerable to the effects of the general economic recession and incipient economic restructuring and technological change (Earley 1981, pp.271-272). The manufacturing industry, a major employer of relatively poorly educated migrant female labour, 'has shed 200,000 jobs over the last five years' (Earley 1981, pp.272-273). Many female-dominated occupations, such as stenographer, typist, and bookkeeper were under direct threat from advancing computerisation and the emergence of word processing technologies. An analysis of Australian Census data and ABS Labour Force surveys revealed that, between 1970 and 1979, nearly 26 per cent – or roughly a quarter – of full-time jobs for school-leaving young women had been replaced by part-time roles or eliminated through processes of technological change, compared with only 2.8 per cent for young men (Sweet 1980, cited in Earley 1981, p.274). According to Earley (1981, p.270), this state of affairs was such that, 'unless young girls broaden their occupational and career horizons and enter types of work that have hitherto been seen as largely out of bounds and

exclusively or predominantly male, then they will be increasingly relegated to a life of intermittent employment and/or domesticity’.

In March 1983, the Hawke Labor Government swept to power after eight years of conservative rule. At the National Economic Summit convened by Prime Minister Bob Hawke the following month, the newly-appointed Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Senator Susan Ryan, broke with the optimistic tone that had been sounded by that same Department the previous year. The current unemployment rate for youth was the highest ever recorded, she pointed out, with 29 per cent of the full-time teenage labour force out of work, a rate that had been reached as almost 80,000 full-time jobs previously held by teenagers had disappeared in the preceding 12 months (Ryan 1983, cited in Watkins 1984, p.5). Senator Ryan also observed, with some alarm, that the number of apprenticeships was in decline: the forecast for the number of new apprentices in 1982-83 was 25 per cent lower than previous projections (Ryan 1983, cited in Watkins 1984, p.5). In her address to the Summit Conference, Senator Ryan underscored the importance of bringing all segments of the workforce along on the journey of national economic recovery: ‘The threat – and the fact – of unemployment has been present for many of our young people and for women for almost a decade’ (Ryan 1983, p.58). To embark on the process of recovery while neglecting to address the entrenched exclusion of women and disadvantaged young people from full participation in education and the economy would be ‘no cause for self-congratulation’, Senator Ryan (1983, p.59) warned. And the consequences of failing to heed this warning would be dire for Australia:

In the long term the distrust and division that will occur if [disengaged and disillusioned young people are] cut off from the fruits of recovery can only create tension and destructive conflicts which will eat away at the very basis of our social cohesion and economic prosperity. (Ryan 1983, p.59)

Framed in this way, and for the first time since the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, Australia confronted the problem of what to *do* with the surplus of potentially ‘idle’ young people. The youth transition programs that were instituted at this time, and the official targets for the increase in rates of post-compulsory education participation that came later, were intended to facilitate the ‘warehousing’, in education and training programs, of young people who would otherwise be classified as unemployed, though this intention was never explicitly stated by policymakers (Watkins 1984, pp.25-26). Alongside the emergence of this solution for the corralling of populations of unemployed young people (and the associated work of ‘massaging’ youth unemployment statistics), a series of important discursive shifts occurred at this time. The new labour market and education discourses gave much greater prominence to the concept of ‘employability skills’, defined as that set of competencies, skills and dispositions understood as essential for successful participation in the world of work (ILO 2000). They ensured that, against the background of a youth labour market that was changing, even ‘collapsing’, young people were to be understood as the architects of their own opportunity structures, and must strive to embody the qualities of the ‘multi-skilled’ worker demanded by a ‘post-Fordist’ regime of production. In the recessionary 1980s, business interests were calling for the education system to be made more responsive to the needs of industry, echoing demands made in earlier periods of economic crisis and high unemployment, notably the 1890s and 1930s (Bessant 1988, p.19). In much of this discussion it was assumed that the education and training sector should carry the burden of responsibility for curing the social ill of unemployment and aiding a return to national economic prosperity (Bessant 1988). In response to these and other concerns, the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports - the key reports establishing the parameters for reform of Australia’s education and training systems in the early 1990s - advocated a greater convergence of

‘general’ and ‘vocational’ education, sectors which had, up to that point, been understood as relatively distinct and separate.

This chapter aims to map the ‘conditions of possibility’ which enable the concept of ‘employability skills’ to function as a ‘truth’ in relation to the problem of youth unemployment. Earlier, I introduced Donna Haraway’s (2008, p.4) concept of the ‘figure’: a ‘material–semiotic node or knot in which diverse bodies and meanings co-shape one another’. In this chapter the ‘figure’ of concern is the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports, three programmatic documents published in the early 1990s in which a variety of concerns about young people in the labour market condensed around the idea of ‘employability skills’. I will begin by adopting a broad focus, examining some of the key ‘events’ in late 20<sup>th</sup> century processes of economic restructuring, as they manifested at the global and national scales. In Australia in the early 1980s, a distinctive approach to economic policymaking emerged, known as ‘the Accord’, which attempted to harmonise the interests of industry, unions and government in a collective effort of national economic recovery. The Accord was forged in response to two key imperatives: first, the need to lift Australia out of the economic recession in which it had been mired for roughly a decade; and second, the need to establish the international competitiveness of Australia’s economy as protectionist industry policies were abandoned.

The following section considers the influence of emerging global flows, in conjunction with changing policy directions at the Federal and State levels of government, in shaping the economic and spatial transformations of Geelong in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. With factory closures and downsizing decimating Geelong’s workforce, and the Pyramid Building Society collapse engendering a local economic crisis, the 1980s and 1990s were challenging times for this regional city. In 1993 Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett dubbed himself the unofficial ‘Minister for Geelong’ and in doing so implied that this increasingly beleaguered ‘Rust Belt’ city was in need of rescuing. From this point, the discussion moves into the education and training policy space, examining the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports, the three documents forming a comprehensive agenda for reform of Australian post-compulsory education and training policy in the 1990s. These documents not only framed understandings of the problem of youth unemployment, but more broadly, sought to meet the needs of a ‘post-Fordist’ economy for ‘cross-skilled and multi-skilled workers who could adapt and respond to domestic and global requirements’ (Cushnahan 2009, p.8). After examining each of the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports in some detail, I will explore some of the key agencies and knowledge flows shaping ideas of ‘human capital’ and ‘employability skills’. Towards the conclusion of the chapter I will identify and analyse some of the key absences, silences and ‘subjugated knowledges’ in the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports and in the policy discussion surrounding their publication. There I will argue that, while policymakers and other stakeholders assumed that the ‘employability skills’ discourse that emerged from these reports would be automatically applicable to young people from a diversity of socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, these reports were marked by significant silences and absences where questions of disadvantage and accessibility were concerned. As I will demonstrate, these absences and silences served to limit the relevance and inclusivity of ‘employability skills’ for a range of different social groups.

### Late 20<sup>th</sup> century economic restructuring and the transformation of global flows

The Hawke Labor Government was elected to power in 1983 amid widespread public dissatisfaction at the effects of recession (Ryan & Hawthorne 2011, p.10). In a joint statement released in February 1983 the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) proposed a Prices and Incomes Accord, a new approach to economic policy that they suggested would control inflation and high unemployment simultaneously. In doing so, they lambasted the ‘monetarist’

policies pursued by the conservative Fraser Government, in power from 1975 to 1983 (ALP & ACTU 1983, p.408). In the ten years between 1973 and 1983, Australia was buffeted by no less than five recessions (Humphrys 2019, p.4). The ALP and ACTU (1983, pp.408-409) argued that a new approach to national economic policy was necessary because ‘we enter 1983 with official predictions of negative growth, double digit unemployment, double digit inflation and no sign of recovery on the basis of the continuation of current policies’. The premise of ‘the Accord’, as it became known, was that, in return for trade unions restraining their wage demands to the level of inflation (and making ‘no further claims’ via industrial action), the government promised to moderate prices and non-wage incomes, expand the ‘social wage’, and implement tax reform (Humphrys 2019, p.5).<sup>16</sup> The Accord featured a consensus-oriented style that ‘brought the union movement inside the economic policy management tent’, and business interests would be represented via the newly-established Economic Planning Advisory Council (Forsyth & Holbrook 2017). Along with the floating of the Australian dollar in 1983, opening the Australian economy to international banks, and the reduction of tariffs, the Accord was a key component of the Hawke-Keating Governments’ economic reform agenda, and signalled a turn toward a more globally engaged Australian economy (Forsyth & Holbrook 2017).

As the 1980s progressed, several subsequent Accords were brokered in response to new economic challenges.<sup>17</sup> In 1986, following Accord Mark II, and with Prime Minister Hawke in his second term in office, unemployment remained high, at 8.1 percent, with a more alarming youth unemployment rate of 15.1 percent (Ryan & Hawthorne 2011, p.10). That same year, Treasurer Paul Keating voiced his concerns that Australia would become a ‘banana republic’ if it continued to rely on exports of natural resources for its economic prosperity:

We took the view in the 1970s – it’s the old cargo cult mentality of Australia that she’ll be right. This is the lucky country, we can dig up another mound of rock and someone will buy it from us, or we can sell a bit of wheat and bit of wool and we will just sort of muddle through ... In the 1970s ... we became a third world economy selling raw materials and food and we let the sophisticated industrial side fall apart ... If in the final analysis Australia is so undisciplined, so disinterested in its salvation and its economic well being, that it doesn’t deal

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<sup>16</sup> However, not all of the parties to the ‘social contract’ upheld their end of the agreement. As Humphrys (2019, p.6) writes, while the trade unions honoured their commitment to restrain wage claims, many of the promises made by the government failed to materialise. Many core elements of the ALP and ACTU’s original statement ‘were not implemented and, on frequent occasions, policy contrary to the text was adopted’:

The process quickly narrowed to focus almost exclusively on wages. Real wage levels, to be maintained under the Accord, declined markedly. Early in the period, the ALP adopted a policy - ‘the trilogy’ commitment - not to increase taxation, government expenditure or the size of the budget deficit as a percentage of gross domestic product. This significantly curtailed the planned social wage spending...Australia’s tariff system was dismantled and free tertiary education was abolished, in contravention of the agreement. Taxation—which was to be restructured under the Accord to ensure business paid a ‘fair share’—moved in the opposite direction. (Humphrys 2019, p.6)

While the dominant narrative of the emergence of neoliberalism in the industrialised democracies focuses on the ascendancy of New Right ideas and coercive implementation of economic reform, Humphrys (2019, p.9) advances the argument that the Accord was a key moment in the construction of ‘vanguard neoliberalism’ in Australia: ‘the agreement engendered consent for the neoliberal project to take place by integrating the unions and the working class into the efforts of political society to construct a new form of social rule’.

<sup>17</sup> Humphrys (2019, p.6) notes that there was a total of eight Accords across the Hawke-Keating Government’s thirteen years in office.

with these fundamental problems ... Then you are gone. You are a banana republic. (Keating 1986, cited in Conley 2013)

Keating's comments reveal that, even as he and other policymakers took steps to open Australia up to global forces, he feared that Australia was at times sorely lacking in the kind of strategic planning and foresight that could firmly establish the competitive advantage of its products, services and expertise on the 'world market' into the future.

As part of its microeconomic and macroeconomic reform agenda, the third Hawke Labor Government turned its attention to reform of Australia's industrial relations system. While the policy regimes of the Fraser Government and the early years of the Hawke Government (1983-1987) were focused on regulating wages and reducing strike levels through enhancing the power of centralised wage-fixing institutions, Briggs and Buchanan (2000) note that the balance of payments crisis of 1985-86 triggered a major debate on the future of wage fixing in Australia. It was in this context that, in 1987, the Business Council of Australia (BCA) proposed a more radical deregulation of labour markets. The BCA, Briggs and Buchanan (2000) write, 'began from the position that Australia's industrial relations system was an impediment to the development of an "enterprise orientation" and the source of periodic wage explosions'. The BCA established a study commission to investigate ways of establishing an enterprise-based industrial relations system. The proposals of the BCA, that the wages system should be fragmented into different 'streams' and that non-union bargaining should be expanded, 'had an immediate impact on both mainstream political parties', and with the passing of Accord Mark VII in October 1991, enterprise bargaining was formalised at the Federal level (Briggs & Buchanan 2000).

The late 1980s was also a period of nascent reform of Australia's tertiary education sector. In a 1987 policy discussion paper, education minister John Dawkins (1987, p.8) predicted that, in the context of Australia's efforts to broaden its export base and introduce policies that would encourage the development of internationally competitive manufacturing and service industries, the demand for a more highly skilled and better educated workforce would only increase into the future. Dawkins (1987, p.8) argued that 'as the prime source of higher-level skills for the labour market, the higher education system has a critical role to play in restructuring the Australian economy'. In a later section of this chapter I will examine the Dawkins reforms in the context of the reorientation of the purposes of education towards 'human capital' objectives. However, at this point it is important to note that Dawkins' proposals ushered in a series of unprecedented reforms that would ultimately effect the transformation of Australia's universities from elite institutions into a mass system of higher education (Macintyre, Croucher & Brett 2017). The various technical colleges, teachers' colleges and colleges of advanced education disappeared from the structure of higher education in Australia and were incorporated into a system of multi-campus universities, with the aim of creating a 'unified national system' (Abbott & Doucouliagos 2003, p.1). While rates of participation in tertiary education did increase markedly over the following decade (Macintyre, Croucher & Brett 2017, pp.214-215), the reforms were also fundamentally concerned with making the tertiary education sector more accountable to 'market' imperatives. The establishment of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) in the final years of the 1980s signalled the abandonment of the Australian Labor Party's commitment, established under the 1972-75 Whitlam Government, to the provision of fully-subsidised tertiary education.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> While the Federal Government indicated its support for the reforms proposed in Dawkins' Green Paper, it cited budgetary constraints as ruling out any substantial increase of outlays on higher education (Macintyre, Croucher & Brett 2017, p.71). The government established the Higher Education Funding Committee, chaired

These changes in the realms of economic and industrial relations policy and tertiary education are a sketch of the various ‘events’ that were significant in this busy period of economic and social policymaking and reform in Australia. This sketch is not meant to be exhaustive. It also builds on earlier discussions about the global, national and regional flows and consequences for restructuring of spaces, places and relations during this period. Policymakers framed these various reforms as essential in the work of establishing the flexibility, dynamism and agility that Australia would need to compete in global markets. Yet, other commentators regarded these developments as indicative of the influence of ‘economic rationalism’ on the Australian policymaking apparatus. In *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes its Mind*, published in 1991, Michael Pusey sought to document what he saw as a major rupture in policy thinking and policymaking among senior bureaucrats in Canberra, and in doing so, brought the concept of ‘economic rationalism’ into popular usage (a term that would later be understood as interchangeable with ‘neoliberalism’) (Pusey 1991; Barnes, Humphrys & Pusey 2018). Pusey (2018, pp.13-14) observes that in the post-war period, Australia’s senior public servants understood that ‘the purpose of policy was to improve the quality of life of a nation-society’, and the nation-building agenda they pursued was underpinned by principles of social democratic redistribution. From the early 1980s, however, under the influence of New Right, free market ideas, the purpose of economic management was ‘reduced to little more than the protection and accumulation of capital’ by a new generation of policymakers who were drawn overwhelmingly from the disciplines of economics and accounting (Pusey 2018, pp.13-14).

The 1970s and 1980s were periods of significant disruption and transformation for industrialised societies such as Australia, and many commentators and academics were attempting to understand and theorise the relationship of the emerging global flows and the changing social, political, economic, cultural and governmental composition of these societies. For example, Scott Lash and John Urry, in their 1987 book, *The End of Organised Capitalism*, regarded the shift from manufacturing to service-based economies, the decline in national-level collective bargaining procedures in favour of enterprise- and plant-level bargaining, and the associated decline in collective working class representation in the labour market as evidence of a more far-reaching ‘disorganisation’ of capitalism. The previous era of ‘organised capitalism’, in contrast, began ‘in most countries in the final decades of the nineteenth century’ and was characterised by such features as the concentration and centralisation of industrial, banking and commercial capital, and the development of extractive/manufacturing industry as the dominant sector with a relatively large number of workers employed (Lash & Urry 1987, pp.3-5). While Lash and Urry understood recent changes in terms of the ‘disorganisation’ of capitalism, other commentators suggested that the shift from a ‘Fordist’ to a ‘post-Fordist’ mode of production was the key dynamic shaping processes of economic change in the industrialised democracies. In theorising this shift, scholars turned their attention to the experiences and trajectories of industrial reorganisation in those places eschewing the mass production model, such as in Italy and Japan. Japan, for example, had weathered processes of technological change and

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by Neville Wran, to explore the options for funding the significant expansion of the tertiary education sector (Macintyre, Croucher & Brett 2017). The Wran Committee indicated its support for a ‘user pays’ system, citing the argument that university graduates benefitted from an ‘income advantage’ in the labour market (Macintyre, Croucher & Brett 2017, pp.72-73). Introduced in 1989, the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) involved an income-contingent repayment of part of the cost of tuition: the requirement to pay would arise only when the student’s personal taxable income exceeded average Australian weekly earnings (Jackson 2003). After the election of the Howard Coalition Government in 1996, HECS was subsumed into the larger Higher Education Loan Program (HELP), where it became known as HECS-HELP. The Howard Government instituted changes to the repayment rates and thresholds, and established the alternative loan option of FEE-HELP, which assists fee-paying students with the costs of postgraduate courses of study (Ey 2018).

economic restructuring by replacing Fordist principles of production with ‘work teams, job rotation, learning by doing, flexible production and integrated production complexes’ (Watkins 1994, p.16).<sup>19</sup> At the same time as the Japanese model was upheld as an exemplar of adaptability and ingenuity, the precipitous decline of North America’s steel producing regions in the 1970s and 1980s ‘served as a bellwether for aging manufacturing cities around the world’ (Neumann 2016, p.5). In the early postwar decades, the manufacturing centres of the US Great Lakes region:

Projected an image of invulnerability to the boom-and-bust cycles that affected other economic sectors. At midcentury, the hulking factories that punctuated the regional landscape lent an air of permanence to industries like steel and automotive and to the hundreds of thousands of jobs they created. (Neumann 2016, p.5)

Only a few decades later, however, trade liberalisation, changing industry policies, and a range of other factors facilitated the flight of manufacturing offshore and decimated these at-one-time proud industrial communities (Neumann 2016, p.5). Initially, the ‘Rust Belt’ was understood as a peculiarly American phenomenon, where it pejoratively denoted a specific, economically depressed, geographical region (Neumann 2016, p.5; High 2003). However, as the 20<sup>th</sup> century drew closer to its end, the figure of the ‘Rust Belt’ city or region spread, materially and discursively, throughout the North Atlantic and beyond, connecting Bilbao, Birmingham, the Ruhr Valley and many other cities and regions in a vast network of beleaguered industrial places.

### Geelong: becoming a ‘Rust Belt’ city

The work of feminist geographer Louise Johnson and colleagues has made a significant contribution to illuminating the ways in which processes of economic restructuring – many of which had their origins in developments at the national and international scales – played out in the local Geelong context, transforming the economic and social fabric of this regional city. Wright and Johnson, writing in 1995, identified four moments of intensified labour market restructuring occurring in Geelong across the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, each of which was centred upon a particular manufacturing sub-sector. First, the textiles, clothing and footwear sector restructured during the mid-1970s; second, agricultural machinery in the early eighties; third, clothing and footwear in the late eighties; and finally, the automotive sector at the beginning of the nineties (Wright & Johnson 1995, p.125).

Wright and Johnson (1995, p.125) observe that a number of Federal Government decisions made in the first years of the 1970s drastically impacted on Geelong’s textile, clothing and footwear industry. The Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission enshrined the principle of equal pay for women through a series of rulings handed down between 1969 and 1974. These legislated increases in

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<sup>19</sup> The concept of ‘post-Fordism’ has been discussed and debated extensively by scholars, across a range of disciplines including economics, political theory, sociology, geography, cultural studies, and education studies, among others. Amin (1994, p.3) suggests that post-Fordism is perhaps best characterised as ‘a debate about the putative transition from one dominant phase of capitalist development in the post-war period to another thirty to fifty year cycle of development based upon very different economic, societal and political norms’. The three predominant theoretical positions at the heart of the post-Fordist debate – the regulation approach, the neo-Schumpeterian approach, and the flexible specialisation approach – attempt, in different ways, to theorise the key features and underlying causes of this transition to a new phase of capitalist accumulation (Amin 1994, pp.6-16). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2004) identify ‘immaterial labour’ as one of the defining features of post-Fordist production. ‘The contemporary scene of labour and production’, they suggest, ‘is being transformed under the hegemony of immaterial labour, that is, labour that produces immaterial products, such as information, knowledges, ideas, images, relationships, affects’ (Hardt & Negri 2004, p.65). Hardt and Negri’s work in this space has informed contemporary theories of ‘aesthetic labour’ and ‘affective labour’, theories which will be explored further in Chapter 7.



the value of women's labour had the perhaps unforeseen effect of displacing large numbers of women from the textile workforce, altering the sexual division of labour in local factories (Wright & Johnson 1995, p.126). The Whitlam Government's implementation of a 25 percent across-the-board tariff cut, and the devaluation of the Australian dollar precipitated a dramatic collapse in the market for domestically produced textiles, clothing and footwear (Wright & Johnson 1995, p.126). The scale of job losses associated with the closure and downsizing of local textile operations was such that between 1971 and 1973, Geelong's 3000-strong textile industry workforce was halved (Wright & Johnson 1995, p.126).

The second wave of labour market restructuring in Geelong fell heavily on the workforce of International Harvester, a manufacturer of agricultural machinery (Wright & Johnson 1995, p.126). Again, changes in policy direction by the Federal Government were a contributing factor in the crises encountered by this multinational corporation in the early 1980s, culminating in the closure of its Geelong plant in 1982. In the context of falling demand for heavy agricultural equipment, it appeared likely that Federal Government assistance to the sector, in the form of a tractor bounty, would be cut after 1984 (Wright & Johnson 1995, p.126). Faced with a contraction in the global market for farm machinery, International Harvester closed more than a third of the plants in its global operation between 1979 and 1983, cutting its staff from 98,000 to 32,000 in the process (Marsh 1985, cited in Wright & Johnson 1995, p.126). Once boasting a workforce numbering in the thousands, a much smaller number was employed at the Geelong plant at the time of its closure. Wright and Johnson (1995, p.126) note that in the midst of the wider dynamic of corporate downsizing, 'Harvester's Geelong employees were simply minor casualties'.

Geelong's clothing and footwear industry was at the epicentre of the next moment of restructuring. Wright and Johnson (1995, p.126) observe that, in the late 1980s, the number employed in the sector 'again began to fall at a marked rate'. According to Wright and Johnson (1995, p.126), 'the impact of tariff reductions and product market shifts, and management decisions to increase outwork and/or relocate production processes from traditional sites' were among the forces buffeting Geelong's clothing and footwear sector and its counterparts in other industrial locales across the country. The final moment of labour market restructuring identified by Wright and Johnson centred on the city's automotive manufacturing sector. As in the case of International Harvester, the problems besetting local automotive production in the early 1990s were bound up with those of its dominant transnational corporation: in this case, the Ford Motor Company (Wright & Johnson 1995, p.127). In addition, the Australian Government's Motor Industry Development Plan, implemented in the mid-1980s, placed pressure on manufacturers to rationalise the number of car models produced. In Geelong this resulted in production stoppages and job losses, both at the Ford plant and throughout the automotive component supply chain. Wright and Johnson (1995, p.127) highlight that the 1991 Census recorded a loss of more than 1600 positions in the local transport equipment sub-sector since the 1986 Census: a net contraction of 31 per cent. In a 1992 study of 'economically vulnerable' Australian regions conducted by the Office of Local Government and the Department of Employment, Education and Training, Geelong was rated the region most vulnerable to the impacts of the Federal Government's tariff reduction and industry restructuring policies (Bita 1992, p.1).

As I highlighted in Chapter 3, with Geelong's manufacturing sector experiencing significant and continuing decline, in the 1980s city administrators and business leaders turned their attention to an ambitious proposal for the comprehensive redevelopment of Geelong's waterfront and city centre, known as *City By The Bay*, in the hope that it would deliver on its promise of economic renewal and revitalisation of this increasingly beleaguered 'Rust Belt' city. The plan was the joint vision of the

Geelong Regional Commission (GRC) and Geelong City Council, with the sponsorship of the State Government and retailer, Myer Shopping Centres (GRC 1981). In the 1970s and 1980s, Geelong's city centre was hollowing out as a result of the significant development of commercial and retail amenities in suburban locations, alongside 'changes in wool handling and selling technology' which were rendering the woolstores lining the city's waterfront 'empty and redundant' (GRC 1981, p.11). According to the authors of *City By The Bay*, an outsider visiting Geelong's city centre would encounter the:

Immediate problem of location and orientation, emphasised by the noticeable lack of a distinctive place either in the form of an open space or an architecturally significant landmark. In the face of suburban retail counterparts offering one-stop undercover shopping and easy parking, the central area has lost out. (GRC 1981, pp.10-11)

While the decline of textile manufacturing had contributed to this problem, it also provided the city with an opportunity: 'with the removal of the woolstore function to more economic locations, a great opportunity exists for the revitalising of this area to restore to the city a strong physical connection with the bay' (GRC 1981, p.11). Stage One of *City By the Bay* featured the significant expansion of retail amenities in the city centre, incorporating many of the disused woolstores, along with the proposed construction of a fully-undercover 'central pedestrian spine' that would link this revitalised commercial precinct with the foreshore (GRC 1981, p.12). In 1988, with many of the elements of Stage One completed, the GRC released its blueprint for Stage Two of *City By The Bay*, known as The Bay Link. The developments proposed as part of The Bay Link included an amphitheater and entertainment area looking onto a landscaped foreshore, conference and entertainment facilities including an IMAX cinema, and an international food court, among a range of other tourist and leisure attractions (see Figure 10). It was anticipated that these various developments would together constitute a vibrant foreshore precinct (see Figure 11), 'a place children will want to bring their parents and grandparents. A place where tourists relax with lunch and where office workers and shoppers get away from the day's hustle-and-bustle' (GRC 1988, p.13).

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 10: The developments proposed as part of Stage Two of the City By The Bay plan (GRC 1988, p.11)

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 11: Artist's impression of the completed Bay Link project (GRC 1988, p.13)

Before any meaningful progress could be made towards the realisation of the second and final stage of the *City By The Bay* plan, the city of Geelong entered the 1990s and was faced with a range of further crises and challenges. In June 1990, the Pyramid, Countrywide and Geelong Building Societies closed, and up to 200,000 accounts at 54 branches, 19 of them in the group's Geelong heartland, were frozen (Schelle 2018, p.25). In all, an estimated 220,000 Victorians were victims of the collapse, and the resulting local economic crisis cast a pall over Geelong, as people lost their life savings, businesses and homes (Schelle 2018, p.25). A 1994 parliamentary inquiry found that company chairman Bill Farrow had pursued 'reckless and imprudent lending policies' which deliberately

breached the provisions of the Building Societies Act (Schelle 2018, p.25). In 1993, Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett cast himself in the role of Geelong's saviour, dubbing himself the unofficial 'Minister for Geelong' and pledging funds for waterfront redevelopment works (Sinnott 2016). However, other changes instituted by the Kennett Government at this time would prove incredibly disruptive to the foundations of local communities.

While local government had not featured as an issue in the 1992 Victorian state election, in the years following his electoral victory Premier Kennett embarked on one of the most radical programs of local government amalgamation and restructuring seen in any Australian state (Kiss 1999, p.111). Sweeping amalgamations throughout the state left only the Borough of Queenscliff untouched and reduced the number of municipalities from 210 to 78 (Kiss 1999, p.111). In addition, Kiss (1999, p.111) notes that Compulsory Competitive Tendering of at least 50 per cent of council expenditures 'led to the contracting in or out of every type of council service'. Geelong was the first region to go through amalgamation, with six local Councils and part of a seventh (Barrabool) formed into one large municipality called the City of Greater Geelong in 1993 (COGG 2018b). Across the state, opinion was divided on Premier Kennett's local government restructures. The City of Geelong, for example, had indicated its support for a change in the boundaries of local government several years before the reforms were implemented (City of Geelong 1991). Critics of the amalgamations, on the other hand, often situated Kennett's rationalisation of local government in the context of the broader 'economic rationalist' agenda that was a feature of his administration, an agenda which left no area of policy untouched (Economou & Costar 1999, p.x). In pursuing the amalgamations, the Kennett Government understood itself to be taking decisive action to resolve the 'pressing financial issues facing the state' (Martin 1999, cited in Connoley 2007, p.6). However, a less openly-stated intention of the reforms was to reduce the size of the public sector workforce, and, in conjunction with this, to reduce the influence of the public sector unions which conservative think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs, suggested had 'created work inefficiencies and had unnecessarily promoted the expansion of government services' (Institute of Public Affairs 1993, cited in Connoley 2007, p.6). One estimate suggested that as many as 11,000 council positions were lost across the state by the late 1990s (Millar & Dowling 2004).

In the context of this period of crisis, transformation and restructuring, concerns about youth unemployment in Geelong sometimes mirrored, sometimes shaped, broader conversations and debates about 'the problem'. In 1992, with the Australian economy emerging from recession, the unemployment rate among 15-to-19-year-olds reached 24.2 percent nationally (Mission Australia 2006, p.1). At this time, Geelong's youth (15-19) unemployment rate was 16.1 percent, 3.6 percentage points higher than that for Victoria (GRC 1992a, p.3)<sup>20</sup>. However, the differential spatial distribution of youth unemployment between Geelong's suburbs was such that, in 1992, 53.5 percent of people aged 20 or younger receiving either the Job Search or Newstart allowance were residents of the northern suburbs of Geelong (GRC 1992b, p.1), reflecting the contraction in the number of job opportunities with the decline of manufacturing industries in Geelong's northern suburbs. A precipitous decline in the availability of apprenticeships in the early 1990s was another likely contributor to this state of affairs. While the Ford Motor Company remained the major employer of skilled trades persons in the Geelong region, a 1991 report in the *Geelong Advertiser* noted that the

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<sup>20</sup> The Geelong Regional Commission calculated these rates through an analysis of numbers of people registered with the Commonwealth Employment Service. The GRC (1992a, p.1) explains that, at this time, Australian Bureau of Statistics data did not accurately reflect unemployment rates in the Geelong region because 'Geelong is part of an ABS region which stretches to the [South Australian] border and useful breakdown of labour force figures for specific cities/regions is not possible'.

number of first-year apprenticeship positions in the region had effectively halved between 1990 and 1991, in large part as a result of Ford's downsizing (Busfield 1991, p.1). In 1993 the Federal Government assembled a Task Force on Regional Development, chaired by secretary of the ACTU, Bill Kelty, and asked it to 'identify how the regions can best contribute to national economic growth including attracting greater private sector investment' (Minister for Industry, Technology and Regional Development 1993, p.1). In its submission to the Task Force, a confederation of Geelong-based community service agencies suggested that 'the social blight that is our rising unemployment' was one of the most pressing issues facing the Geelong region (Barwon Regional Housing Council et al. 1993, p.22). The submission noted that, in Geelong, there were a significant number of 16-to-20-year-olds living below the accepted poverty line. Barwon Regional Housing Council et al. (1993, p.22) identified this cohort as one of three groups most adversely affected by processes of economic restructuring and recent changes to the Federal Government's industry policy, alongside single parents with dependents, and the families of the long term unemployed. The submission observed with particular alarm the deleterious local effects of the rise in the numbers of long-term unemployed:

The region's long term unemployed are quickly becoming a 'forgotten group' and a growing underclass. As the experience of the previous recession has shown, a great many of the long term unemployed remain jobless. It is not uncommon for support workers to be still working with unemployed people with whom they began working a decade ago. It is more than likely that this phenomenon will be compounded as we emerge from this recession. (Barwon Regional Housing Council et al. 1993, p.19)

### The Finn, Mayer and Carmichael reports: framing the problem of youth unemployment

Through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a succession of government-commissioned special committees inquired, variously, into the state of the labour market, the pace and scope of technological change, and the adequacy of existing education and training approaches, among a range of other issues. A consistent theme running through these various inquiries was an explicit, though sometimes implicit, concern with the problem of youth unemployment. The Williams Committee of Inquiry into Education, Training and Employment reported in 1979, and was among a range of major policy reviews commissioned by the Fraser Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government in the late 1970s (Watkins 1984, p.11). Schools should have a central role in fostering young people's employability, the Williams review suggested, through 'greater attention to the problems of transition', a greater emphasis on 'teaching the essential basic skills required for further learning' and encouraging in students 'a disciplined habit of work' (Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training 1979, p.133). However, in a later interview, the chairman of the review, Professor Bruce Williams, expressed the belief that 'the solution to the problems of unemployment is not going to be found within the education system. It can help, in all conditions it can help, but it can only help. It cannot solve' (Hoffman 1979, cited in Watkins 1984, p.8). An earlier working party, convened by the Australian Education Council to investigate young people's transitions from secondary education to employment, had similarly concluded that 'education systems have no control over the labour market situation...they cannot by themselves correct the social problems which arise from unemployment' (Working Party on the Transition from Secondary Education to Employment 1976, cited in Freeland & Sharp 1981, pp.58-59).

With the election of the Hawke Labor Government, however, reform of education and training systems was harnessed much more firmly to the imperatives of national economic recovery and reconstruction. And with the 'opening up' of Australia to global forces through the 1980s, a range of

new international influences were brought to bear on Australian education, training and labour market policy. 'As a central policy-making agency', Soucek (1994, p.66) notes, 'the OECD played an extremely influential part in the subsequent shaping of individual member countries' educational policies'. In key policy documents released by the OECD in the late 1980s, there was an explicit linking of education to processes of capital accumulation: *Structural Adjustment and Economic Performance*, and *Education and the Economy in a Changing World* are two examples (OECD 1987, 1989 cited in Soucek 1994, p.66). In arguing for skills to be conceptualised as competencies, and for these to be work-related, documented and transferable, and nationally recognised, the latter report presaged many of the reforms associated with the emergence of the new skills paradigm in Australia in the 1990s (Soucek 1994, pp.66-67). Ryan and Hawthorne (2011, p.10) trace the OECD's interest in these matters even further back, to the 1984 'landmark conference' *Competence and Cooperation*, which examined the relationship between vocational education and enterprise skill formation. In this chapter I will explore in more detail the influence of the work of key agencies such as the OECD in shaping conceptions of 'human capital'.

In addition to the 'trickle down' of policy agendas originating at the supranational scale, Australian policy actors were 'reaching out' to overseas jurisdictions. Australian delegations ventured to other parts of the globe to gain insight into the processes and policies adopted in other countries, and to consider whether, and how, these should be adapted to the Australian context. In the 1980s Australia was facing a decline in its terms of trade and a balance of payments crisis. A 1986 trade union-led tour of Sweden, Norway, West Germany, Austria and the UK investigated how these northern European countries had successfully overcome similar challenges and established their international competitiveness. The resulting report, *Australia Reconstructed* (Australian Council of Trade Unions [ACTU] & Trade Development Council [TDC] 1987, p.xi), proposed a series of recommendations across six key policy areas: Macroeconomic Policy; Wages, Prices and Incomes; Trade and Industry Policy; Labour Market Policies; Industrial Democracy; and Trade Unions. The report observed that Sweden and West Germany, in particular, had pioneered new approaches to the delivery of general and vocational education, ensuring the development of a highly-skilled workforce (ACTU & TDC 1987, pp.108-109). This finding left a particular impression on the report authors, who argued that 'Australia's international competitiveness depends on our ability to develop the skill base of our workforce' (ACTU & TDC 1987, p.xiii). Symes (1995, p.260) maintains that the recommendations offered by *Australia Reconstructed* 'provide[d] the blueprint for the educational restructuring of the 1990s'.

Symes (1995, p.259) suggests that what was distinctive about the post-Fordist reworking of education in Australia, epitomised by the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports, was that these reforms were 'grounded in an accord politics marked by a confluence of interests between unions, governments and industry'. It is significant, in terms of my later discussion of the rise to dominance of a view of the purpose of education as being about the development of an individual's human capital, that educationalists were largely absent from the groups of consultants responsible for producing each of these reports. Brian Finn, for example, was Managing Director of the Australian branch of multinational technology company IBM; Eric Mayer was chair of the Business/Higher Education Round Table, and former Chief Executive Officer of life insurance company National Mutual; and Laurie Carmichael, assistant secretary of the ACTU, drew on his experience as one of the authors of *Australia Reconstructed* in his role as chair of the Carmichael review (Symes 1995, p.261). Indeed, as Collins (1992, p.45) observed, 'Finn is the first national level report dealing with schooling and universities which has dispensed with the screen of professional educational expertise and been written unblushingly by managers'. In what follows, my aim is to explore the Finn, Mayer and

Carmichael Reports as key elements of an ‘apparatus’, the ‘dominant strategic function’ (Foucault et al. 1980, p.195) of which is the development of the ‘employability’ and ‘human capital’ of the individual young person.

### The Finn Review

The ‘Finn Review’, officially titled *Young people’s participation in post-compulsory education and training: report of the Australian Education Council Review Committee*, was a major national review of post-compulsory education and training that was published in 1991, with the review committee reporting to the Australian Education Council and the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training. While rates of young people’s retention in education and training had risen throughout the 1980s, the *Report of the Working Party to establish the Agenda and Scope for an AEC Review of Post-Compulsory Education and Training* (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.4) noted that ‘Australia falls well short of achieving universal participation in education and training by the 15-19 age group’. Most Australian states and territories were responding to the need to promote greater interlinkages between schools and vocational education providers such as colleges of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), and between the curriculum they offered. However, at the national scale there remained a lack of clarity around the ‘appropriate form and focus of education and training provision at the post-compulsory level, and the organisational and delivery arrangements which will best meet the needs of the 15-19 age group’ (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.3). In light of these issues, it was proposed that the national committee of inquiry would examine seven key terms of reference:

1. The appropriate form and level of a new national target for participation in post-compulsory education and training, an appropriate basis of measurement of that target, and a recommended timetable and strategies for its achievement;
2. Appropriate national curriculum principles designed to enable all young people, including those with special needs, to develop key competencies, with the associated implications for curriculum development, initial teacher preparation and continuing professional development;
3. The means by which links can be drawn between different education and training pathways and sectors to expand the options available to all young people, including those with special needs, and to achieve national coherence in entry and exit points between education, training and employment;
4. The appropriate roles and responsibilities of schools, TAFE and higher education in the provision of post-compulsory education and training for young people...and the roles of private and industry providers;
5. Current barriers to the effective participation of disadvantaged young people, including those with disabilities, in post-compulsory education and training, and strategies for increasing their participation and improving their educational and labour market outcomes;
6. The implications of current and prospective changes in post-compulsory education and training for the provision of careers education, information and counselling to students, including the requirements for information on educational pathways and associated career paths; and
7. The likely resource and funding implications of existing trends in, and further strategies for, post-compulsory education and training. (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.10)

The review consulted widely, receiving more than 80 written submissions from interested individuals, education bureaucrats, and representatives of schools, higher education, vocational education, industry, and community service organisations, among others (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, pp.143-149). The review committee conducted face-to-face consultations with the following organisations:

National Catholic Education Commission; Australian Council of Trade Unions; Union of Australian College Academics; Federation of Australian University Staff Associations; Australian Teachers Union; Metal and Engineering Workers Union; Youth Affairs Council of Australia; Australian Parents Council; Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee; Dusseldorp Skills Forum; Industry Education Forum; Business Council of Australia; Confederation of Australian Industry; Metal Trades Industry Association; Australian Chamber of Manufacturers; Australian Council of Social Services; Association of Youth Affairs Councils; National Board of Employment, Education and Training; National Training Board. (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.153)

Additional information gathering activities included the commissioning of special reports to examine the barriers standing in the way of disadvantaged young people or those with a disability participating in post-compulsory education and training more effectively. Overseas missions were also deployed to study how other jurisdictions were developing vocational education and training systems. Members of the Finn review committee represented Australia at a seminar attended by several OECD member countries on 'Linkages in Vocational-Technical Education and Training' (VOTEC) in Arizona, USA (Finn Report 1991, vol. 2, p.15). A key point of discussion was the suggestion that it was increasingly recognised internationally that the 'half-life' of skills and knowledge was shrinking: 'an estimate of 5 years before skills need to be up-dated, and strategies re-aligned, was the subject of keen interest', the Australian delegation noted (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.27)<sup>21</sup>. And processes of technological and labour market change were demanding new skills requirements:

Where in the past, on the assembly line, for example, people could be trained within a week, and required little cognitive ability at any sophisticated level, the modern workplace demands a far higher level of intellectual acuity of 'base-level' workers. The modern workplace demands workers with familiarity and confidence with information technology, and more advance[d] levels of language, communication and numeracy skills. (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.27)

*The Report of the Australian Delegation to the International Seminar on Linkages in VOTEC* suggested that, internationally, there was a growing evidence base for the power of 'pathways', 'lifelong learning', and a greater convergence of general and vocational education in meeting the new labour market and skills challenges (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, pp.23-27). These recommendations would provide the foundations of the reforms proposed by the wider Finn Review Committee. "Pathways" is a powerful and persuasive concept to drive policies and practices for post-compulsory education and training', the Australian delegation argued:

A fundamental virtue in the pathways concept is its positive overtones of clear points of progression, and successive educational and training milestones. These milestones can then be regarded as defined in competency (or outcome) terms rather than as they are currently defined by duration (or time served). (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.23)

The 'learning continuum' was proposed as a model for facilitating lifelong learning (see Figure 12 below). As the authors explain, 'education and training should NOT be perceived as sets of "blocks"

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<sup>21</sup> Krbavac and Stretton (1988, p.6) trace the argument that the 'half-life' of skills is diminishing back to 'some United States companies', who, in the late 1980s 'calculated that the "occupational half-life", the time in which one half of workers' knowledge and skills becomes obsolete, has declined from 7-14 years to 3-5 years'.

...the dynamism of the broader environment in which VOTEC operates requires more fluid policy development strategies and implementation mechanisms' (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.25). In the learning continuum model represented in Figure 12, the various service providers delivering learning experiences, including TAFE/Higher Education (multi-modal), private providers, enterprise-based providers (on-the-job education and training), and schools, form the 'thread' at the centre of the continuum (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.25). The learning continuum model should be considered simplistically, the authors suggest:

As a fluid form of pathways which provide flexibility for individuals in moving in and out of learning modes. An individual may access learning at a given point in the situational context (on-job) but at all stages is progressing along the continuum. The individual may then move along the curve to develop the appropriate cognitive/theoretical appreciations of the experientially based learning experience. (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, pp.25-26)

Importantly, this model was understood as facilitating a greater articulation of 'general' education with its vocational counterpart. 'International experience is showing clearly', the authors argued, that the maintenance of a distinction between the two sectors 'is not only unsustainable, but in many respects, is one of the major obstacles to economic regeneration of the workforce, and the process of work re-organisation to meet the demands of rapidly changing technology and production processes' (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.26).

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Figure 12: The Learning Continuum model proposed by the *Report of the Australian Delegation to the International Seminar on Linkages in VOTEC* (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.25)

The convergence of general and vocational education was also represented in diagrammatic form (see Figure 13 below) in the main body of the Finn Report. In Australia, as in many other Anglophone countries, the Review Committee argued, there persisted an educational and cultural tradition:

Which until recently has tended to see as separate the concepts of 'education' and 'training', 'theoretical' and 'practical', and 'general' and 'vocational' education...Moreover, in common understanding the concepts of 'skills' and 'skill training' have been associated with only a limited range of occupations, mainly the so-called 'skilled trades'. (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.5)

In contrast, the education systems of France, Japan, Italy, Finland and Sweden were not structured according to this notional separation of general and vocational education. In those countries 'schools accept as a matter of course that they have a role in providing students with skills that are required by the labour market, as well as roles in preparing them for higher education and for active citizenship' (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1991, cited in Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.5). The new forms of work organisation, the Review Committee argued, were shaping the demand for workers that were not only 'multi-skilled, creative and adaptable', but were possessed of the civic and ethical capabilities and mindsets that enabled them to participate actively in society (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, pp.5-6). This demand could be met through the concept of 'General/Vocational Education' (see Figure 13), which would necessitate a greater convergence in the curricula offered by schools and TAFE. This convergence would require:



Schools to become more concerned with issues of employability and the provision of broad vocational education; and TAFE to recognise that initial vocational courses must increasingly be concerned with competencies that are more general than those which, for example, characterised the traditional craft-based apprenticeships. (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.7)

Although there would be increasing overlap between these two types of education, this convergence was necessarily incomplete, for ‘there are elements of general education which do not have any clear vocational character, and there are elements of vocational education which are so specific to an individual task or occupation that they have no wider application’ (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.7).

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Figure 13: The Finn Report’s illustration of the convergence of general education and vocational education to form the concept of ‘General/Vocational Education’ (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.8)

On the question of the problem of youth unemployment, the Finn Report (1991, vol.1, p.15) suggested that transitions between education and work in the teenage years were often characterised by a degree of flux and uncertainty: ‘changes of jobs and short periods of unemployment often reflect experimentation with different employment options. For a small proportion of teenagers however the transition is very risky indeed, with prolonged periods of unemployment and underemployment’. The Finn Report (1991, vol.1, pp.28-32) identified the drop in the availability of full-time employment, the at-times slow growth in apprenticeships and traineeships, and the move toward recruitment of older, more experienced workers in sectors which historically had been major providers of youth employment, including retail, banking, and the public service, as key factors making the transition from school to work more difficult for a growing number of young people. In much of this discussion it was tacitly accepted that boosting rates of young people’s participation in education and training offered the best strategy for addressing the problem of youth unemployment, through absorbing the surplus of potentially ‘idle’ young people within education and training systems. ‘It is certainly likely’, the Finn Report (1991, vol.1, p.15) suggested, ‘that increased educational participation over the last decade has constrained the level of teenage unemployment which would otherwise have been experienced’:

The combined effects of an increase in the size of the youth population and a decline in full-time employment over the 1980s would have led to increased teenage unemployment had it not been for the growth in full-time educational participation over the same period. In 1980 some 8.5 percent of all teenagers were unemployed and looking for full-time jobs, compared to about 8 percent in 1991, despite the less favourable labour market conditions in 1991.

It was further intimated that the benefits of increased participation would also flow to individual young people themselves, providing them with a degree of ‘insurance’ against unemployment: ‘whatever the relationship between education and employment patterns for teenagers it is important to note that young people with higher levels of education and training experience lower rates of unemployment than their peers’ (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.15).

In order to facilitate progress towards the goal of universal participation of 15-19-year-olds in education and training, the Finn Review Committee proposed a set of new national performance targets for rates of educational attainment and participation, with the key target that ‘by the year 2001,

95 per cent of 19-year-olds should have completed Year 12 or an initial post-school qualification or be participating in education and training' (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, pp.ix-x). Governments could support the proposed participation targets, the Review Committee suggested, through the implementation of an 'Education and Training Guarantee', whereby 'all young people would be guaranteed a place in school or TAFE after Year 10 for two years of full-time education or training or its equivalent part-time for up to three years' (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, pp.91-92). Finally, one of the other key outcomes of the Finn Review was the Committee's identification of six key employment-related competencies, in the areas of language and communication; mathematics; scientific and technological understanding; cultural understanding; problem solving; and personal and interpersonal characteristics, which 'young people should be able to develop...regardless of the education or training pathway that they follow' (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.x). The responsibility for the detailed conceptualisation of these key competencies, however, would fall to the Mayer Committee, which reported its findings in 1992.

### The Mayer Report

The remit of the Mayer Committee was to develop the key competencies concept recommended in the Finn Report. The Committee's final report, *Key competencies: report of the Committee to advise the Australian Education Council and Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training on employment-related key competencies for postcompulsory education and training*, was handed down in September 1992. The Mayer Report was the culmination of three stages of research and consultation, which included a 'Preliminary Industry Validation' of the proposed Key Competencies, and an 'Access and Equity Audit' examining issues of access for disadvantaged and disengaged young people (Mayer Committee 1992, p.vii). The Mayer Report defined 'key competencies' as 'competencies essential for effective participation in the emerging patterns of work and work organisation':

They focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations. Key Competencies are generic in that they apply to work generally rather than being specific to work in particular occupations or industries. This characteristic means that the Key Competencies are not only essential for participation in work but are also essential for effective participation in further education and in adult life more generally. (Mayer Committee 1992, p.7)

The seven Key Competencies proposed by the Mayer Committee (1992, p.4) included 'collecting, analysing and organising information', 'communicating ideas and information', 'planning and organising activities', 'working with others and in teams', 'using mathematical ideas and techniques', 'solving problems' and 'using technology'. The six key competencies proposed in the Finn Report – language and communication; mathematics; scientific and technological understanding; cultural understanding; problem solving; and personal and interpersonal characteristics – had undergone development and evolution in order to reflect the Mayer Committee's understanding of competence as concerned with the *application*, and not simply the acquisition, of knowledge and skills (Mayer Committee 1992, pp.11-12). As an example, the Mayer Committee (1992, p.11) highlighted that the Key Competency of 'using technology' emphasised the application of scientific knowledge and skills in ways that its earlier incarnation in the Finn Report, 'scientific and technological understanding', did not. While cultural understanding, arts, creativity, and family and household management, among others, did not make the final list, the Mayer Committee (1992, pp.11-12) suggested they were nonetheless integral to the Key Competencies, representing essential forms of knowledge

underpinning the Key Competencies, or contexts in which the Key Competencies could be developed and applied.

The Mayer Committee (1992, p.7) suggests that it ‘drew on a wide range of sources in the process of arriving at the set of Key Competencies’. Consultations with industry provided the Committee with insights into ‘the attributes required and valued most highly by industry for entry to the workforce’, and the Preliminary Industry Validation studies provided ‘direct and practical input’ on the generic employment-related competencies that young people would need (Mayer Committee 1992, pp.7-8). Dialogue with the school and training sectors, including with curriculum workers and practitioners, represented another key reference point. Most significant, the Mayer Committee (1992, p.8) maintains, was the extensive feedback generated in response to the initial discussion papers produced by the Committee, which provided ‘opportunities to test and refine proposals with the school and training sectors, industry and the broader community’. The Mayer Committee was also in accord with the broad consensus forming among education policymakers across several of the industrialised democracies (the US, UK and New Zealand) around what should constitute key employment-related competencies for young people. In the early 1990s, Australia was one of several countries experimenting with the development of a national generic skills scheme, and the Mayer Committee identified many similarities in the content and scope of the UK’s ‘Core Skills’, ‘Workplace Know-How’ in the US, ‘Essential Skills’ in New Zealand, and Australia’s Key Competencies (Mayer Committee 1992, pp.13-15). These countries were meeting the challenge posed by economic restructuring and the emerging forms of work organisation through very similar processes of education and training reform, and the similarities across these various schemes ultimately reinforced ‘the Committee’s belief in the importance of the Key Competencies and the validity of the proposed set’ (Mayer Committee 1992, p.14). Figure 14 (below) appears in the Mayer Report, and is a mapping of the set of Key Competencies against its UK, US and New Zealand counterparts.

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Figure 14: A comparison of the Mayer Key Competencies with similar generic skills schemes in the UK, US and New Zealand (Mayer Committee 1992, p.15).

### The Carmichael Report

Where the Finn and Mayer Reports focused on general (albeit work-related) competencies, the Carmichael Report was concerned with vocationally-specific competencies (Kenway et al. 1997, p.5). Officially titled *The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System*, the Carmichael Report was handed down in early 1992 after several months of deliberations by the Employment and Skills Formation Council (ESFC). The Carmichael recommendations led to the establishment of an integrated national system of providing entry-level training that was designed to replace existing apprenticeships and traineeships over a two-year period beginning in 1995 (Kenway et al. 1997, p.5). It was intended that the set of seven general competencies established by the Mayer Report would complement and underpin the acquisition of vocational and occupation-specific competencies (ESFC 1992, p.vii). Kenway et al. (1997, p.5) observe that four key arrangements were planned for providing vocational education and training: school-based; part-time work in combination with part-time study; a vocational year (Year 13); and employment-based training. As with the Finn and Mayer Reviews, the Carmichael Report was shaped with the input of a variety of individuals, agencies and organisations situated within the business and industry, government, trade union, education and training, and community service sectors (ESFC 1992, pp.154-170).

In his foreword to *The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System*, Laurie Carmichael suggested that the Employment and Skills Formation Council ‘saw as a fundamental task the devising of a system that would extend structured entry level training for that large number of young people who do not at present have the opportunity to participate’ (ESFC 1992, p.v). However, ‘this report is not a response to youth unemployment in the current recession’, he specified, ‘it is much more a response to structural changes in industry and the labour market which are shaping our future for decades to come’ (ESFC 1992, p.vi). In its deliberations on access and equity issues, the ESFC (1992, pp.98-104) identified women, NESB (non-English speaking background) migrants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, and ‘the rural poor and marginal workers’ as the populations most likely to be overrepresented in unemployment and underemployment statistics, and poorly represented in vocational education and training programs. Women, for example, were disadvantaged by their concentration in industries and occupations characterised by inadequate and poorly recognised training, a lack of career paths, and low wages (ESFC 1992, pp.98-99). The ESFC proposed a series of targets and recommendations for boosting the participation of disadvantaged populations in vocational programs by 2001. Where addressing gender inequity was concerned, these recommendations included incentives to encourage young women to enter ‘non-traditional’ vocations and vocational training, and extending equal training, accreditation and recognition arrangements to traditionally female occupations (ESFC 1992, pp.99-100).

### The Purpose of Education: the development of an individual’s human capital

As Prime Minister Bob Hawke observed in 1984: ‘as a nation we must be prepared to invest heavily in human skills. The more efficient use of our human resources will enhance prospects for achieving economic recovery’ (Hawke 1984, cited in Bessant 1988, p.25). Hawke’s conceptualising of workers as the nation’s ‘human resources’ not only revealed how the language of the corporate sector had begun to reconfigure and reshape the education debate, but was significant against the background of the increasingly vocal calls of business interests that education should be made more responsive to the needs of industry (Bessant 1988). Symes (1995, p.247) observes that in the late 1980s-early 1990s period there was a ‘resurgence of human capital imperatives in educational policy’. He further notes that ‘unlike its manifestations in the past, which contained Fordist and Taylorist elements, the new nexus which is now being forged between school and work is post-Fordist in character’ (Symes 1995, p.247). Traditionally the school was cast in the role of a ‘moral technology’, Symes (1995, pp.250-251) argues, responsible for inculcating in young people the skills and dispositions appropriate to the industrial work ethic, and ensuring the reproduction of the hierarchical, highly-differentiated workforce demanded by the Fordist regime. In contrast, the new school-work nexus being shaped in the era of ‘flexible specialization’, ‘just-in-time’ production, and the emerging ‘knowledge economy’, was concerned with the production of the ‘multi-skilled’ worker capable of ‘lifelong learning’, and whose skills in ‘symbolic analysis’ were in demand in the new economy (Symes 1995, pp.254-257, 263).

### Key agencies and knowledge flows shaping understandings of ‘human capital’

Human capital theory understands the purpose of education as providing individuals with skills and credentials, with the ‘human capital’, that will allow them to accrue economic rewards in the labour market. The theory assumes that the investments of governments and individuals in education will, in the aggregate, enhance productivity and contribute to national economic growth (OECD 1989). Marginson (2019) and Blackmore (1992) highlight that, in the conditions of relative prosperity that prevailed in the industrialised democracies in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the core propositions of human capital theory appeared to be confirmed. Marginson (2019, p.288) writes that ‘the 1960s’ expansion of

opportunity and social mobility enabled human capital economists to imagine that the theory was not just necessary in explaining the relationship between higher education and work, it was sufficient'. The appeal of human capital theory at this time was its ability to describe, with econometric sophistication, the relationship between education, work, productivity and earnings (Marginson 2019). The key international agencies propagating these ideas were the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and later, the OECD and International Labour Organisation (ILO). UNESCO observed in 1968 that, within the space of 'ten short years' there had been a dramatic surge of interest, across many parts of the world, in the potential roles of education in economic development (UNESCO 1968, p.15). In *Readings In The Economics of Education*, UNESCO (1968) invited a range of economists to reflect on the various aspects of the education-economy nexus and their implications for issues of 'manpower', education planning, and government expenditure and the broader financing of education, among other issues. The OECD (1989, p.50) highlights that, beginning in the 1960s, interest in growth accounting studies saw attempts in a number of countries to quantify the contribution of education to national economic growth. However, the OECD (1989, pp.49-50) noted that human capital theory was but one of a number of theories which sought to explain the relationship of educational attainment to labour productivity, alongside theories of sorting-screening, socialisation, and others. The OECD (1989, pp.51-52) warned that:

There are obvious dangers in relying too much on any one of the theories of the economic significance of education, or in excluding other factors in employment and economic performance. Even in the case of youth unemployment, a problem linked so closely to educational failure...the limits of education policy's ability to ameliorate labour market problems can be seen clearly. The youth unemployment problem has many dimensions that go beyond education and training solutions. Some of these dimensions may rest on the demand side of the labour market, outside the control of schools and training institutions.

Marginson (2019, p.288) observes that, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, as equality of opportunity and social mobility faltered in many of the advanced capitalist countries, the explanatory power of human capital theory was nonetheless strengthened. Indeed, a 1998 OECD document reveals that human capital had become a key priority area in the Organisation's research and policy work:

Investment in human capital is at the heart of strategies in OECD countries to promote economic prosperity, fuller employment, and social cohesion. Individuals, organisations and nations increasingly recognise that high levels of knowledge, skills and competence are essential to their future security and success. (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation [CERI] 1998, p.7)

According to CERI (1998, p.9), the concept of human capital 'powerfully emphasises how important people have become, in knowledge- and competence-based economies': 'human capital...constitutes an intangible asset with the capacity to enhance or support productivity, innovation and employability'. Human resources development and training was also a focus of discussions among the member states of the ILO gathered at the 2000 International Labour Conference. With knowledge and skills increasingly representing a key source of economic growth and productivity in a large number of countries, the ILO (2000, p.5) predicted that education and training would play a crucial role in equipping nations, enterprises and individuals with the skills and capabilities to overcome the constraints of globalisation, benefit from processes of technological change, as well as 'create more and better jobs, and improve incomes and living conditions'. The concept of employability was a

central theme of the ILO's (2000) analyses and recommendations, and in particular, its analysis of policies and programs for youth employment and unemployment.

A key text providing the theoretical justification for arguments in support of the 'upskilling' of the workforce was the 1984 book *The Second Industrial Divide*. In this book, Michael Piore and Charles Sabel (1984, p.5) advance the concept of the 'industrial divide', a moment of rupture in which 'social conflicts of the most apparently unrelated kinds determine the direction of technological development for the following decades'. They suggest that after passing through the first industrial divide in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the industrialised democracies were, in the 1970s, facing a second divide: 'the present deterioration in economic performance results from the limits of the model of industrial development that is founded on mass production' (Piore & Sabel 1984, p.4). The marginalisation of systems of craft production at the time of the first industrial divide ultimately represented a missed opportunity, Piore and Sabel (1984, pp.5-6) argue, to channel human creativity and ingenuity towards the democratic improvement of economy and society:

Under somewhat different historical conditions, we argue, firms using a combination of craft skill and flexible equipment might have played a central role in modern economic life – instead of giving way, in almost all sectors of manufacturing, to corporations based on mass production. Had this line of mechanised craft production prevailed, we might today think of manufacturing firms as linked to particular communities, rather than as the independent organisations – barely involved with their neighbours – that, through mass production, seem omnipresent.

In Piore and Sabel's work could be found not only a deeply felt desire for a return to the world of the autonomous craftworker (Watkins 1994, p.15), but more importantly, the assumption that an investment in human skills was the kind of solid foundation on which a nation's future economic prosperity could depend. This sentiment can be traced through Bob Hawke's entreaty that Australia should 'invest heavily in human skills' and the argument of the ACTU and TDC (1987, p.xiii) in *Australia Reconstructed* that 'Australia's international competitiveness depends on our ability to develop the skill base of our workforce'. It was also a feature of the proposals advanced by John Dawkins (1987, p.8) in envisioning an enhanced role for the higher education sector in restructuring the Australian economy. He noted that Australia continued to lag behind several other OECD countries in rates of educational participation and output of graduates, suggesting that a substantial increase in participation across the age ranges would be necessary to ameliorate this situation, as would efforts to 'improve the educational opportunities available to those people who have not traditionally participated in the system' such as people from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, people from rural and isolated areas, and Aboriginal people (Dawkins 1987, pp.9-13, 21). Dawkins' contention appeared to be that the productive capacities of all the various segments of the nation's 'human capital' must be activated, developed and harnessed in the effort of establishing Australia's international competitiveness.

Laurie Carmichael's analysis of the ways in which skills approaches were being reshaped by processes of technological change and economic restructuring was also profoundly shaped by discourses of 'human capital'. Collins (1993, p.8) maintains that from the early 1980s, and particularly since the 1987 publication of *Australia Reconstructed*, Laurie Carmichael 'had a sense of urgency about the restructuring of Australia's economic base and industrial relations'. Carmichael saw *The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System*, and competency-based education and training more generally, as contributing to the more fundamental process of restructuring the economy

and establishing the competitiveness of Australian industry on the international market (Collins 1993, p.8). In a 1993 essay, *Workplace Imperatives for Education and Competence*, Carmichael outlined four key imperatives which he suggested were constitutive of changes to work and work organisation and were shaping the demand for competency-based approaches in education and training. The first imperative was the ‘computer-based technological revolution’ that was eliminating a large number of the repetitious and laborious jobs that were previously performed by early school leavers (Carmichael 1993, p.15). ‘The jobs created with the use of the new technology’, in contrast, ‘require significantly higher and broader levels of education and skills formation’ (Carmichael 1993, p.15). These sentiments are echoed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills/enterprise skills agenda that I will examine in greater detail in Chapter 6.

‘The second imperative’, Carmichael (1993, p.15) continued, ‘is the emergence of markets for high quality products and services that are globally competitive’. Participation in these markets would require an incessant drive to work ‘smarter’ in order to maintain competitive advantage. Carmichael (1993, pp.15-16) also argued that a growing convergence of work and learning made the practice of lifelong learning essential. Third, the ‘increasing awareness, understanding, and legal accountability about the environmental and social effects of industry demand that all enterprises must take greater corporate responsibility for the level of knowledge, understanding and commitment of all employees for the outcomes and effects of their efforts’ (Carmichael 1993, p.16). Finally, Carmichael (1993, p.16) understood the emergence of work groups and teams as facilitating greater participation and involvement of all employees in the objectives of the enterprise. However, ‘to effectively participate in work teams...each individual needs to contribute their own particular growing expertise’, and each member of the team will be ‘called upon to own the objectives they pursue as a team’ (Carmichael 1993, p.17). The increasing convergence of general and vocational education and training, and the further maturation of the modern labour market would usher in an almost utopian future, Carmichael’s predictions indicated, in which all workers could expect to participate in the labour market in highly-skilled and highly-fulfilling roles:

As work is substantially freed of repetitious and laborious drudgery; as work and continuous learning increasingly converge in the pursuit of quality, innovation, and creativity; as higher educational levels of entry into work are required; and as social skills and self-management increasingly bring a convergence of general and vocational education – then work over time will become more and more professional and the gap between the humanities and instrumentalist pursuits become less and less. (Carmichael 1993, p.20)

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum, named in honour of its inaugural Chair, Dick Dusseldorp, founder of the Lend Lease group of companies, was established in Australia in 1989 as an ‘independent organisation’, formed ‘to benefit the Australian community by stimulating innovation and educational developments’ (Dusseldorp Forum n.d.). As the 1990s progressed, the organisation claimed an authoritative voice in discussions and debates on post-compulsory education and training, young people’s labour market transitions, and how policy and practice in these areas could adapt and respond to the emerging, global economic and labour market challenges. Across a series of publications through the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum’s research coordinator, Richard Sweet, became a key translator and disseminator of these debates and discussions for a variety of academic, business and policy audiences in Australia (see for example,

Sweet 1988, 1994, 1995).<sup>22</sup> In a position paper prepared for the Finn Review, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (1991, p.i) argued that the emerging skill and labour market challenges facing Australia could be addressed through expanding and improving options for vocational preparation in the post-compulsory years. On the question of how the national education and training targets emerging from the Finn Review would be met, Sweet (1995, p.5) suggested that:

Clearly we cannot and are not going to try to meet them by a never ending expansion of higher education... The gap between 77 per cent [the proportion of 19-year-olds completing post-compulsory education as of 1993] and 95 per cent will be met by expanding places in and outputs from vocational education and training. This means expanding the initial vocational education and training system by at least a third by the end of the century.

In advocating for the vocational education and training system to play a greater role in young people's preparation in the post-compulsory years, Sweet (1988, p.347) highlighted that Australia was, at that time, ranked second lowest in the OECD in terms of the proportion of post-compulsory students in vocational preparation programs. Sweet (1988, p.350) questioned why, in Australia, vocational education and training continued to be regarded as the 'poor cousin' of more generalist, academically-oriented programs, when such an attitude was noticeably absent in many of the other industrialised economies. However, for a variety of reasons, none of the major training providers – schools, TAFE colleges, the workplace – would be capable of single-handedly meeting the need for expanded provision of vocational education and training (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1991, p.i). Rather, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (1991, p.i) argued that the way forward was through these institutions forming new partnerships, allowing learning in various settings to occur within a common framework of certification. And the Dusseldorp Skills Forum highlighted its pioneering TRAC (Training for Retail and Commerce) program as an example of how such a partnership-based model might work to the benefit of both industry and young labour market entrants. Initially piloted in the Hunter region of New South Wales in 1989, TRAC was later adopted in a range of locations throughout four Australian states and territories (Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1991, p.9; Sweet 1993, p.3). In the TRAC model, senior secondary students participate one day a week in a work placement in the retail, commercial services or hospitality industries (Sweet 1993, p.3). A key strength of TRAC, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum (1991, p.10) argued, was that the competency-based curriculum, designed and accredited jointly by industry and education providers, allowed students to develop competencies that are not only relevant to key service sector roles, but that also foster the broader 'employability skills' of participants.

### Employability skills for all?

A major consequence of the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports was that post-compulsory education and training was dramatically expanded and its utility was reconceived according to the criterion of young people's 'employability'. As the Finn Review Committee explained, a major focus of its terms of reference was the issue of employability:

The Review's terms of reference direct attention to the immediate post-compulsory school period and the transition from education to employment. The Committee has therefore approached the issues before it from a perspective of 'employability', understood in the

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<sup>22</sup> In Chapter 6 a key figure in my analysis will be the Foundation for Young Australians and its *New Work Order* series. The significant role that the FYA has assumed, in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in discussions about young people's education, training and participation in the labour market mirrors that of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum in the 1990s.



broadest possible sense. That is, the Committee has consciously given greater prominence in its thinking to those issues or aspects of issues which bear most directly on the process of transition from the world of education to the world of work. (Finn Report 1991, vol.1, p.10)

And this demand for 'employability' was apparently emanating not only from industry but also young people themselves. In *The Perceptions of Youth of the Education System*, a report prepared for the Finn Review Committee, market research firm Motive Market Research (Finn Report 1991, vol.3, pp.10-11) noted that:

While there were considerable individual differences in the young people we spoke to, the vast majority were aware of the importance of school and education. Educational qualifications are acknowledged as the pre-requisite for finding an effective and secure place in the workforce. Indeed, young people clearly see the role of the education system as providing them with skills which will aid their 'employability'. There is little interest in knowledge for knowledge's sake.

However, such an account is problematic for a number of reasons. First, in suggesting that young people were demanding that education develop their employability skills rather than provide them with 'knowledge for knowledge's sake', it fails to recognise the various and complex ways in which young people were increasingly being incited to imagine themselves as an enterprise, an enterprise that must develop employability skills and engage in lifelong learning (Kelly 2006, 2013). This leads into the second point, that the employability skills paradigm, like the theory of human capital that it is informed by, understands these skills in the abstract, and young people in the abstract: disembodied, of no particular gender or socioeconomic background, from no particular place, and all with more or less equal capacities to develop and exercise employability skills in education, training and labour market settings. In this final section of the chapter I will explore the relevance and accessibility of 'employability skills' for a range of different social groups. Here I will argue that, for a variety of reasons, the employability skills paradigm, as it emerged from the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports, was not sufficiently sensitive to the needs of young people from a diversity of socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

What also tends to be subjugated and silenced in accounts of the type offered by Motive Market Research is the fact that many of the reforms proposed in the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports were highly contested. In the extensive debate and commentary that surrounded their publication, there crystallised recent, and more long-running, concerns over the 'instrumental' direction in which post-compulsory education policy was being taken (see for example, Collins 1992, 1993). Peter Watkins (1994, p.31), for example, argued that 'the power of the business sector which is now evident in educational policymaking underpins the instrumental expectations of education embodied in managerial post-Fordism', and his critique echoed his concerns of ten years earlier. In 1984, Watkins expressed the view that the refocusing of the purposes of education on the development of employment-related competencies was closing off opportunities for young people to develop a more critical understanding of structural change in the economy and its role in shaping the experiences of individuals and groups in the workplace. The youth transition programs that were proliferating at that time, Watkins (1984, p.6) observed, eschewed a reflection on 'inequality, power, and the hierarchical structure of the workplace' in favour of a focus on preparation of the individual:

Discontent or unrest over a society that cannot provide enough jobs for young people is deflected away from a broad general analysis of contemporary capitalism...Directing the

attention of youth to the perspective that social outcomes are individual, and not structural, allows any blame for the failure to acquire a job to be shifted away from the State. Blame for unemployment is placed either on the individual for not acquiring skills or on the educational institution for not providing appropriate skills and development opportunities.

The Finn Report (1991, vol.1, p.58) had proposed ‘cultural understanding’ as one of six key areas of competence, suggesting it could encompass such things as ‘understanding and knowledge of Australia’s historical, geographical and political context’, ‘understanding of major global issues – e.g. competing environmental, technological and social priorities’ and ‘understanding of the world of work, its importance and requirements’. The Mayer Committee, however, ultimately disagreed that cultural understanding was a priority for post-compulsory education, as it was omitted from the Committee’s list of seven Key Competencies. If stakeholders such as Watkins had hoped that it might be possible to leverage ‘cultural understanding’ as a platform for taking young people’s understandings of the world of work in a more critical direction, the Mayer Committee’s decision ensured that it was not possible.

Other critiques of the new skills paradigm emerging from the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports interrogated and problematised the apparent neutrality and universal applicability of the concepts of ‘competence’ and ‘skills’. Collins (1993, p.4) observes that the concept of ‘competencies’ was a feature of educational psychology discourses in the 1960s, and returned to education in the 1990s ‘along a circuitous route through industry and the training sector’. While a range of jurisdictions were exploring competency-based approaches – the Anglophone countries of Britain, Canada and the US, in particular – Collins (1993, p.4) notes that only in Australasian countries were they applied beyond the training sector and seen as relevant for all cohorts in post-compulsory education, including senior high school and university students. The application of competency approaches beyond the training sector had raised the issue of how to define and measure competence in areas of human performance that are more holistic, human-relational and open-ended. The implicit view of competence is a skills collection model, in which each ‘skill’ is understood as comprised of a series of tasks that are sequential, discrete and material in nature (Collins 1993, p.4). Such considerations appeared not to dim the enthusiasm of policymakers for the concept of ‘competencies’, which was swiftly revived and pressed into service to meet the new economic and labour market challenges facing industrialised democracies such as Australia.

Blackmore (1992) critiques the implicit gendering of ‘skill’ as it is understood within human capital theory. At the micro level, human capital theory understands that individuals pursue education as an investment – an investment of time and effort for which individuals can hope to receive, in return, skills and credentials that are transferable to work – and assumes that ‘the longer one invests in education, the greater the economic rewards’ (Blackmore 1992, p.354). Blackmore (1992, p.354) argues that, in this model, ‘women’s lower economic rewards are a consequence of individual “choice” not to invest in longer periods of training as they give priority to their family responsibilities, rather than due to discrimination or structured disadvantage’. This is just one of the many ways in which human capital theory has traditionally been blind to the sexual division of labour and the gendered inequalities shaping notions of ‘skill’ (Blackmore 1992, p.354). While human capital theory typically rests on a ‘positivist’ approach to skill, feminist and social constructivist critiques have highlighted the relational and context bound nature of ‘skill’. As Blackmore (1992, pp.355-356) argues, skill ‘is socially and historically constructed in ways which favour particular individuals and social groups’. The term ‘takes on new meanings in specific historical contexts and different worksites’:

For example, we may think of someone being skilled in the use of a lathe, sewing machine or computer. But empirical research indicates that each of these 'skills' is judged differently according to how the skills are acquired (training/experience), who possesses the skills (male/female, adult/youth) and in what context these skills are used (public/private). Individuals are generally only seen to have expertise or 'skill' when such a skill is associated with paid work and when such skills have been acquired through training. Particular types of skills such as social skills (e.g., interpersonal and emotional management) and operational skills (carrying out routine tasks), which are generally possessed by women, are less highly valued (and paid) or defined as being a lesser skill than other types of skills. Manual, strength-related skills and technical skills which have connotations of expertise, those generally possessed by men, receive higher remuneration and status. (Blackmore 1992, pp.355-356)

Speculating on how this gender differential may have come about, Blackmore (1992, p.356) suggests that, initially through guild activity, and later, the law and union activity, male workers were able to monopolise the more valued forms of skill and knowledge (craft, management and technological) through an often-deliberate strategy of excluding women. Women's work has generally been perceived as relatively unskilled and of lesser value, and this is 'not due to any real difference in actual content or technical knowledge' but rather because women have lacked the equivalent industrial strength to define it otherwise (Blackmore 1992, p.356).

The work of bringing all segments of the labour force along on the journey of economic recovery (to take up the gauntlet thrown down by Senator Susan Ryan at the 1983 National Economic Summit Conference) required that the new skills paradigm target even those young people understood to be 'residualised' and most 'at-risk'.<sup>23</sup> The Finn Review had identified the need to focus special attention on the issue of reengaging those populations of young people understood to be recalcitrant or 'residualised', and the two groups it identified were the 'hard core unemployed' and 'traumatised learners'. The *Report of the Australian Delegation to the International Seminar on Linkages in VOTEC* (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.35) suggested that the 'hard core unemployed' are 'the "street kids" of the major cities who currently are tending to form a very strong and impermeable sub-culture of their own'. 'The unfortunate side effects of this sub-culture' included 'the increasing number of youth suffering from AIDS, being exposed to this and other STDs, and the steady development of the drug culture in major cities in particular' (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.35). 'Traumatised learners' were described as 'individuals for whom the traditional "chalk and talk", reading oriented education system has failed' (Finn Report 1991, vol.2, p.36). This focus was also a feature of the Mayer Report (Mayer Committee 1992, p.vii), which in its 'Access and Equity Audit' examined issues of access to the Key Competencies for young people with disabilities, those experiencing disadvantage, or otherwise not currently engaged in formal education and training. The Mayer Committee (1992, p.65) argued that if the goal of 95 per cent of 19-year-olds participating in or completing post-compulsory education was to be achieved, then different learning settings and methods would need to be employed to facilitate re-entry into the education and training system of young people currently disengaged. In addition to the 'hard core unemployed' and 'traumatised learners', the full list of groups the Mayer Committee suggested were likely to 'have inadequate opportunities to acquire the Key Competencies' was extensive, and included:

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<sup>23</sup> In youth studies, researchers such as Tait (1995) and Kelly (1998, 2000a) have explored the role of key 1990s policy documents such as the Finn Report in shaping the category of 'at-risk' young people.

Young people with limited levels of literacy, numeracy and self-esteem; young people of non-English speaking background, particularly those poorly represented in education, training and the labour market; young women, particularly those in non-traditional areas of education, training and employment; young mothers; young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; geographically isolated young people; young people with disabilities; young people in institutions; young people who are homeless or 'at risk' of homelessness; young people who are on protective or corrective orders; young people who display behavioural problems and are difficult to manage; and other young people 'at risk' of leaving school. (Mayer Committee 1992, p.66)

The barriers to participation encountered by these various groups could be overcome, the Mayer Committee (1992, p.66) suggested, through the provision of flexible models of delivery that catered to different learning styles and needs, and the establishment of mechanisms for providing young people with credit for learning undertaken in non-traditional settings. As I noted previously, the Key Competency of 'cultural understanding' proposed by the Finn Report was absent from the list outlined in the Mayer Report. The Mayer Report's Access and Equity Audit revealed that a number of groups representing culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous populations took exception to this omission, viewing it as a missed opportunity to develop young people's appreciation for, and proficiency in, cross- or inter-cultural communication. The multicultural and multilingual character of Australia's workforce, these groups argued, made competence in this area a necessity for all Australian young people (Mayer Committee 1992, p.81). In a similar vein, Collins (1992, p.47) observed that, despite the Finn Review Committee commissioning several studies of the needs of various disadvantaged populations, 'only a single substantive new recommendation concerning specific groups, one on young people with physical disabilities, is actually passed on to government in the Finn Report itself'. 'The chapter in the Finn Report which specifically addresses the term of reference on participation and disadvantage is simply evasive', she writes:

It says almost nothing. Most young Australians face forms of disadvantage in relation to post-compulsory education. We know a fair amount about who they are and the kinds of difficulties they experience. They include young women (in TAFE particularly); aboriginal young people; rural and isolated young people; young people from impoverished backgrounds; and, generally, young people who are first-generation school stayers. This overwhelming *majority* is treated as a set of minorities who are each the province of some other specialist body. Their difficulties are issues for which, apparently, the Finn Review felt no particular responsibility. (Collins 1992, p.47, emphasis in original)

The Mayer Committee, and the Finn Committee before it, had perhaps failed to recognise the potential of such omissions to inhibit the greater inclusivity and relevance of the new skills paradigm for a range of social groups.

## Conclusion

In Australia in the late 1970s, education policymakers remained unconvinced that the solution to the problem of unemployment was to be found within the education system. As late as 1989, the OECD was of the view that the ability of education policy to ameliorate labour market problems was limited. By the 1990s, however, in the context of new and reemerging economic pressures, a very different set of statements prevailed. As the ACTU and TDC argued in *Australia Reconstructed* (1987),

‘Australia's international competitiveness depends on our ability to develop the skill base of our workforce’, and such a view increasingly came to represent the policy orthodoxy as the 20<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close. Among the various crises and pressures bearing on many of the industrialised democracies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century were the decline of manufacturing, economic restructuring, and the abandonment of a protectionist approach to industry policy precipitated, in part, by the turn to an ‘economic rationalist’ (or ‘neoliberal’) model of government. In conjunction with this were growing pressures to ‘warehouse’ young people in education and training programs for longer periods of time, as full-time youth labour markets effectively collapsed, and rates of youth unemployment peaked at levels not seen since the Great Depression. These developments represented the ‘conditions of possibility’ that enabled the resurgence of ‘human capital’ objectives in education policy to take place.

The appeal of human capital theory for economists, and for the political and business establishment more generally, was its purported ability to describe and explain, with mathematical precision and econometric complexity, the relationship of educational attainment to labour market outcomes. The ‘employability skills’ paradigm that emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, built as it was on the precepts of human capital theory, tended to view ‘young people’ in the abstract: disembodied, of no particular gender or socioeconomic background, and from no particular place. The Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports give extensive consideration to Access and Equity issues. And yet, these reports are marked by significant silences and absences: they do very little to actually *address* the particular forms of disadvantage experienced by the various groups they identify as disadvantaged and ‘at-risk’. The Carmichael Report, for example, discusses in some detail the kinds of strategies that may be effective in overcoming gender segmentation and inequality in vocational training and in the labour market. Yet, it has relatively little to say about the many other groups – NESB (non-English speaking background) migrants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, and ‘the rural poor and marginal workers’ – that it identifies as ‘at considerable risk of not making an effective transition to adult independence’ (ESFC 1992, p.96). As Collins (1992, p.47) observes of the Finn Report’s treatment of disadvantaged populations, ‘this overwhelming *majority* is treated as a set of minorities who are each the province of some other specialist body. Their difficulties are issues for which, apparently, the Finn Review felt no particular responsibility’. Such a criticism can equally be made of the Carmichael Report: it treats the problem of unemployment among, for example, NESB migrants, or ATSI populations, as one to be dealt with, in large part, by some other specialist body. It can therefore be argued that these reports are imbued, in ways that were perhaps not intended by their authors, with assumptions about the *type* of young person who is ideally positioned to acquire employability skills, to acquire the kinds of human capital that it is thought will provide them with a degree of ‘insurance’ against unemployment and underemployment.

For some education practitioners and commentators, the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports represented a key juncture, an opportunity in which curriculum reform could be harnessed to the goal of encouraging young people to reflect more critically on the world of work and their place in it. Advocates for disadvantaged and marginalised populations hoped that these major policy reviews would provide an opportunity for the needs of disadvantaged young people in post-compulsory education and training to be recognised and acted on. However, such considerations were ultimately subordinate to the objective of reinforcing understandings of the purpose of education as developing an individual’s ‘human capital’. The following chapter is oriented around a ‘figure’ of a different kind: Geelong’s turn-of-the-21<sup>st</sup>-century bid to secure a southern hemisphere Guggenheim museum. Geelong’s ‘Guggenheim dreaming’ illustrated the city’s ambition to be recognised as a global centre for innovation and creativity, and in the following chapter I will explore the implications that this

emerging 'climate of innovation' had for understanding the problem of youth unemployment in a de-industrialising city.

# Chapter Five

## Guggenheim Dreaming in a Climate of Innovation

### Introduction

There are many points in the historical evolution of a City where it will reach a crossroad in its development. Geelong at the end of the twentieth century is in such a position. Having dragged itself out of the recessive gloom of the early 1990s, the past five years have witnessed a significant turn around in its level of confidence and economic investment potential ... Greater Geelong is a city with a new attitude – it is now dynamic, proactive and outward looking. The City is intent on aggressively marketing its strengths and achievements.

*Geelong's Vision and Guiding Principles*, Greater Geelong Planning Scheme (2001, p.1)

This statement, appearing in a document titled *Geelong's Vision and Guiding Principles*, is one of a plethora of ostentatiously forward-looking and aspirational vision statements propagated by economic development authorities in Geelong as it transitioned into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It encapsulates the enthusiasm and dynamism with which civic and business leaders sought to characterise Geelong's 'post-industrial' future. As MacDonald and Shildrick (2018, pp.89-90) observe, beginning in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 'old industrial regions' of the OECD and EU – places that were once centres of capital accumulation and growth – were transformed into 'regions of decline, characterised by capital flight, devalorisation and disinvestment'. The logic of uneven capitalist development was such that not all of these places would be successful in their attempts to position themselves as nodes within the emerging global flows of networked, informational capitalism. As Mah (2013, cited in MacDonald & Shildrick 2018, p.89) observes, 'not every old industrial city can have a Tate'. The risk that the 'Rust Belt' city of Geelong would join the annals of the economic 'losers' of globalisation was a very real, and bleak, prospect. In a desperate attempt to ensure that Geelong was not relegated to the ranks of 'the left behind' (MacDonald & Shildrick 2018, p.90), the city's business and civic leaders strove to project an attitude of confidence and optimism in Geelong's economic recovery and 'post-industrial' future.

This chapter aims to map the 'conditions of possibility' which enable 'innovation' to function as a 'truth' in relation to the problem of youth unemployment. The 'epochs', 'episodes', 'events' and 'moments' that I will explore in this chapter occurred largely (but not exclusively) in the mid-1990s-to-mid-2000s period. As I will demonstrate, this was a particularly busy period in Geelong's development, with a range of local authorities actively engaged in reimagining and re-imaging the city, as processes of economic and spatial restructuring continued to make their impacts on the economic and social fabric of this regional locale. The central 'figure' of concern in this chapter is the story of Geelong's bid to secure a Guggenheim museum, a campaign which ran from 1998 to 2003. This story has been selected for exposition in this chapter, as it represents Geelong's attempt to connect to a global 'brand' that offered the promise of renewal, and is illustrative of a variety of priorities and imperatives – arts- and culture-led urban renewal, 'post-industrial' economic restructuring, innovation, 'place branding' – that were emerging in Geelong, and in a range of other 'Rust Belt' places, in this period. Geelong's business and civic leaders took inspiration from the success of the Basque city of Bilbao, an at-one-time peripheral, Rust Belt city that had, in the 1990s,

turned its fortunes around by successfully plugging in to global cultural flows and networks of exchange.

I want to suggest that Geelong's Guggenheim campaign was significant within a 'climate of innovation'. In this climate of innovation, there was a growing awareness among policymakers and other stakeholders that many of the existing approaches to problems of youth employment, unemployment and transitions, or to issues of urban and regional development, were no longer fit for purpose. Another key event occurring in the climate of innovation was the emergence of the Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (SGR LLEN), one of a series of LLENs established throughout the State of Victoria between 2001 and 2002. A product of the 'Innovation State' agenda that the Bracks Labor Government suggested would make Victoria globally competitive, the LLEN was a configuration that promised to unite local providers and stakeholders in relation to the shared responsibility to address young people's challenges and needs in education, training and the labour market. The SGR LLEN was one of a range of new, networked entities that flourished in Geelong in the first years of the new millennium, and whose stated ambit was the development of innovative, 'strategic' approaches to solving local problems and planning for the future needs of the region. In Chapter Three I explored the emergence of the G21, an alliance of five Local Government Areas (LGAs) that promised to more effectively advocate for the strategic economic interests of the Geelong region at higher levels of government. In 2001, the G21 was joined by the Committee for Geelong, an alliance of local business leaders seeking to provide 'strategic leadership and influence to leverage the economic potential of the region to make Geelong a world-class place' (Committee for Geelong n.d.).

What all of these initiatives claimed to do differently was to apply a 'strategic' focus to issues of planning, whether it be urban or regional spatial and economic planning, or planning for the education and training needs of young people in the post-compulsory years. Indeed, 'strategic' and 'smart' emerged as key motifs across the various publications and communications produced by the G21, Committee for Geelong, SGR LLEN and other entities like them. In 2003, for example, the G21 released its inaugural *Geelong Region Strategic Plan*, 'a blueprint to achieve the desired long-term vision for the Region' (G21 2003, p.5). And the SGR LLEN's Executive Officer, Anne-Marie Ryan, had a key role in framing the *Strategic Plan*'s proposals in the area of education, training and lifelong learning. The August 2003 Newsletter of the SGR LLEN (2003a) reported that Anne-Marie, as head of the 'Lifelong Learning Pillar' in the G21, was leading local education and training professionals in developing a strategic plan for the future education and training needs of the Geelong region. This example illustrates that the various Geelong-based planning networks – G21, Committee for Geelong, SGR LLEN – articulated with each other at various points. Indeed, this kind of cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership was what the increasingly popular 'regional planning' approach was all about.

What the emergence of entities such as the G21, Committee for Geelong, and SGR LLEN (and their counterparts in other OECD member countries, such as the Local Strategic Partnerships established in the UK in 2001 [Kamp 2003, p.4]) also indicates is that, in the climate of innovation, networks emerged as the organising principle *par excellence*. A network perspective became increasingly central to efforts to understand the workings of 21<sup>st</sup> century, global capitalism, and to address the challenges and issues that these new global flows and interconnections raised. As dynamic, nimble and adaptable structures, networks were upheld as the preferred model for facilitating systems of governance and local problem solving. As I will explore in more detail below, in the late 1990s to early 2000s period, network logics were applied in a range of fields, from education and training



policy, to structures for local governance, to systems for managing unemployed populations. It appeared that, much as sociologist Manuel Castells had predicted in his influential thesis *The Rise of the Network Society*, first published in the late 1990s, networks were the infrastructure on which the global flows of 21<sup>st</sup> century capitalism travelled.

Geelong's Guggenheim campaign, and the establishment of the SGR LLEN, are key events in the climate of innovation that emerged in this regional city at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While I will explore the creation of the SGR LLEN later in the chapter, I will begin by considering Geelong's Guggenheim bid as a key event in the city's campaign to forge a distinctive 'post-industrial' identity. Next, I will explore the significance of the 'creative industries' and the 'creative class', and 'networks' and 'globalisation' as key discursive and material elements in the climate of innovation. I will consider the policy agendas emerging in Australia at Federal and State levels in the 1990s, the intent of which was to prioritise and highlight the role of the 'cultural industries' and the 'creative class' in economic growth. I will then consider how sociologists and youth scholars were, from the 1990s onwards, developing new ways of 'thinking the social', harnessing concepts such as 'networks' and 'mobilities' as new analytical tools in the effort to theorise the impacts of globalisation on human beings and society. The following section of the chapter will bring the discussion firmly into the education and training sphere, examining how the State-level policy initiatives of the Bracks Labor Government were shaping new approaches to addressing young people's pathways and transitions through and into education and the labour market. At the close of the chapter, I will problematise the notion that innovation, in the form of the development of novel, networked methods of problem-solving, is the answer to the problem of youth unemployment. I will do this by interrogating some of the tensions, contradictions, absences and silences that emerge in such an approach.

### Geelong's Guggenheim dreaming

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close, the city of Geelong approached the new millennium with a desire to not only forge a new, 'post-industrial' identity, but with the more immediate goal to distance itself from the economic hardships of the early 1990s. At that time, the local economic woes associated with the collapse of the Geelong-based Pyramid Building Society were compounded by a more far-reaching downturn - 'the recession that Australia had to have', as then-Federal Treasurer, Paul Keating, described it in 1990. In the turn of the century period, Geelong embarked on an audacious bid to secure a Southern Hemisphere Guggenheim museum for the city's waterfront, as the culmination of efforts to reimagine Geelong as a global centre for arts, culture, tourism and knowledge. Although the 'Cultural Capital' agenda, and its concern to revalue and reinvigorate urban spaces decimated by the decline of manufacturing, had been in place in Geelong since the early 1990s (Johnson 2009b, p.194), in the late 1990s to early-2000s, these efforts were accelerated as Geelong increasingly became conscious of the need to harness to its advantage the new global flows and interconnections that were remaking 'space' and 'place', and the identities and livelihoods of cities and the people within them.

The story of Geelong's Guggenheim dreaming begins in 1998, when a small group of key figures from Geelong's civic, business and cultural sectors got together to strategise what might be needed to revive the city's economic prospects, and to offer a viable alternative to a declining manufacturing sector (Johnson 2009b, p.218). Geelong Mayor Ken Jarvis, City of Greater Geelong (COGG) CEO Geoff Whitbread, National Arts Gallery Director and Geelong businessman Jim Cousins, and former Geelong Performing Arts Centre (GPAC) General Manager Sue Hunt were in search of an iconic 'brand' or attraction that could rival the Sydney Opera House in scale and that would put Geelong 'on the map' internationally (Johnson 2009b, p.218). Johnson observes that tourism and cultural tourism

were seen as a start but on their own were not enough: as Ken Jarvis recalls, ‘we recognised that what was needed was a re-imaging of Geelong to become a world city, one that ranks alongside the likes of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Toronto and Bilbao’ (Geelong Business News 2000, cited in Johnson 2009b, p.218). It was in this context that the ambitious plan for Geelong to secure a franchise of the global Guggenheim museum brand was hatched, and it quickly garnered the support of the State government, with COGG CEO Whitbread, Mayor Jarvis and Victorian Premier Steve Bracks travelling to New York in 1998, by way of Bilbao, to meet with Guggenheim Director Thomas Krens (Johnson 2009b, p.219).

In New York, a key outcome of consultations was that the Geelong delegation pledged to conduct an initial feasibility study, in order to demonstrate Geelong’s commitment to the Guggenheim project. This proposed AU\$1 million feasibility study would be jointly conducted by New York and Victorian experts, but funded by the Geelong bidders (Johnson 2009b, p.219). The Geelong campaign considered that a Guggenheim museum would be the ‘jewel in the crown’ of Geelong’s restored waterfront (more on the city’s waterfront redevelopment later in the chapter). Bilbao was clearly the model to be emulated; the Basque city was the most recent to successfully secure a Guggenheim franchise. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao opened in 1997 and had drawn huge crowds and attracted international acclaim, largely for its architectural excellence (Plaza 2007). Designed by Canadian-American architect Frank Gehry, the imposing building – a ‘striking titanium-dressed concoction of interlocking planes, curves and abstract shapes’ (McNeill 2000, p.473) – was constructed on one of the banks of the Nervion River.

The Geelong campaign secured the travelling exhibition ‘Bilbao: Transformation of a City’ to visit Geelong’s National Wool Museum in 2001, which would present Bilbao ‘as a paradigm of what Geelong could be if it could replicate Bilbao’s strategy for renewal’ (Johnson 2009b, p. 221). Thomas Krens stipulated that Geelong’s Guggenheim would need to be of a scale and impact that could ‘set new standards in architecture’, and, as with Bilbao, the Guggenheim Foundation would not contribute to the cost of the building, with the multimillion-dollar funding commitment having to come from local, State and Federal governments as well as the private sector (Johnson 2009b, p.219). Geelong city council moved to set up a company limited by guarantee – the Geelong Guggenheim Bid Co. Ltd – to formalise and coordinate local lobbying efforts (Johnson 2009b, p.221). Johnson (2009b, p.221) explains that the establishment of this separate company was ‘designed to distance the bid from local politics and better attract corporate finance – connecting museums to business in a clear and unabashed way – with the Guggenheim long seen as the organisation which brought business and art together’.

Advocates were seeking the ‘Bilbao effect’, taking inspiration from the unlikely success of this at-one-time decaying industrial city.<sup>24</sup> While ‘those who first proposed a Guggenheim museum there were shouted down’, in 2002 the Guggenheim Bilbao was estimated to inject the equivalent of AU\$1.3 billion into the city’s economy (Bunworth 2002).<sup>25</sup> If successful, Geelong would join the

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<sup>24</sup> As González (2010) highlights, cities such as Bilbao and Barcelona have been transformed into key destinations for urban policy tourism, attracting thousands of urban policy and planning professionals from across the globe every year to learn the secrets of their successful regeneration.

<sup>25</sup> As a counterpoint to this triumphalist narrative of Bilbao’s Guggenheim coup, Friedman (2002) suggests that the Guggenheim Bilbao story is one of ‘uneven power relations, mortgaged urban futures, and fiscal chicanery’, pointing to the work of Joseba Zulaika in exposing the real cost of the Guggenheim to Bilbao. It appears that the grandiose museum stuck the city with a stiff bill: ‘by 2000, Zulaika writes, the Basques were in for \$250 million—that’s \$700 for each Bilbao resident. On top of that, the local government is committed to a perpetual

ranks of Bilbao, New York, Venice, Berlin and Las Vegas in the global network of Guggenheim cities, achieving nothing less than a wholesale reimagining of this regional 'Rust Belt' locale. Advocates such as Ken Jarvis perceived that, if successful, the project would generate a massive return on investment, and was the 'big ticket item' that could kickstart Geelong's international tourism economy and make the city a magnet for investors. An attitude of dogged optimism and determination, Mayor Jarvis believed, would get Geelong over the line: 'I firmly believe that it's there for us. If we want a Guggenheim enough, we can get it' (Geelong Business News 2000, cited in Johnson 2009b, p.219). The bid was not without its detractors, who cast doubt on the viability of the campaign and questioned city council's choice of priorities (Johnson 2009b, pp.219-222). The bidders countered such criticisms by suggesting that the local climate of optimism that the bid generated was as important as the particular outcome of the campaign: the bid itself was seen as a bold and ambitious thing for the city to do (Johnson 2009b, pp.220-221). As Mayor Jarvis observed in 2000:

What we have done is to create the biggest talking point in the Australian art world at the moment. The bid itself is a statement about Geelong – it shows us as positive, bold and forward thinking. In this regard we're already ahead in the 'positive perception' stakes, both within the region and for businesses and people wanting to invest here. That positive perception is crucial in today's business climate. And if we succeed, we will have gained what amounts to a cultural icon, a brand name that will push Geelong onto the world scene. (Geelong Business News 2000, cited in Johnson 2009b, pp.220-221)

Commentators such as Leon van Schiak, a Professor of Architecture at RMIT University, noted the scale of the challenge facing Geelong. For one, the city was at a geographical disadvantage, remote from the major tourist routes and networks of capital that were within arm's reach of a city like Bilbao (Bunworth 2002). 'I guess the most difficult thing for Geelong really is to prove that they can get enough people through the doors', van Schiak maintained:

Bilbao - within an hour's flying time of Bilbao you have many millions of people. Within a couple of hours flying time you have over 100 million people. You've also got Bilbao well on the routes, the tourist routes - people flying in from the US or elsewhere can stop off there. I think one of the biggest impacts on Bilbao has been what's happened to the local airport. Geelong has to prove that it can get a sustainable number of visitors through the doors. (Bunworth 2002)

There was also the risk that, in connecting to a global museum enterprise, Geelong would be made vulnerable to the market fluctuations of the Guggenheim brand. The financial difficulties of the Guggenheim corporation became apparent at this time with the closure of the Las Vegas branch and the abandonment of plans to open a Manhattan branch (Johnson 2009b, p.222). Within a few short years, the campaign to secure a southern hemisphere Guggenheim for Geelong's waterfront had lost

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public subsidy of \$7 to \$14 million a year' (Friedman 2002). In effect, this meant that 'the funds going to the Guggenheim were immediately slashed from [public] subsidies for Basque culture, which pays for libraries, cinema, theater, art, literature, popular crafts, and publications' (Zulaika 1997, cited in Friedman 2002). 'The Bilbao museum has no local artistic director and no permanent collection of its own', Friedman (2002) adds, 'what you won't see at Bilbao is much in the way of local Basque art, much less new Spanish art'. It is also important to note that the establishment of the Guggenheim was but one piece of a much larger program of urban renewal activities in Bilbao, which included the restoration of a former shipyard area in a central inner-city area, a new airport and a new Exhibition Fair, among others (González 2006, p.844).

momentum, and financial considerations were likely a key influence in the apparent lack of interest shown by Guggenheim headquarters. As Geelong's Guggenheim bid was declared dead in 2003, city boosters turned their attention to campaigning for a major convention centre, and Geelong joined the annals of the more than a hundred cities who had at one time strove to secure a Guggenheim of their very own (Johnson 2009b, pp.222-223; Friedman 2002).

### *Creative Nation, creative classes*

Geelong's Guggenheim bid occurred against the background of some key developments that were occurring in this period at both the Federal and State levels of the Australian policy context, the intent of which was to more fully articulate the potential of culture and 'cultural industries' to drive a 'nation building' economic development agenda. The Keating Government's *Creative Nation* (1994), and the Kennett Victorian Government's *Arts 21* (1994) were the key policy documents establishing the parameters of this agenda at the Federal and State levels of government. '*Creative Nation* was the first Commonwealth cultural policy document in Australia's history', Johnson (2009b, p.205) notes, and, in developing the notion of the 'cultural industries', one of the first policies to explicitly recognise the economic dimension of arts and culture, and the potentially fruitful interconnections of these sectors with the tourism sector (Department of Communications and the Arts 1994). As Prime Minister Paul Keating explained in an interview at the time of the release of the *Creative Nation* report in October 1994:

[*Creative Nation* advances] the simple proposition that the arts are central to Australian life and culture and that as our identity becomes more obvious, as we make a greater claim on our own sovereignty, as we project ourselves into the world, as we rejoice in what we become, the arts will be an obviously central ingredient to all of that. (Keating & O'Brien 1994, p.1)

The flourishing of information and communication technologies, Keating foresaw, would allow for the dissemination of art, culture, news and education across new media: 'this technology has the capacity to take the creator's product straight to the person' (Keating & O'Brien 1994, p.2). Young people were uniquely positioned, he argued, to take advantage of the myriad commercial and creative opportunities presented by the 'information superhighway', as the new telecommunications infrastructures were often termed in laudatory 1990s political discourses around technological innovation. Thus, one of the central aims of *Creative Nation* was 'to bring in the creativity of a lot of young people':

This is not going to be a business that people of your age and my age are going to be in. This is going to be, basically, young people who have, I think, the chance with that creativity and the technical opportunity which comes with this medium. Now, this will not be true of film and television because that will be a highly developed business as it is in every other country. But, there is a tremendous, that sort of blossoming of creativity one sees – particularly with young people today who are computer literate – we are going to see this opportunity. (Keating & O'Brien 1994, p.3)

In the competition to secure and host high-profile and lucrative cultural events, in the 1990s Australian States dramatically expanded their arts policy and funding programs, enthusiastically underwriting the costs of building cultural precincts, and casino and festival marketplace developments (Stevenson 2000, cited in Glow & Johanson 2007a, p.177). 'Victorian cultural policy under [Premier] Kennett', Glow and Johanson (2007a, p.177) observe, 'did not just attempt to broaden the audience for the arts but to broaden the economic attractiveness of the state of Victoria

through the arts', with the *Arts 21* policy representing 'the height of this fervour for the industry paradigm'. Through massive investment in the city of Melbourne, and in particular the development of 'mega precincts' such as Southbank, Crown Casino and Docklands, and major events such as the Formula One Grand Prix, Premier Kennett sought to make Victoria the 'cultural capital' of Australia (Glow & Johanson 2007a, p.178; Johnson 2009b, p.209). Key regional centres were also the beneficiaries of the *Arts 21* agenda, with new or redeveloped art galleries secured for Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong (Glow & Johanson 2007b, p.129).

The outcome of these developments, Johnson (2009b, p.210) suggests, was that Victoria 'moved from being a State which somewhat benignly supported those major cultural institutions inherited from colonial times – especially its public galleries, libraries and museums – to a far more entrepreneurial actor', harnessing arts and cultural policy (in a fashion some would characterise as 'economic rationalist') to the broader agenda of economic renewal. The Kennett Government's penchant for place marketing and 'big ticket' projects nonetheless provoked significant disquiet among some commentators and critics, with this period witnessing a slashing of expenditure on essential public services. Engels (1999, cited in Stilwell & Troy 2000, p.919) notes that 'public funding for health, education and community care all declined while resources were redirected to "mega-projects" designed to appeal to prospective investors'. Another major influence on the spread of the cultural industries agenda was the work of 'Cultural Capital proselytisers' Richard Florida and Charles Landry, both of whom placed creativity front and centre of urban renewal efforts, and who were invited, by Australian jurisdictions among many others, 'to visit, speak, advise and generally enthuse metropolitan and provincial authorities with their visions' (Johnson 2009b, p.209).

As Geelong moved further into the 2000s, the quest was no longer for the iconic monument which could kick start a tourist economy, 'but for a more physically attractive and culturally vibrant city which can attract and keep the creative class who will hopefully populate the expanding service and new manufacturing industries of the city' (Johnson 2009b, p.227). Business and civic leaders had, in other words, shifted their sights from Bilbao and its Guggenheim to the increasingly influential theory of the 'creative class' and its author Richard Florida. In doing so they joined a multitude of countries, cities and regions around the globe who have, since the early 2000s, sought in Florida's work a 'fix' for faltering and uneven economic growth.

The central argument of Florida's influential book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, first published in 2002, is that we (in the industrialised democracies, at least) have entered a new era of capitalism, in which human creativity has become the driving force of economic growth (Florida 2014, p.30). The activities of a 'Super-Creative Core' of professionals, Florida (2014, p.38) suggests, a diverse group that includes scientists and engineers, university professors, artists, designers, as well as thought leaders, writers and researchers, among others, are increasingly central to processes of innovation and economic development. The challenge for jurisdictions seeking to attract the creative class to their shores is to understand what makes the members of this class tick: 'as the source, apparently, of all good economic things, the Creative Class must be nurtured and nourished, its talents must be harnessed and channelled' (Peck 2005, p.743). In Chapter 3, I described the '3 Ts' of Florida's model of economic development – talent, technology and tolerance – and noted the influence of Florida's ideas on urban development agendas in Geelong in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I will not reprise that discussion here, except to note that Florida's advocacy of open-minded bohemianism and tolerance as particularly generative cultures (the third and final 'T' of his model) has overwhelmingly been interpreted by planning and economic development authorities as a prescription for amenity-led

growth. He also stipulates that ‘an environment attractive to young people *must* be part of the mix’ for contemporary cities (Florida 2002, cited in Peck 2005, p.754).

Florida’s ideas were catapulted into Australian regional planning and policy discourses with the inclusion of his ‘creativity index’ (a statistical model for ranking and quantifying the success of various places) in the 2002 *State of the Regions* report, a report produced annually by think tank National Economics on behalf of the Australian Local Government Association (Gibson & Klocker 2005). The report employed the ‘creativity index’ to create a map of Australian regions, with the perhaps predictable result that inner areas of the capital cities performed well on the creativity index, and rural and regional areas inland from Australia’s heavily-populated Eastern/Pacific coast performed badly (Gibson & Klocker 2005, p.97). The effect of such an exercise, and of Florida’s arguments more generally, Gibson and Klocker (2005, p.98) suggest, was to advocate for the targeting of assistance at those regions understood as lacking in creativity, in order to create the conditions in which inter-regional competition could operate more effectively. ‘The report’s recommendations’, Gibson and Klocker (2005, p.98) write, ‘ultimately centre on fostering creativity, reiterating the primacy of global markets, and the inevitability and singularity of the economic development “game” that all places must “play” against each other’.

Other criticisms of Florida’s work have focused on the contradictory and perhaps unintended effects of his recommendations for creativity-led economic growth as they are translated into policy. Young people have been particularly vulnerable to the effects of these policies. Florida’s ideas are so politically palatable, Peck (2005, p.760) suggests, because they do not fundamentally challenge existing social and economic orders. In fact, the creative class thesis as it has been interpreted by various authorities has often been used to justify the normalisation of flexible labour market conditions: ‘*The Rise of the Creative Class* both glorifies and naturalizes the contracted-out, “free-agent” economy, discursively validating the liberties it generates, and the lifestyles it facilitates, for the favoured class of creatives’ (Peck 2005, p.756). Gibson and Klocker (2005, p.99) highlight that social displacement is often the outcome of ‘creative’ urban revitalisation; Florida himself acknowledges this but offers no solutions. There is a significant contradiction between Florida’s emphasis on the utility of ‘garage’ and cheap space for business start-ups and emergent creative enterprises, and the effect that his policy prescriptions often have in reality, in pushing low cost spaces out of the city through gentrification (Atkinson & Easthope 2007, p.594).

Florida’s ideas were beginning to have an impact in ‘Rust Belt’ cities and regions just as the most recent and perhaps most successful in a long line of attempts at waterfront redevelopment was being completed in Geelong. His emphasis on attractive and vibrant city centres and the provision of cultural and leisure amenities as drawcards for the creative class provided further legitimisation of city council’s decision to prioritise the major capital works project, ‘Steampacket Place’. As I explored in the previous chapter, a comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of Geelong’s city centre and waterfront areas, known as *City By The Bay*, had been developed by the Geelong Regional Commission as early as 1981 (and updated in 1988). However, Johnson (2009b, p.211) observes that little came of such plans until the late 1990s due primarily to the local economic crisis precipitated by the Pyramid Building Society collapse. With the backing of the Kennett State government, a vocal supporter of Geelong’s efforts at urban renewal, and with significant private sector investment, work began on the ‘Steampacket Place’ development in 1995. In plan and realisation, the waterfront redevelopment differed significantly from *City By The Bay*, and included a new quay and gardens, antique carousel and pavilion, and a ‘baywalk promenade’ that showcased key public art assets, the

painted bollards<sup>26</sup> (COGG & Steampacket Waterfront Geelong Development Board 2000). The remarks of city Councillor Allana Goldsworthy in *Waterfront Geelong: The Future Is Here, Be Part of It Today* (2000), a brochure touting the achievements of the waterfront redevelopment project, reveal something of the significance attributed to the project by civic and business leaders:

This transformation of the once underutilised and derelict foreshore into a vibrant leisure, recreation and tourist precinct will be the sort of lasting legacy from the leaders of today to the community of tomorrow that will generate ongoing permanent changes to our region for decades to come. (COGG & Steampacket Waterfront Geelong Development Board 2000, p.3)

Both Geelong's Guggenheim campaign and the redevelopment of its waterfront were reflective of the policy vogue for culture- and amenity-led economic growth at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What these key events also illustrate was that a range of emergent global networks of exchange were increasingly significant in shaping the fortunes of de-industrialising cities such as Geelong. The following section of this chapter will take up this theme of networks. I will explore how a range of scholars sought to theorise these new global flows and interconnections, and to understand the implications of these changes for shaping the fortunes of 'places' and the people within them.

### Network logics, network thinking

As the discipline of sociology confronted the new millennium, scholars were bringing a range of new analytic tools to bear on the social, economic, political, cultural and governmental changes associated with processes of globalisation. Manuel Castells develops his theory of the 'network society' across several publications spanning the early 1990s to late 2000s. Castells (1991) considers the confluence of a range of forces in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, which included the restructuring of capitalism in the late 1970s and 1980s, the emergence of a new, 'informational' mode of development, and the advance of scientific discovery and technological innovation, and their impact on the transformation of cities, regions and societies. As he writes of the organisational transition from industrialism to 'informationalism':

The main process in this transition is not the shift from goods to services but, as the two main theorists of the 'post-industrial society' proposed many years ago, Alain Touraine in 1969 and Daniel Bell in 1973, the emergence of information processing as the core, fundamental activity conditioning the effectiveness and productivity of all processes of production, distribution, consumption, and management. (Castells 1991, p.17)

In his *Information Age* trilogy originally published between 1996 and 1998 (and republished in a revised form in 2010), Castells seeks to identify the key features of this networked, informational capitalism. In Volume One of the series, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Castells (2010, pp.442-443) demonstrates the significance of 'flows' and 'nodes' as key pieces of network architecture in the emergent 'space of flows', and he highlights the primacy of financial flows in networked capitalism:

While finance capital has generally been among the dominant fractions of capital, we are witnessing the emergence of something different: capital accumulation proceeds, and its

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<sup>26</sup> The more than 100 bollards dotted along Geelong's waterfront were designed and produced by local artist Jan Mitchell on commission from the City of Greater Geelong, as part of waterfront rejuvenation efforts. Constructed from large wooden pylons recovered from the demolished Yarra Street Pier, the bollards depict many of the people, events, places, institutions and moments that have been important in the history of the Geelong region (Johnson 2009b, pp.213-214).

value-making is generated, increasingly, in the global financial markets enacted by information networks in the timeless space of financial flows...in the age of networked capitalism the fundamental reality, where money is made and lost, invested or saved, is in the financial sphere. All other activities (except those of the dwindling public sector) are primarily the basis to generate the necessary surplus to invest in global flows, or the result of investment originated in these financial networks. (Castells 2010, pp.502-503)

In the late 1990s-early 2000s period, the late sociologist John Urry also focussed his attention on these new global flows and interconnections. Urry became one of the leading theorists of the emergent 'mobility turn' in the discipline of sociology, which he suggested was producing new ways of 'thinking the social'. Urry (2000, pp.1-2) argued that the 'social as mobility' was replacing the 'social as society' as the organising concept of sociological analysis. In this sense:

Issues of movement, of too little movement for some or too much for others or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are it seems central to many people's lives and to the operations of many small and large public, private and non-governmental organisations. From SARS to plane crashes, from airport expansion controversies to SMS texting, from slave trading to global terrorism, from obesity caused by the 'school run' to oil wars in the Middle East...issues of what I term 'mobility' are centre-stage on many policy and academic agendas. (Urry 2007, p.6)

For Urry (2007, p.6), the mobility turn is 'post-disciplinary', with contributions from cultural studies, feminism, geography, migration studies, politics, science studies, sociology, transport and tourism studies serving to mobilise analyses 'that have been historically static, fixed and concerned with predominantly aspatial "social structures"'. As Urry, Castells and a range of other theorists recognised, the global flows and interconnections made possible by late 20<sup>th</sup> century globalisation were reconfiguring the dynamics of economic and spatial inequality in new and significant ways. In *Globalization: The human consequences*, first published in 1998, Zygmunt Bauman (1998, p.113) suggests that 'the mark of the excluded in the era of time/space compression is immobility'. This point is echoed by Urry (2007, p.9): 'moving between places physically or virtually can be a source of status and power, an expression of the rights to movement either temporarily or permanently. And where movement is coerced it may generate social deprivation and exclusion'.

Many of these themes have been taken up by youth studies researchers in their work in theorising the impacts of globalisation on young people's lives (see for example Farrugia 2015). The concept of 'sticky subjects', for example, emerges as particularly useful for thinking about those young people who are unable to take advantage of the new mobile, flexible circuits of capital, information and ideas. In their study of the factors influencing young people's aspirations for creative sector employment in three de-industrialising urban locales in England, Allen and Hollingworth (2013, p.502) argue that mobility must be understood as a social resource that is unequally distributed: 'some subjects, through their spatial and social location, can embody mobility and weightlessness while others remain "sticky"'. The particular ways in which places come to be constructed — as dynamic and fluid or as sticky or dead-ends, for example — also play a key role in shaping the aspirations of local young people (Allen & Hollingworth 2013, p.502).

Although their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, it was precisely this 'stickiness' that Geelong's Guggenheim bidders were attempting to shake off, in advancing an innovative, aspirational vision of the city as a global centre for arts, culture and tourism. It was hoped that, through positioning Geelong



as a key node in relation to the emergent global circuits of ‘cultural/creative’ and ‘knowledge’ capital, this regional city could emphatically, and finally, eschew its ‘Rust Belt’ status. However, other initiatives in the climate of innovation fared considerably better than Geelong’s Guggenheim campaign. In the following section of this chapter I will explore, with reference to the emergence of the Local Learning and Employment Network, the ways in which the imperative of innovation was remaking the spaces in which young people’s education, training and labour market participation were discussed and addressed.

### Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs): bringing networks to bear on the challenge of pathways planning for young people

As Furlong and Cartmel noted in 1997 (p.27), ‘the transition from school to work has become much more protracted...increasingly fragmented and in some respects less predictable’. The advent of an increasingly networked, globalised capitalism demanded the development of networked, ‘whole of government’ and ‘whole of community’ approaches to addressing young people’s labour market transitions and outcomes (Department of Education, Employment and Training [DEET] 2000, p.9; Kamp 2003). As part of a growing policy focus on young people at risk of early school leaving, ‘smarter’ pathways planning in secondary school that drew on a range of intersectoral links was framed as the solution to the complexity and uncertainty that increasingly characterised young people’s transitions and pathways.

The election of a ‘reformist’ Labor government in Victoria at the end of 1999, Kamp (2009, p.474) highlights, fostered a change in approach from that of the former conservative Liberal government. The Victorian Labor Government identified the education and training policy domain as central to the realisation of a dual commitment to foster greater social cohesion, and to support the development of Victoria as an ‘innovation economy’ (Kamp 2009, p.474; Kosky 2002). In 2000, the Government commissioned two reviews of education and training policy: a review of the future directions of the State’s public schools, and a review of post compulsory education and training policy and provision. Both reviews pointed to the need for novel, networked approaches to revive a poorly performing education and training system (Kamp 2003, pp.6-7). The problem, the *Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria* (known as the ‘Kirby Report’) suggested, was that:

The linkages between education and training, employment and industry, and other support and safety net resources are weak. There is a lack of coordination between the parts of the education and training system, and there is a need for stronger and clearer vision. The system lacks accountability for all young people: many ‘fall through the cracks’. (DEET 2000, p.7)

Moving immediately to further investigate the Kirby Report’s suggestion that ‘the pathways for young people are uncertain, unequal and poorly signposted’, the Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training selected twelve localities for a Pathways Project, the aim of which was to review the range and adequacy of local pathways planning services offered to young people (DEET 2000, p.7; Kamp 2006, p.47). The responsibility for deciding what particular form the project would take was devolved to each of the twelve localities. In Greater Geelong, the Project was auspiced by local government, and a team of researchers at the Centre for Education and Change at Deakin University was engaged to map the services already existing and to explore the experiences of secondary students and service providers (Kamp 2006, p.47). While the researchers noted that ‘the concept of the “pathway” as an educational and developmental conduit from one stage of life to another is dominant in the policy and practice environments of the post-compulsory years’, sweeping

social and economic changes occurring in industrialised societies in recent decades had rendered the concept problematic: ‘the pathways metaphor is seen to be inadequate as it suggests a linear staging rather than a mosaic or complex web of shifts between school, part time work, training, employment and unemployment’ (Angwin et al. 2001, pp.14-15, 31).

Nonetheless, it was suggested that, if armed with the right knowledge and support, schools could more effectively prepare young people to negotiate ‘multiple and fragmented transitions’ (Angwin et al. 2001, p.31). Schools would do this through a combination of internal reform of careers education approaches and the forging of greater external links with local youth agencies and expertise, the researchers suggested. While schools’ careers education programs remained narrowly focused on the end goal of the senior secondary certificate and university entrance score, there was a need to expand the range of vocational offerings to better cater to the interests, capacities and needs of the 70 percent of students not going on to tertiary studies (Angwin et al. 2001, pp.33-34). In addition, Angwin and colleagues (2001, p.32) argued that ‘planning for transition can no longer be seen as the sole responsibility of schools, given the complexity of the post-school sector and the rapidly changing world of work’. They advocated for greater intersectoral communication and sharing of responsibility between schools and local youth agencies. While each of the twelve localities participating in the Pathways Project had designed and implemented their project in different ways, an evaluation of the state-wide Pathways Project found that ‘three identifiable approaches or “models” emerged’, and the authors described these as the ‘direct negotiation model’, the ‘coordinator facilitation model’ and the ‘network facilitation model’ (Stokes & Tyler 2001, p.10). ‘While each of the models has advantages and disadvantages,’ Stokes and Tyler (2001, p.10) continued, ‘the network facilitation model provides the most direct mechanism for developing more innovative, systematic, inter-sectoral approaches to supporting young people’s pathways through education, training and employment’. However, Stokes and Tyler (2001, p.10) suggested that a number of key elements needed to be in place for the network to do this work effectively, and that some of these elements would take some time to be developed:

The development of a ‘shared vision’ for a network is a process that occurs between people working in the different sectors within a network over time. It can be hampered by changes in personnel and requires external support (in the form of professional development) to be developed. Professional development can be especially significant in assisting with the establishment of structures that facilitate the network’s goals. Similarly, the establishment of good working relationships with young people is a process that is developed over time.

The Kirby Report was also interested in the capacity of networks to facilitate innovative approaches to post-compulsory education and training and pathways planning. The report argued that the move to a networked, regional model of coordination and delivery was in evidence in a range of locations internationally and throughout Australia:

Post compulsory education and training is delivered on a municipal basis in Sweden; the UK is to establish a set of regional Learning and Employment Skills Councils to coordinate delivery at the post-16 level; and Denmark has organised its post compulsory education and training through regional ‘social partnerships’. Even France, among the most centralised of education systems, has moved towards a regional approach. (DEET 2000, p.114)

In addition, the Kirby Report noted that the OECD, in its 1998 report, *Overcoming Failure at School* ‘points out that network approaches to solving problems related to failure at school are becoming more common in member countries than programmatic approaches which seem to be less successful

in implementing reform' (DEET 2000, p.115). The Danes had developed an effective system for identifying and monitoring those young people 'at risk' of disengagement from education and training, and this 'Danish Safety Net' was highlighted by the Kirby Report as an example of what regional planning networks could achieve for young people (DEET 2000, pp.116-117). The Report noted that in this system – a system designed around the goal of attracting and retaining all young people 'no matter what their interests, motivation and talents' – 'personal, educational and career guidance is widely available at all points within the system' (DEET 2000, p.116). In order to ensure that no young person 'falls through the cracks', schools, municipalities, and a youth guidance service are legally obliged to identify and follow up those young people leaving school or post-compulsory education without a qualification (DEET 2000, pp.116-117). Another feature of the system designed to encourage the retention of 'at risk' young people in education and training programs was that the receipt of income support was made contingent on the young person remaining enrolled in a course of study and continuing to follow the 'personal action plan' that they had developed in consultation with the youth guidance service (DEET 2000, p.117).

The Kirby Report also pointed to a range of Australian research and analysis advocating regional, networked approaches, citing recent reports published by the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA), among others. In *Bright Futures for Young Australians: Community Partnerships for the Future of Successful Transitions*, the ASTF, 'an independent industry-led body established in 1994 that was responsible for supporting the expansion and enhancement of joint school and industry programs' (National Centre for Vocational Education Research n.d.), argued that:

The achievement of successful transitions in the future in our view is most directly dependent upon building and supporting the capacity for communities through genuine partnerships to appreciate and respond to the diverse learning needs of the young people in that community, to understand their own situation and the external factors influencing it, to develop strong and enduring relationships between schools, employers and other community organisations.  
(ASTF 1999, pp.22-23)

The ASTF suggested that the importance of school-community partnerships was being recognised in key policy documents such as the 1999 *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, which recommended the 'further strengthening [of] schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnerships with business, industry and the wider community' (MCEETYA 1999, cited in ASTF 1999, p.32).

The BCA emerged as a key voice in support of regional approaches to addressing the problem of what it suggests were young people's 'failed' school-to-work transitions. *Pathways to Work: Tackling Long-Term Unemployment*, a report prepared by the Boston Consulting Group (2000) on behalf of the BCA, argued that it was imperative to 'focus intervention efforts on high-risk individuals *before* they enter long-term unemployment' (Boston Consulting Group 2000, p.27, emphasis in original). A failure to do so, the report argued, would result in deleterious outcomes for individual young people and for society, because 'failure in the transition from school to work is a pathway to marginalisation and long-term unemployment' (Boston Consulting Group 2000, p.11). The Boston Consulting Group (2000, p.11) advocated for the increased application of market logics to the field of pathways planning for young people: 'stated simply, some fundamental management principles are missing from the way we manage the school-to-work transition; they are accountability, measurement of outcomes and informed purchasing of services'. The solutions to this problem, the Boston Consulting Group

suggested, lay in developing and enhancing local accountability structures for improving school-to-work transitions in areas of high disadvantage. The Boston Consulting Group (2000, p.12) argued that this should involve the creation of a new role, the Local Director of Youth Futures, an individual who would work closely with ‘a Community Board comprising local businesses, school principals, vocational education and training (VET) representatives, youth representatives, and other members of the community with relevant expertise’. The Boston Consulting Group (2000, p.13) proposed the introduction of a new performance measure, the “youth participation ratio” – defined as the proportion of young people from an age cohort who have spent at least half of the preceding year in full-time work, education or training’, which would be tracked at the school, local and regional levels and would offer a means to assess the efficacy of the Local Director’s and Community Board’s efforts to improve outcomes for young people.

The Kirby Report noted that, already in many places throughout Australia, ‘local planning networks’ were emerging to address the shortcomings of a poorly integrated education and training sector, and it recommended that these networks be expanded and nurtured:

Local planning networks have the potential to meet some of the broad objectives that have underpinned the Government policy and this report. They are focused upon the needs of young people, are cross sectoral, and can support stronger links with industry and other agencies. An important goal should be their capacity to develop a corporate commitment to account for all young people in a region. In doing this, the needs of groups such as Koorie students should be incorporated. The Government should aim to develop and nurture a state-wide pattern of local planning networks consisting of relevant education and training providers, industry and other agencies. (DEET 2000, p.11)

The Victorian Government endorsed this recommendation, and 31 Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) were established between 2001 and 2002, covering all areas of the State. The LLEN would play a central coordinating role in the service of the ideal of ‘joined up’ government, a configuration that Kamp (2003, p.3) argues was vested with the power and remit to foster ‘lifelong learning’: ‘the idea of partnership and joined-up government has come to be seen as a necessary condition for the operationalisation of lifelong learning’. The emergence of an entity like the LLEN, I want to argue, carried a significance that extended well beyond the education and training sector – it was indicative of a wider shift in thinking about the capacity of networks to facilitate innovative approaches to addressing local problems. In developing and applying network approaches to problems of youth unemployment in ‘Rust Belt’ (or otherwise economically marginal) places such as Geelong, policymakers and other stakeholders understood themselves to be enacting the process of ‘innovation’.

The advantage of a network model of governance is that it ‘resides between the extremes of “macro” central steering and micro “local autonomy” perspectives’ (Keating and Robinson 2003, cited in Kamp 2003, p.4). The OECD emerged as a key advocate for systems of ‘devolved’ government that moved power and responsibility for decision-making from central government to the local or regional levels. In its 2001 report *Devolution and Globalisation: Implications for Local Decision-makers*, the OECD examined the ways in which city and regional governments would need to redesign their institutions and development policies in order to respond to the twin trends of devolution and globalisation. The OECD (2001, p.9) argued that, in order to compete successfully in a globalising economy, ‘territories increasingly need policies that help build and exploit endogenous capabilities. Devolved governments are best placed to design and deliver such policies’. The emergence of this

network orthodoxy was also significant in the context of the reconfiguration of the relationship between governments, industry and civil society. As authors such as David Harvey and Patrick Bailey have argued, ‘governance’ implies that a much broader range of actors are bringing their influence to bear on policy formulation than has traditionally been the case<sup>27</sup>:

As the state ‘retracts’ some of its power and jurisdictions of government through outsourcing, contracts and privatisations, policy and public services are ‘opened up’ to a whole array of non-state actors from across civil society. This kind of governance, it is argued, is exercised across, between and through networks of complex relationships which traverse established sectoral boundaries and which constitute a mix of state and non-state, public and private, and profit and not-for-profit organisations and actors who are involved in the advocacy, development, researching, ‘moving’ and delivery of social and public policy. (Bailey 2013, p.817)

This shift does not entail a diminution of the role and power of the state, Bailey (2013, p.817) continues; rather, the state’s role is reconceived as that of a central catalyst, mobilising all sectors – public, private and voluntary – into action to solve the community’s problems. In this turn of the century period, Australia’s employment services system was also being remodelled according to a network logic. In 1998, the Howard Liberal-National Coalition Government dissolved the Commonwealth Employment Service, the public employment service created 50 years earlier, and tendered out the delivery of employment services to a range of not-for-profit and for-profit providers under the banner of the ‘Job Network’ (Thomas 2007). The Howard Government also restructured the welfare system at this time, establishing Centrelink, a Commonwealth service delivery agency in the form of a ‘one-stop-shop’ that would deliver income support services and act as a gateway to the Job Network (Thomas 2007).

These reforms were justified by the Howard Government on the grounds that the establishment of a quasi-market framework for the delivery of employment services would introduce a necessary level of competition that could bring costs down, promote efficiency and provide a better quality of service (Thomas 2007). The Howard Government’s employment services reforms represented the fulfillment of the desires of successive ‘economic rationalist’ governments to fully privatise and outsource the delivery of these essential public services. Considine and colleagues (2015, p.32) observe that, ‘in under a decade, Australia’s system of assistance to the unemployed went from entirely publicly run to the most comprehensively outsourced service in the world’. Bessant (1999) argues that the economic and labour market policies pursued by the Howard conservative Government in the late 1990s and early 2000s – such as the ‘Work For the Dole’ scheme, more stringent activity testing for unemployment benefits and harsher sanctions for non-compliance, and the ‘WorkChoices’ industrial relations legislation designed to reduce the ‘interference’ of unions and industrial arbiters in the labour market – impacted heavily on the lives of young Australians, in many cases with the effect of exacerbating inequality and poverty.

At the same time, policymakers understood that boosting rates of young people’s participation in, and completion of, education and training programs remained an effective strategy for addressing the problem of youth unemployment. The consensus was that the establishment of a set of performance targets remained an effective way for policymakers to incentivise the education and training sector to assume a large degree of responsibility for the management of this problem. In 2003, the Minister for

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<sup>27</sup> I explored Harvey’s work in this space in Chapter 2.

Education and Training in the Victorian Labor Government, Lynne Kosky, addressed the inaugural conference of the LLENs and the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC), the body charged with funding LLENs and monitoring their progress and outcomes. In her speech, Kosky (2003, p.5) outlined the Government's two key targets for increasing young people's participation in education and training: that by 2010, 90 percent of young people in Victoria would successfully complete Year 12 or equivalent, and that by 2005, the number of 15-19-year-olds in rural or regional areas engaged in education and training would increase by six percent. Kosky challenged LLENs to play a central role in fulfilling these targets, while maintaining a focus on the 'wider goal of promoting lifelong learning – by making near-universal participation in post school education a norm in our society'. Certain groups of young people were at particular risk of leaving school early, and 'we expect LLENs to target these pockets of poor achievement' (Kosky 2003, p.5). Furthermore, LLENs should develop strong links with industry 'to make sure our education and training system meets both its needs and those of young people' (Kosky 2003, p.5).

At the end of the Smart Geelong Region LLEN's first year of operation, the network was comprised of 190 members, 'including government and non-government schools, businesses, unions, education and training providers, community and youth agencies, neighbourhood houses, government departments and a range of interested individuals'<sup>28</sup> (SGR LLEN 2001, p.12). Figure 15 below provides an illustration of how the SGR LLEN conceptualised its various functions in 2001. The SGR LLEN would stand at the centre of a series of interlinkages of community, industry and service providers, acting as an advocate, a disseminator of best practice, a data collector, and an ideas and information clearinghouse in order to facilitate the development of a local, strategic approach to the education and training needs of young people. 'In the thirteen months that I have been with the LLEN and in the Geelong region', Executive Officer Anne-Marie Ryan wrote in the SGR LLEN's 2001 *Annual Report*:

I have come to recognise that Geelong is 'Network City'. There is a strong history of collaboration between the spheres of endeavour that comprise the LLEN membership including the education, training, employment and youth sectors. Less evident is cross-sector collaboration focussing on the learning needs and transitions of young people as they move between the sectors. This area is the LLEN's primary focus. (Ryan 2001, p.4)

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Figure 15: The SGR LLEN functions (SGR LLEN 2001, p.11)

In its initial surveys of the local learning and employment landscape, the SGR LLEN (2003b, p.7) noted that 'the unemployment rate for the region as a whole is dropping in line with national trends (5.6 percent and 6.3 percent)'. However, the unemployment rate among 15-19 year olds remained at 16.8 percent in 2003, a rate higher than the Victorian average (SGR LLEN 2003b, p.7). In line with the mandate set out for LLENs by the Bracks Labor Government, the SGR LLEN (2003b, p.7) would maintain a focus on 'at risk' young people, with the category of 'at risk' referring to those young

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<sup>28</sup> As the 'Geelong: Smart Move' campaign also attests, the 'Smart' appellation emerged as a key discursive element in the Climate of Innovation. In Geelong and further afield, 'Smart' found its way into the titles of an array of projects, organisations, initiatives, and even places (for example, Queensland was declared the 'Smart State' in the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century period). The precise meaning of 'Smart' varies across these different contexts, however the common theme appears to be that 'Smart' is intended to lend an aura of purpose and intelligence to the thing to which it attaches, and to signify a new and innovative way of doing things.

people ‘considered from a range of factors to be likely to leave school before the completion of Year 12 or equivalent, or not continue in education and training or gain full-time work’. The SGR LLEN’s analyses revealed that risk was organised and distributed along the lines of race and gender. While Indigenous young people, in line with national trends, were at disproportionate risk of early school leaving and poor post-school outcomes, male early school leavers tended to fare better than their female counterparts:

Whilst more young men do leave school before the completion of Year 12 or equivalent, their post school opportunities and outcomes are better than for young women who are early leavers. More apprenticeship opportunities are available to young men than young women, and women are at increased long-term risk of permanent casual employment or long-term unemployment. (SGR LLEN 2003b, p.6)

In conjunction with the Pathways Project and the establishment of a state-wide network of LLENs, the Bracks Labor Government invested in a range of vocational education and training initiatives that it suggested would transform Victoria into an ‘innovation State’. As Minister Kosky explained in her 2002 Ministerial Statement *Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy*, reform of the vocational sector would enable Victorian industries to compete internationally: ‘the VET sector must transform itself from one that is designed for an industrially based economy to one that assists businesses to compete in the innovation economy, assists communities to develop and assists individuals to gain the skills they need for the future’ (Kosky 2002, p.1). While many of these initiatives and reforms were targeted at the TAFE sector, the vocational education ‘stream’ in secondary schools also underwent significant expansion, through a number of initiatives, including the further development of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools program; the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), a ‘hands-on’ alternative to the Victorian Certificate of Education; increased funding for school-based apprenticeships; and the introduction of Managed Individual Pathways, which would provide more intensive assistance and mentoring to students enrolled in study in government schools or TAFE and who are deemed ‘at risk’ of discontinuing their studies (Kosky 2003, p.5; VLESC 2002, p.17). The Victorian Government, moving to implement one of the key recommendations of the Kirby Report, that ‘the capacity for tracking the destinations of young people in their post compulsory years be developed through the local planning networks’, charged LLENs with the responsibility for the follow-up and referral functions of the On Track program that would monitor the post-school destinations of school leavers in Years 10-12 (Kirby 2000, cited in Kamp 2006, p.141).

The introduction of new network infrastructures into the education and training sphere was designed to bring vastly increased resources of social, economic and intellectual capital to bear on the problem of youth unemployment. Yet, the model was not without its challenges and limitations. For a start, there was the entrenched nature of the competitive model of inter-school relations that militated against schools developing more collaborative ways of working together and with non-school agencies, and the difficulty of building norms and trust among ‘weak ties’ (Kamp 2009, p.477). The theory of the ‘strength of weak ties’, proposed by sociologist Mark Granovetter in the 1970s, suggests that social capital is comprised of different combinations of ‘bonding’, ‘bridging’ and ‘linking’ ties (Kamp 2009, p.473; Granovetter 1973). As Kamp (2009, p.473) explains, the theory proposes that ‘individuals improve their likelihood of achieving change by not only being connected to others in their primary network but also by having weak but powerful ties with other communities’. ‘The weak ties of bridging and linking networks’, Kamp (2009, p.477) observes, ‘can provide access to a far broader range of resources but also inhibit the development of norms and trust because of differences

which come into play when networking outside familiar contexts'. Indeed, while promoted in policy as a relatively simple linear process, in practice, networking is 'a learning process marked by tensions and contradictions' (Warmington et al. 2004, cited in Kamp 2009, p.477). Another challenge the LLEN model faced was the persistent lack of clarity among local stakeholders in relation to the boundaries and role of the LLEN: 'th[e] tension between an understanding of a LLEN as an entity that "should do something" as opposed to an understanding of a LLEN as being just another part of the network which "would do something" has remained constant throughout the operation of SGR LLEN' (Kamp 2006, p.69).

As structures that are open, highly dynamic, and able to expand without limits, networks are particularly suited to a 'culture of endless deconstruction and reconstruction' (Castells 1996, cited in Wittel 2001, p.52). The work of networking among weak ties demands a particular form of sociality – what culture and media studies researcher Andreas Wittel (2001) terms 'network sociality'. This new form of sociality was emerging 'among the new middle class of culturally educated and media- and computer-literate people' in 'urban (post)industrial spaces and milieus', and Wittel (2001, pp.51-53) traced its rise to the development of information and communication technologies, and to processes of globalisation and individualisation. Network sociality is, in short, 'the social expression of a "liquid modernity"' (Wittel 2001, p.51). Wittel contrasts network sociality with 'community'. Where the latter entails 'stability, coherence, embeddedness and belonging' and 'involves strong and long-lasting ties, proximity and a common history or narrative of the collective', network sociality typically 'consists of fleeting and transient, yet iterative social relations; of ephemeral but intense encounters' (Wittel 2001, p.51).

Social relationships are transformed into commodities, and become transactional in nature. Social encounters in the network are organised around a particular purpose, goal or project, and 'when the project terminates, these collaborations are kept on a low flame and new projects, cooperations and social ties are established or re-established' (Wittel 2001, p.66). In addition, these encounters are shaped by the imperatives of mobility and speed; they are concerned with the rapid exchange of data rather than the sharing of stories, discourses and narratives: 'narratives are time-consuming; information is quick' (Wittel 2001, p.68). There is some evidence to suggest that the SGR LLEN understood its role as cultivating precisely these kinds of purpose-focused, transactional relationships – certainly, as the organisation moved further into the 2000s, 'partnership brokerage' featured much more explicitly in the SGR LLEN's stated mission.

Wittel (2001, p.67) notes that, while some commentators such as Richard Sennett are pessimistic about the ability of networked sociality to promote a sense of community responsibility, norms and trust, we should not discount the 'possibility of a reconfigured trust being inscribed in informational social bonds, bonds based less in hierarchical relations and more in the complex, reciprocal intricacies of the transverse networks of information exchange'. As Wittel (2001, pp.67-68) argues:

Trust here might be based less on continuous work relations of a long duration, and more on iterated work relations of a short duration; less on the knowledge of someone's character and more on the knowledge of someone's resources and his/her position in the social field. Trust here is constructed and produced as a social relation rather [than] already pre-given or reproduced. Giddens...calls this 'active trust'. It is a matter of mutual influence rather than mutual fatedness.



In the SGR LLEN's inaugural *Annual Report*, Executive Officer Anne-Marie Ryan suggested that 'an enormous amount of goodwill' on the part of the network members was part of the glue that held the LLEN together, as was a shared commitment among the various network members to the 'strategic imperative' of supporting young people's transitions:

Predictably, when people come together to form cross-sector groups there will be different interpretations of priorities and goals. An enormous amount of goodwill and a mutual interest in young people is needed to make these groups work. This goodwill is a marked feature in the region and an enabling factor as we move towards refocusing our joint attention on the needs of young people rather than on the agendas of the various players. (Ryan 2001, p.4)

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the social, political, economic, cultural and governmental 'conditions of possibility' which enabled 'innovation' to function as a truth in relation to the problem of youth unemployment. In the context of the challenges facing 'Rust Belt' places in the late 1990s and early 2000s, networks were, at one and the same time, understood as the problem and the solution. While the new global flows of networked, informational capitalism threatened to cast the old industrial cities of the OECD and EU to the economic periphery, the promise of innovative, networked approaches to regional planning was that 'Rust Belt' places such as Geelong would not be relegated to the ranks of 'the left behind', and that the young people in these places would not be 'sticky subjects', unable to enact the forms of mobility and weightlessness increasingly understood as necessary in 21<sup>st</sup> century, flexible capitalism. Geelong's Guggenheim campaign, an event that represented the culmination of efforts to reimagine this regional, de-industrialising locale as a global centre for arts, culture and tourism, was ultimately unsuccessful. While the financial woes of the Guggenheim brand were to blame in this case, the likelihood that the Guggenheim corporation would choose to invest in a place at such a significant geographical remove from the major (Northern Hemisphere) cultural networks and circuits of capital was perhaps remote to begin with. Yet, other initiatives that were the product of the innovation agenda, such as the LLEN, have endured in the Geelong context.

However, in adopting the LLEN model as 'best practice' for facilitating pathways planning for young people, policymakers and stakeholders made a series of assumptions about the ability of this model to address complex social and economic problems such as unemployment. In the remaining paragraphs of this chapter, I want to problematise the notion that 'innovation', in the form of the development and application of networked approaches, is the solution to the problem of youth unemployment. Here I will seek to bring to light some of the tensions, contradictions, absences and silences that emerge in such an approach.

So, what are some of the assumptions that are embedded in an approach such as the LLEN? To begin, there is the assumption that the answers to the problem are already 'out there' in the community: that it is simply a matter of drawing the kind of expertise that could solve the problem into the network. Another key assumption is that the causes of the problem originate at the local or regional level, therefore so too must the solutions. Such an approach assumes that structural changes in local labour markets and education and training systems are somehow disconnected from patterns of change at the national and global scales. As John Spierings, a research strategist with the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, asked in 2000 (p.19), 'how can community partnerships at the local level engineer sustainable change when the issues they are dealing with arise from macro-forces in the economy and culture?'. The characteristics of the 'place' in which the young person is embedded are important in shaping the

kinds of educational and employment outcomes that they can expect to experience. Spierings suggested that there was increasing evidence that inequalities within and between regions and localities in Australia were growing, and he highlighted the finding of the 1999 *State of the Regions* report, that ‘around half our population live in communities that are equipped to handle the economic pressures of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The rest live in either marginalised communities or communities that...run a strong risk of becoming marginalised’ (National Economics 1999, cited in Spierings 2000, p.5). However, it is important to recognise that wider patterns of change at the national and global levels have a key role in shaping the fortunes of particular places. Indeed, in previous chapters I identified that ‘macro’ processes and forces emerging in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the crisis of overproduction in global manufacturing, and the turn away from ‘protectionist’ industry policies at the national level, played a critical role in shaping the fortunes of industrial towns and cities in Australia and in many of the other industrialised democracies. Spierings (2000, pp.4-5) noted that, in the late 1990s, Australia was confronting the problems of capital flight and a skills drain, and that this was ‘happening at two levels: from Australia as a nation-state to other international centres; as well as internally’, with the major metropolitan centres of the Eastern/Pacific coast prospering while many inland rural and regional areas were in decline.

Another point to be made here is that a number of the networked entities that were established in the climate of innovation were the products of government policy initiatives. This is certainly true of the LLENs in Victoria, which were instituted as part of the Bracks Labor Government’s education and training reform agenda, and the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in the UK, which Geddes (2006) suggests were a key plank of New Labour’s strategy to ‘modernise’ local government structures. As Geddes (2006, p.80) explains, ‘an LSP is a body which brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors’ to develop local solutions to issues of unemployment, crime, health, education, housing and physical environment. It is interesting to note, and perhaps something of a contradiction that, while place-based networks such as the LLENs and LSPs were intended to facilitate and build on ‘local’, ‘endogenous’, ‘grassroots’ approaches, they were imposed ‘from above’ – on municipalities by higher levels of government. Earlier I referred to Kamp’s (2006) observation that there was a persistent lack of clarity among local stakeholders in the Geelong community in relation to the boundaries and role of the LLEN. In this context it is possible to imagine that existing education and training and youth agencies would question the motives behind the introduction of these new entities. LSPs, for example, were tasked with the ‘rationalisation’ of local partnerships within their area (Geddes 2006, p.80). In a climate of confusion, established local agencies could, for example, perceive the LLEN as another layer of bureaucracy, or alternatively, view it as a new player on the scene and a competitor for scarce sources of funding, or be wary or suspicious of the authority bestowed on the LLEN to sit above local agencies and coordinate local strategic planning efforts.

In the climate of innovation, policymakers believed that the network model represented the most effective way of making local stakeholders responsible and accountable for a problem such as youth unemployment. Indeed, network approaches were hailed as a panacea that could cure all manner of social, political, and economic ills afflicting all manner of different populations, so that in the climate of innovation, support for networked approaches formed a kind of orthodoxy. Advocates of networked approaches assumed that it was possible to achieve a commonality of purpose and intention among stakeholders drawn from a range of diverse sectors. LLENs, for example, operate on the premise that all network members have the ‘best interests’ of young people at heart and are equally invested in tackling the problem of youth unemployment.

However, as my analysis above indicates, while the formation and development of networks is often framed as a process that unfolds organically, spontaneously and smoothly, the reality is likely to be somewhat different. Indeed, in the Network Society we cannot expect networks to emerge spontaneously and organically because they have become institutionalised, rationalised and governmentalised (Kelly & Kenway 2001, p.30). Kelly (2000b, p.305) argues that in contemporary liberal democracies, the responsibility for the government of populations – where ‘government’ is understood, following Foucault, as the ‘conduct of conduct’ – is vested in multiple agencies across diverse settings: ‘in schools, in the justice system, in families, in economic relations’, and in an entity such as the LLEN. Although power here is not vested in a centralised, monolithic state, Foucault (1983, cited in Kelly 2000b, p.305) suggests that ‘in a certain way all other forms of power relation must refer to [the state]’. The various other social, economic, and political institutions responsible for the ‘conduct of conduct’ have become ‘governmentalized, that is to say, elaborated, rationalized and centralized in the form of, under the auspices of, state institutions’ (Foucault 1983, cited in Kelly 2000b, p.306). In their study of the restructuring of young people’s school-to-work transitions and of processes of pathways planning in the Network Society, Kelly and Kenway (2001, p.30) suggest that ‘in these processes of rationalisation, the need for networks to be supported by institutionalised practices emerges as a major element in the structuring of the “reflexivity chances” of those people caught in the “web” of these networks’.

The personal capacities, and access to resources and opportunities, of those who must do the work of networking and partnership brokering are also an important element here. We should question whether all network members can practice forms of ‘network sociality’ in more or less equal, intuitive, and straightforward ways. Network forms of sociality may not develop as readily in smaller, regional and rural areas away from the urban centres, for in these places it is more likely that an established sense of ‘community’ (in the sense that Wittel [2001] intended) prevails. Certainly, an attitude of ‘goodwill’, and being a ‘people person’, are essential attributes, but they are only part of the equation (Kelly & Kenway 2001, p.30). As Stokes and Tyler (2001) pointed out in their evaluation of the Victorian Pathways Project, the various elements that underpin a network can take some time to be developed, and are often reliant on supports and resources generated elsewhere, such as the professional development of those who must do the work of partnership brokering and collaboration.

In the policy discussion around networked approaches, there was an absence of critical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages of these approaches, and on the differential capacities of networks to effect change, across varied policy, institutional and geographical contexts. The Kirby Report, for example, highlights the ‘Danish Safety Net’ as a model of what regional, networked approaches can achieve for pathways planning for young people, without taking into account the social, political, economic, cultural and governmental ‘conditions of possibility’ that make such a system possible. The Report is silent on the fact that Denmark is a country whose political and governmental institutions are very different to those of Australia, so that the Danish Safety Net occurs within the context of a much stronger overarching social safety net. Shaped by very different political, social, cultural and economic traditions to those of Australia, Denmark’s political institutions are underpinned by a commitment to principles of social justice and social democratic redistribution - principles that Australian politicians and policymakers were, in the 1990s and 2000s, moving further away from.

In Australia, reports published by the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA) were among the key sources influencing the Kirby Report’s support for networked, regional approaches to addressing youth unemployment, pathways planning

and transitions. In different ways, the ASTF and BCA argued for business and industry to play a greater role in shaping the directions of reform of the education and training and youth sectors. While the ASTF (1999) was concerned with strengthening schools' capacities for building partnerships with business, industry and community organisations, the BCA (Boston Consulting Group 2000) argued for the extension of managerial and market logics into the fields of education and training and youth work as a means to promote greater local accountability for the problem of youth unemployment. However, there is a basic tension to be found between, on the one hand, the BCA's suggestion that young people's school-to-work pathways, and the pathways planning necessary to facilitate these transitions, can be 'rationalised' and made manageable, knowable, and quantifiable, and on the other, the growing body of evidence demonstrating that young people's pathways were becoming increasingly fragmented, complex, non-linear and uncertain in the face of the sweeping social, cultural, political and economic changes associated with processes of globalisation. These are just some of the many tensions, contradictions, absences and silences that a genealogical analysis of the emergence of networked approaches is able to reveal. These tensions, contradictions, absences and silences make problematic the notion that 'innovation', enacted as it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s through the development and application of networked approaches, is the 'solution' to the problem of youth unemployment. Having explored the processes through which innovation was 'made real' in the particular context of the 'Rust Belt' city of Geelong in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in the following chapter I will explore the emergence of a new, algorithmically-energised, regime of capitalist accumulation, and other key 'disruptions' shaping the demand for young people's 'enterprise skills' in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# Chapter Six

## New Work Orders? The Foundation for Young Australians and Young People's Enterprise Skills

### Introduction

In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the concept of 'enterprise' is increasingly, and powerfully, vested with the capacity to rescue 'Rust Belt' locales such as Geelong, and the young people within them, from economic insecurity and destitution. The previous chapter, 'Guggenheim Dreaming in a Climate of Innovation', considered Geelong as it stood on the cusp of the new millennium, at a time in which local business and civic leaders began to harbour global ambitions for the city, as they strove to leave the legacies of 20<sup>th</sup> century industrialism behind, and to remake and re-image this regional locale. In that period, 'creative cities', the 'creative class' and 'innovation' were the watchwords underpinning local strategies for economic and labour market transformation.

This chapter is the third and final of three chapters that seek to problematise and historicise each of the key terms, 'employability skills', 'innovation' and 'enterprise', all of which have, in slightly different ways and in slightly different periods, been understood as promising the solution to the problem of youth unemployment. This chapter brings the discussion into the historical present, into an early 21<sup>st</sup> century period in which new, algorithmically-energised circuits of capitalist accumulation, and discourses of the 'gig economy', are shaping notions of youth enterprise. The central 'figure' of concern in this chapter is the Foundation for Young Australians' (FYA) *New Work Order* report series, a series which argues for the significance of the transferable, 'enterprise skills' that young people will need if they are to successfully navigate future labour markets characterised by almost constant churn and change.

The FYA's interventions into the education and training policy space are occurring at a time when algorithms, Big Data, and artificial intelligence are becoming increasingly significant as drivers of economic growth, and of processes of societal change more generally. In his 2017 book, *Platform Capitalism*, Nick Srnicek argues that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, advanced capitalism has come to be centred on the extraction and use of a particular kind of raw material: data. Srnicek (2017, pp.41-42) argues that data have come to serve a number of key functions in processes of capitalist accumulation:

They educate and give competitive advantage to algorithms; they enable the coordination and outsourcing of workers; they allow for the optimisation and flexibility of productive processes; they make possible the transformation of low-margin goods into high-margin services; and data analysis is itself generative of data, in a virtuous cycle.

The need to effectively manage all of this data has given rise to what Srnicek (2017, p.42) suggests is 'a powerful new type of firm: the platform'. Srnicek (2017, p.43) argues that, at its most basic level, a platform is a digital infrastructure that enables two or more groups to interact. Numerous companies, across both 'old' and 'new' sectors of the economy, are now reliant on platforms: from leading technology companies such as Google, Facebook, and Amazon, to 'dynamic start-ups' such as Uber and Airbnb, to some of the key behemoths of 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial capitalism, such as GE, Siemens, John Deere and Monsanto (Srnicek 2017, p.43). Srnicek traces the 'conditions of possibility' which enabled this data-driven regime to emerge. Forming a background to the transformations of late 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism was the crisis of profitability and oversupply in global manufacturing that emerged in the 1970s (Srnicek 2017, pp.13-17). In the 1990s, with manufacturing continuing to decline, the

advent of the World Wide Web saw a frenzy of investment in, and speculation on, technology companies and stocks, so that, by the late 1990s, the telecommunications sector became the favoured outlet of financial capital (Srnicek 2017, pp.19-22). Srnicek (2017, p.23) observes that ‘the 1990s tech boom was a bubble that laid the groundwork for the digital economy to come’. And the global economic conditions which have prevailed in the post-Global Financial Crisis period have proved particularly conducive to the growth in size and influence of technology firms such as Google and Apple. As governments and central banks have pursued low interest rates and a loose monetary policy, ‘investors seeking higher yields have had to turn to increasingly risky assets – by investing in unprofitable and unproven tech companies, for instance’ (Srnicek 2017, p.30). At the same time, the post-2008 conditions supported the growth of the flexible labour force necessary to platform capitalism. In a context of high unemployment in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, large numbers of workers have been pushed into the hyper-exploitative ‘gig economy’ as a result of their need to earn an income (Srnicek 2017, pp.33-35).

In a context of post-Global Financial Crisis austerity, a variety of policy, media and academic actors and agencies have focused their attention on the rise in rates of youth unemployment and the withering of traditional opportunity structures, and their role in shaping contemporary patterns of precarity and generational inequality. In Australia, the FYA’s own research has highlighted that ‘today’s generation of young people is the first to be worse off than their parents on a number of key social and economic measures’ (FYA 2018, p.7). An oft-cited statistic is that it now takes young people 4.7 years, on average, to secure a full-time job after leaving full-time education, compared with an average of one year in 1986 (FYA 2015b, p.2). Today a home buyer pays 6.5 times the average income for their home; in 1985 houses typically cost 3.2 times the average income (FYA 2014, p.18). With a full 31.5 percent of young people classified as unemployed or underemployed in 2018 (FYA 2018, p.8), it is feared that, despite their best efforts to ‘get on and get ahead’, current generations of young people are often locked out of the opportunity structures that previous generations were able to fall back on. In 2016, the ‘smashed avocado’ debate that erupted across Australian media became a site where many of these anxieties and concerns were not only expressed, but also contested. In October of that year, Australian social commentator Bernard Salt made the (apparently tongue-in-cheek) provocation that young people’s proclivities for posh breakfasts in ‘hipster cafes’ were imperilling their prospects of home ownership (Salt 2016). The avalanche of impassioned commentary and debate that ensued across digital and traditional media became colloquially known as the ‘smashed avocado’ debate, and sparked a discussion of generational inequality and housing affordability that reverberated around the globe (see for example, Levin 2017; Delaney 2016).

In the academic field, a multidisciplinary research agenda has emerged to suggest that the experiences of young people, as they move through 21<sup>st</sup> century education and work contexts reshaped by processes of globalisation and neoliberal individualisation, can increasingly be understood in terms of ‘precarity’ and/or ‘precarisation’ (see for example, Ross 2008; Standing 2011; Carbajo & Kelly 2019). There has been renewed impetus for such an agenda in the aftermath of the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the impacts of which in many cases fell (and continue to fall) disproportionately on young people. As Carbajo and Kelly (2019, p.74) observe, in large parts of Europe the youth labour market is yet to recover from the effects of the GFC. In Spain, for example, youth unemployment reached a peak of 41.4 percent in 2013, and the country’s youth unemployment rate remained over twice that of the EU-28 average several years later, with 28.7 percent of young people out of work in 2017 (Carbajo & Kelly 2019, p.74). In these contexts, in which precarity appears to have become the new normality for young people, there have proliferated a large number

of policies and programs designed to improve the employability of this population through the cultivation of their capacities for entrepreneurship and enterprise (Carbajo & Kelly 2019, pp.74-75).

The OECD at the international scale, and the FYA in the Australian context have sought a key role in identifying the kinds of work that education and skills development systems should do in fostering individuals who can adapt rapidly to education and work contexts reshaped by the ‘disruptions’ of neoliberal capitalism and technological innovation. This chapter will begin by exploring the FYA’s *New Work Order* report series. At the time of writing, the series comprises six titles: *The New Work Order*, which was published in August 2015; *How Young People Are Faring*, published in November 2015; *The New Basics*, published in April 2016; *The New Work Mindset*, published in November 2016; *The New Work Smarts*, published in July 2017; and *The New Work Reality*, published in June 2018. I will analyse the arguments put forward in the key titles in the series, examine some of the key sources that the FYA draws on in developing its ‘enterprise skills’ agenda, and offer a critique of some of the core assumptions embedded in the particular vision of the future of work that the *New Work Order* advances. I will also briefly take a closer look at the visual representations of youth enterprise that appear across the pages of these reports, and examine what these images say about the kinds of enterprise privileged by the FYA and other agencies like it, in the technologised, globalised, corporate contexts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the following section of the chapter I will move into the local Geelong context to analyse contemporary economic and labour market developments in this ‘Rust Belt’ city. While these developments continue to be shaped by the reverberations of de-industrialisation and ‘neoliberal’ globalisation, a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders have claimed an authoritative voice in Geelong, advocating a vision of the city’s future as ‘Silicon Bay’. Having lost the ‘Smart’ part of its title in the intervening years, in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (GRLEN) understands itself as taking a leading role in preparing the Geelong region for the coming of the ‘gig economy’. Analysing the GRLEN’s 2017-18 Gig Economy seminar series in some detail, I will demonstrate that the FYA’s efforts to influence the national education and training policy agenda represent a key reference point for the GRLEN as it attempts to mobilise a diverse array of community stakeholders around the need to prepare young people for the future of work. The work of organisations such as the FYA and GRLEN ensures that the key concepts of ‘enterprise skills’, the ‘gig economy’, and ‘portfolio careers’ feature heavily in contemporary discourses around youth employment and unemployment, where they function to individualise and responsabilise young people for managing their lives as an enterprise in increasingly uncertain settings (Kelly 2017). At the conclusion of the chapter I will offer some provocations for rethinking the dominant ways in which the ‘gig economy’ and processes of digital disruption are understood in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### The Foundation for Young Australians and the *New Work Order*

During the last decade, the FYA, via the publication of a series of research reports, has attempted to spearhead a national discussion of the skills that young people will need if they are to survive and thrive in labour markets fundamentally reshaped by the dynamics of automation and globalisation. The FYA (2017a, p.1) suggests that its work is driven by four key goals:

We inspire young people by providing ideas, inspiration and opportunities to connect young people to inspiring, purposeful futures; we back young people by building the capabilities and knowledge young people need to thrive in the future; we connect young people by building a network of inspired and inspiring young Australians; [and] we transform the way government,

industry and community sectors engage young people to rethink the systems that shape the world.

The FYA ‘was formed in 1999 through a partnership between The Queen’s Trust and the Australian Youth Foundation, with the objectives of providing increased opportunity and access for young people of disadvantaged background, as well as supporting the leadership development of young Australians’ (FYA n.d.-b). In 2008 an alliance was formed between Education Foundation and FYA that consolidated the established expertise and knowledge of the youth and education sectors, and established FYA ‘as the pre-eminent advocate for young Australians’ (FYA n.d.-b). The FYA also has historical connections to conservative politics in Australia: Victorian Liberal Party MP Mary Wooldridge was the FYA’s CEO from 2001 to 2005 (Parliament of Victoria 2019). The FYA’s current, high-profile leader, CEO Jan Owen, is ‘a highly regarded social entrepreneur, innovator, influencer and author’, whose ‘lifelong mission is to unleash the potential of young people to lead positive change in the world’, the FYA’s website (n.d.-a) explains. Although Owen commands an authoritative voice in the field of education reform, she is but one of a growing number of (often self-styled) ‘thought leaders’ vying for influence in this space.

The view that education and skills development systems, as currently constituted, are inadequate to the task of preparing young people for the future of work, and more broadly, of equipping young people with the tools to navigate uncertain futures, is now pervasive. And it is one voiced by a multitude of policymakers, education practitioners, and other stakeholders across multiple settings and scales – from the various emerging ‘thought leaders’ and ‘influencers’ seeking to ‘disrupt’ understandings of what it means to work and to learn, and who use the professional networking website LinkedIn as their platform (see for example, McGowan 2014), to the high-level policy coordination and leadership activities of the OECD. The OECD’s *Skills For A Digital World* (2016, p.4) report, for example, suggests that the impact of digital disruption on the workplace ‘is raising the demand for new skills along three lines’:

ICT specialist skills to programme, develop applications and manage networks; ICT generic skills to use such technologies for professional purposes; and ICT complementary skills to perform new tasks associated to the use of ICTs at work, e.g.: information-processing, self-direction, problem-solving and communication. Foundation skills, digital literacies as well as social and emotional skills are crucial to enable effective use of digital technologies by all individuals in their daily lives.

In its 2018 report *The Future of Education and Skills: Education 2030*, the OECD (2018, p.4) argues that ‘education needs to aim to do more than prepare young people for the world of work; it needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens’. The OECD’s Andreas Schleicher (2018, p.2) suggests that, in a context of unprecedented social, economic and environmental challenges – changes which are ‘driven by accelerating globalisation and a faster rate of technological developments’ and which encompass such things as climate change and the depletion of natural resources, digital disruption and the creation of new, algorithmically-energised, global value chains – schools must be able to prepare young people ‘for jobs that have not yet been created, for technologies that have not yet been invented, to solve problems that have not yet been anticipated’. ‘Curiosity, imagination, resilience and self-regulation’ are the qualities that young people will need to develop to successfully navigate these uncertain futures, Schleicher (2018, p.2) suggests:

They will need to respect and appreciate the ideas, perspectives and values of others; and they will need to cope with failure and rejection, and to move forward in the face of adversity.



Their motivation will be more than getting a good job and a high income; they will also need to care about the well-being of their friends and families, their communities and the planet.

While a reformed schooling system can and should equip young people with the attributes and skills that will make them ‘future-ready’, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor’s *Youth Entrepreneurship in Asia and the Pacific 2018-19* report suggests that it is participation in higher education, in particular, that can provide young people with the opportunities and mindsets that will allow them to become future agents of change (Guelich & Bosma 2019). These privileged ‘change agents’ are understood as those with the vision and drive to develop the kinds of social enterprises that are increasingly central to efforts to address the complex and intractable social and environmental problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In Australia, a 2017 report by education policy think tank the Mitchell Institute asserts that ‘education systems have not been designed to foster the types of capabilities needed to navigate complex environments and multiple careers. The basic model of education has been largely static in the face of changes in the broader economy’ (Torii & O’Connell 2017, p.3). The *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* (or ‘Gonski 2.0’ as it is also known) suggests that since 2000, Australia’s academic performance has declined when compared to other OECD countries (Gonski et al. 2018, p.viii). This is concerning, Gonski et al. (2018, p.ix) maintain, because ‘as routine manual and administrative activities are increasingly automated’ and the school system is increasingly called on to ‘prepare students for a complex and rapidly changing world’, Australia still has an industrial model of school education that is not sufficiently innovative to meet these new challenges. Australia’s Chief Scientist, Alan Finkel, advocates for school-industry partnerships to play a greater role in developing Australia’s future STEM workforce on the basis that they can contribute to the formation of the kinds of ‘T-shaped individuals’ that employers are looking for. Finkel (2018, p.6) claims that:

Employers with the vision to invest in the future have the insight to look for T-shaped individuals, those who have deep specialty skills (the vertical pole of the T) and broad enterprise skills (the horizontal bar of the T). Take away the horizontal bar and you are left with an ‘I’ – lots of discipline knowledge but lacking the collaborative skills to contribute that knowledge effectively. Take away the vertical pole and you are left with a dash – possibly smart but always rushing off for the answers instead of being able to contribute to the discussion.

While there are a variety of agencies and actors crowding into the debate around reform of education and training systems, I want to suggest that, in this context, the work of the FYA emerges as particularly influential because it, in the jargon of platform capitalism, has immense ‘retweet value’. The FYA’s analyses and prescriptions are so compelling because they suggest that it is simply a matter of diagnosing the problem (young people’s deficient skills and mindsets) and providing the solution (enterprise skills) – an assessment that is presented in neatly packaged and easily comprehensible ways. The FYA’s enterprise skills agenda promises to render complex 21<sup>st</sup> century problems, such as digital disruption and youth unemployment and underemployment, knowable and manageable in ways that do not represent any fundamental challenge to existing social and economic orders.

Before I move to a detailed examination of the ways in which the FYA develops the concept of ‘enterprise skills’, I will offer some brief comments on the aesthetic dimensions of the representations of youth enterprise in the *New Work Order* series. In fact, what I want to suggest here is that, in this

report series, there is an aestheticisation of youth enterprise and a privileging of the kinds of intellectual labour that take place in technologised, 21<sup>st</sup> century corporate workplaces. The visual representations of youth enterprise in the *New Work Order* report series are carefully gender-balanced and deliberately multicultural. The report series features a signature design, with key pieces of data and analysis presented in the form of sleek and vibrant infographics. The report text is interspersed with large photographs of young people who appear cheerful and engaged as they interact, collaborate, and apply themselves to a particular task or problem (see Figure 16 below). In the image shown bottom right, the gaze of a young Indigenous woman is cast down to her mobile phone. In fact, the relaxed atmosphere evoked in many of these images is suggestive of a blurring of the distinction between work and leisure. The young people in these images appear in casual attire, with laptops, pens and post-it notes as their tools of the trade, and these representations play into the perception that, for these young ‘knowledge’ workers, work can occur anywhere and at any time, in the digitised, diffuse and portable workspaces of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

These representations are congruent with the overarching policy vision of the Turnbull Liberal-National Coalition Government’s 2015 National Innovation and Science Agenda, which ascribes an enhanced role to the innovators and ‘disruptors’ who are leading the way in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields that the Agenda suggests will form the backbone of an ‘agile’ and dynamic Australian economy (Australian Government 2016a; Turnbull 2015). While the surface characteristics of the *New Work Order* exude a spirit of inclusion and diversity, the series nonetheless privileges intellectual labour to the exclusion of other forms of enterprise. Absent is the enterprise of young people whose manual skills and capacities, in the long-established, perhaps relatively unglamorous fields of hospitality and construction, for example, will likely remain economically necessary and relevant in the labour markets of the future.

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Figure 16: A selection of images that appear in the Foundation for Young Australians’ *New Work Order* report series

In the first, eponymous report in the *New Work Order* series, the FYA (2015a) contends that automation, globalisation and collaboration are the three predominant forces shaping the future of work. The FYA (2015a, p.4) maintains that the rapid pace of technological change is such that between 60 and 70 percent of students are being trained in occupations where the vast majority of jobs will be radically affected by automation in the next 10-15 years. Technology is also enabling new collaborative, flexible and remote working arrangements, in digital workplaces that operate cross-nationally and globally (FYA 2015a, p.7). ‘Digital literacy’ and technical skills such as ‘coding’ are therefore becoming key skill requirements. The proliferation of computer programming clubs for young people, for example (such as Coder Dojo, which is open to those aged seven to 17), reflects efforts to complement and extend the basic computer literacy skills developed in school-based learning (Thompson, Hichens & Hoyt 2016; Coder Dojo n.d.).

It is ‘enterprise skills’ that employers increasingly demand in employees, and that ‘have been found to be a powerful predictor of long term job success’, the FYA (2016a, p.5) argues in *The New Basics*, the second report in the series. Enterprise skills include such things as problem solving, presentation skills and communication skills, and are also known variously as generic, soft, or 21st century skills (FYA

2016a, p.5), indicating that this concept shares a very similar set of concerns with that of employability skills. These insights were made possible by the ‘advent of Big Data’, the FYA (2016a, p.7) explains: ‘we analysed 4.2 million online jobs postings over 2012 to 2015 in Australia from more than 6000 sources to definitively uncover what employers want’. With employer demand for key enterprise skills such as creativity, problem solving and digital literacy growing exponentially in recent years, the FYA (2016a, p.12) suggests that young people in possession of these scarce and in-demand skills can expect to receive higher wages:

Compared with early-career jobs that do not list these skills, on average jobs that requested presentation skills paid an additional \$8,853 per year, digital literacy an additional \$8,648, problem solving an additional \$7,745, financial literacy an additional \$5,224 and creativity an additional \$3,129.

According to estimates by McCrindle Research (2014, cited in FYA 2016b, p.6), in the future of work Australians will make an average of 17 changes in employers across five different careers (more on McCrindle’s ‘17 jobs and 5 careers’ prediction later). If young people are to successfully navigate this almost constant change, then it is portable skills that they must seek to acquire. To this end, in its 2016 report *The New Work Mindset* the FYA proposes the ‘job cluster’ as a collection of occupations related in their skills, training and experience prerequisites (FYA 2016b, p.4). The seven new job clusters the FYA has identified in the Australian economy include ‘The Artisans’, ‘The Coordinators’, ‘The Generators’, ‘The Designers’, ‘The Carers’, ‘The Informers’ and ‘The Technologists’ (FYA 2016b, p.7). The latter three clusters – ‘The Carers’, ‘The Informers’ and ‘The Technologists’ – are considered least vulnerable to automation, and are based on future sectors of economic growth, including healthcare, knowledge, and digital technology, respectively.

The FYA’s 2017 report, *The New Work Smarts*, asserts that by 2030 there will be a reduction in the proportion of jobs requiring routine, manual tasks, in favour of jobs that demand an ‘entrepreneurial mindset’, the ability to work autonomously, and which utilise skills in critical and creative thinking and problem solving (FYA 2017b, p.4). *The New Work Reality*, released the following year, suggests that although twenty-five-year-olds today ‘are more educated than ever before’, with nearly 60 percent holding a post school qualification, 50 percent of young people are ‘stuck in transition’, unable to secure full time work (FYA 2018, p.10; Owen 2018). According to the FYA (2018, p.8), the key barriers that young people perceive are holding them back from securing full time work include: their lack of work experience; a lack of appropriate education affording them the technical skills needed to gain a full-time job; a lack of the necessary interview and job application skills; and finally, the perception that there are insufficient full-time job opportunities in the labour market. *The New Work Reality* compared the journeys of young people who have secured full-time work against those who have not, in order to identify what it suggests are the four most significant factors supporting young people to secure full-time work faster (see Figure 17 below where these are represented in infographic form). As Jan Owen (2018) explains, these four factors include:

Courses teaching enterprise skills like problem solving, teamwork and communication. This can increase the speed of entry to working full-time hours by 17 months; relevant paid work experience. This can speed up the transition to full-time work by up to 12 months; employment within an area of work which has strong future growth prospects can speed up the transition by 5 months; [and finally,] an optimistic mindset and strong well-being by age 18. This can accelerate the transition by up to two months faster than a young person who is unhappy or not confident with their career prospects before leaving school.

<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>

Figure 17: The four most significant factors that the FYA (2018, p.18) suggests can accelerate the young person's transition from full-time education to full-time work.

While *The New Basics* (FYA 2016a, p.16) suggests that more than 90 percent of Australia's workforce will need to possess at least a basic level of competence in the use of digital technology 'to function in a digitally-enabled workforce over the next 2-5 years', the report notes with concern that 'Australian students have a significantly less positive attitude towards computers than on average across the OECD' (Thomson & De Bortoli 2012, cited in FYA 2016a, p.17). The performance of Australian 15-year-olds on PISA testing (Programme for International Student Assessment testing conducted by the OECD) of key 21<sup>st</sup> century skills suggests that there is significant room for improvement, and particularly in the case of Indigenous students and students from a low socioeconomic background. The FYA (2016a, p.18) claims that the weaker performance of these groups in the areas of problem solving and digital literacy 'raises a serious equity challenge':

Given that these skills are increasingly demanded by employers, receive higher salaries and will be demanded in the jobs of the future, the association between disadvantage and lower performance in these skill areas implies that labour market disadvantage will be further entrenched. This is data worthy of serious consideration in attempts to close the gap and tackle equity in education.

*The New Basics* proposes that enterprise skills can be built into education and training systems through reforms across five key areas: 'Setting the scene with curriculum'; 'Rethinking teaching methods'; 'Developing teachers'; 'Partnering with employers'; and 'Providing a clear picture with live labour market data' (FYA 2016a, p.19). However, the report shies away from engaging with the role that factors such as class, ethnicity, and geography play in shaping the differential access of particular population groups to an education that builds enterprise skills. Specific proposals for addressing the disadvantage that young people of Indigenous and low socioeconomic backgrounds face in acquiring enterprise skills are noticeably absent. Indeed, the FYA (2016a, p.17) suggests that the barriers holding these groups back from developing greater capability in the area of digital literacy are, in large part, attitudinal in nature: 'unfortunately, low socio-economic and Indigenous students...report lower levels of belief in the importance of working with computers, signalling weaker understanding of the workforce of the future'.

The FYA has recently put its support behind 'micro-credentials', which it regards as promising new educational products that offer a method of 'just-in-time' upskilling. Typically targeted at current university students or recent graduates and intended as an 'add-on' to a degree program, micro-credentials are short packages of learning that can earn the graduate a 'digital badge' on completion of the package. These digital badges can then be shared with potential employers to demonstrate the graduate's enterprise or 'soft' skills and experiences, helping graduates to 'stand out from the crowd' (RMIT University n.d.-a). A number of Australian tertiary education institutions are making forays into the micro-credentials market, working with industry to co-design relevant credentials. 'Becoming a leader', 'lifelong digital learning' and 'networking is working' are some examples of the packages available in RMIT University's (n.d.-b) digital credentials portfolio<sup>29</sup>. These digital credentials, the

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<sup>29</sup> In 2018, I attended an information session at RMIT University on enterprise skills and micro-credentials that was delivered by a representative of FYA to an audience of vocational education professionals working in the

FYA (2017c, p.7) claims, ‘will provide greater industry and job relevance for young people, and build confidence in employers that students will leave their post school training “work ready”’. The enthusiasm surrounding micro-credentials is of a similar pitch to that associated with the concept of ‘competencies’ in an earlier era:

Microcredentials still have a way to go, including developing a common understanding of what they are, but they show great promise in providing a *solution* that gives our current and emerging workforce more responsive training and opportunities to develop the skills needed for the future of work *just in time*. (Fawcett 2018, emphases added)

It is interesting to note that all reports in the *New Work Order* series were prepared for FYA by AlphaBeta, the organisation responsible for the *Automation Advantage* report that, as I noted in Chapter 2, portrays processes of automation in overwhelmingly positive terms. The recognition that AlphaBeta forms a central link between these two bodies of work helps to explain the similarities in perspective and tone that are apparent here. Across these two bodies of work, the complex, contested issues of automation and youth unemployment and transitions are treated as essentially technical problems. Both *The Automation Advantage* and the *New Work Order* series are dominated by data-related, data-driven forms of truth telling: *62 percent of low-skilled workers will experience improved satisfaction at work by 2030... we analysed 4.2 million online jobs postings from more than 6000 sources to definitively uncover what employers want...enterprise skills can increase the speed of entry to full-time work by 17 months*. The implication here is that these technical problems and their likely impacts can best be understood and addressed through the application of statistical, algorithmic frameworks that are reassuring in their mathematical precision and apparent objectivity. This is perhaps the appeal of such an approach for policymakers, education practitioners, and the many other stakeholders whose work is influenced by the FYA’s prescriptions.<sup>30</sup>

The underlying premise of the *New Work Order* series is that if current and future generations of workers are to remain employable in rapidly changing labour markets, they must gain transferable, in-demand skills that are least likely to be displaced by automation. FYA mirrors, here, the ‘upskilling orthodoxy’ that persists in policy circles. This orthodoxy finds its expression in, for example, the view of Brendan O’Connor, the Shadow Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, that young people are ‘not acquiring skills in areas of emerging demand’ and that government and industry investment in skills and education must enable them to do so (Lane 2017). This orthodoxy has been

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higher education sector. At this session it was suggested that micro-credentials were intended as portable sets of credentials that a worker can take with them through the gig economy, offering ‘global recognition and seamless transferability’. It was suggested that the benefits of micro-credentials would flow to three key groups: for students, micro-credentials would offer a sense of agency, with the ability to articulate ‘these are my skills, these are my career goals’. For the education provider, micro-credentials would enable a ‘whole of institution’ aligned curriculum and the ability to ‘build customer loyalty’. Another key beneficiary would be industry, with employers assured that graduates are in possession of ‘work ready’ skills. It was also noted that the rapid pace of change in the world of work is such that some micro-credentials have a two-year expiry.

<sup>30</sup> Conducting an ‘allintext’ Google Search provides a means to trace some of the ways in which the FYA’s work is cited, utilised and translated by other organisations. For example, a search that I conducted on 31 October 2019 using the terms ‘allintext: “new work order report series”’ revealed that schools, LLENs, and business groups are among those engaging most heavily with the *New Work Order* report series. The results of this search can be viewed here:

[https://www.google.com.au/search?q=allintext:++%22new+work+order+report+series%22&lr=&hl=en&as\\_qdr=all&ei=N1a6XcG\\_Bdbf9QO72LSADw&start=30&sa=N&ved=0ahUKEwiBt6iwyMXIAhXWb30KHTssDfA4KBDx0wMIdw&biw=1920&bih=944](https://www.google.com.au/search?q=allintext:++%22new+work+order+report+series%22&lr=&hl=en&as_qdr=all&ei=N1a6XcG_Bdbf9QO72LSADw&start=30&sa=N&ved=0ahUKEwiBt6iwyMXIAhXWb30KHTssDfA4KBDx0wMIdw&biw=1920&bih=944)

extensively critiqued by youth sociologists and other scholars for its problematic assumption that youth unemployment and underemployment is a product, by and large, of the low skills and aspirations of individual young people (see for example, MacDonald 2011).

As Morgan and Nelligan (2018, p.26) point out, qualifications ‘bracket creep’, and ‘credentialism’ emerge as troubling phenomena in the context of the shortage of secure and meaningful employment for young people, and involve the ‘introduction of mandatory qualifications for vocations that formerly did not demand such things’. While young people are exhorted to ‘earn or learn’ by politicians and to ‘future-proof [their] career in a changing world’ by corporatised tertiary education institutions (as Deakin University suggested in a 2017 advertising campaign [Deakin University 2017]), the attainment of an undergraduate degree or higher level of education provides no guarantee that the young person will find secure, relatively well-remunerated employment (Morgan & Nelligan 2018, pp.26-27). The upskilling orthodoxy continues to individualise and responsabilise young people for managing the contradictions of precarious, globalised labour markets. As Kelly, Campbell and Howie argue in their book *Rethinking Young People’s Marginalisation: Beyond Neo-liberal Futures?* (2018, pp.74-75):

FYA presents a largely orthodox rendering of labour market changes that is long on description, and a little short on critical analysis...In imagining [unemployment, inequality and insecurity] as risks, and, at the same time, glossing over them to suggest that these are inevitable aspects of life in 21st century capitalism, FYA makes explicit that it does not imagine that its research and advocacy agenda on behalf of young people involves any serious, critical encounter with a political economy of neo-Liberal capitalism.

In recent years, a range of business lobby groups have weighed into the debates around digital disruption and the education and skills needs of the future workforce. Two of the most prominent examples include the Australian Industry Group’s (AIG) 2016 position paper on the gig economy, *Thought Leader Paper: The Emergence of the Gig Economy*, and the Business Council of Australia’s (BCA) 2017 report, *Future Proof*, subtitled ‘Protecting Australians through education and skills’. In the AIG’s (2016, p.19) estimation, the increased availability of ‘on-demand labour’ that the recent rise of the ‘gig economy’ has made possible is an opportunity that Australian industry should embrace enthusiastically. While the rise of these new working arrangements will require some adjustment on the part of industry – ‘new tools, systems and processes to respond and adjust to the complexities of this 21st century workstream’ will be required – the AIG (2016, p.19) suggests that the benefits flowing to Australian businesses will be immense: ‘the ability to swiftly scale the workforce up and down in response to changing workloads, access to a wider pool of hyper-specialised talent, and increased productivity can help companies reach KPIs and boost the bottom line’. The BCA’s *Future Proof* report argues that, with automation and AI fundamentally reshaping the future of work, it is the task of education and training systems to foster ‘a culture of lifelong learning that encourages people to use qualifications to build a strong foundation, and then dip in and out of short, accredited modules to effectively create their own “credentials” that allow them to upskill and retrain throughout their lives’ (BCA n.d.; BCA 2017). The solutions and recommendations being advocated here are basically identical to those supported by FYA, suggesting which interests might stand to benefit from the entrenchment of the enterprise skills agenda.

The prediction that today’s young people will, on average, move through 17 different jobs across five different industries in their lifetime appears in almost every piece of communication issued by the FYA. This prediction is not a product of the FYA’s own calculations, but rather can be traced back to

a blog post published by Australian market research company McCrindle Research in 2014. The *McCrindle Blog* (2014) claims that ‘today the national average tenure in a job is 3 years and 4 months, based on voluntary turnover of around 15% per annum’. These calculations are based on an analysis of HILDA and Department of Employment data. ‘If this plays out consistently in the life of a school leaver today,’ McCrindle Research (2014) continues, ‘and assuming they start their working life aged 18 (in a part-time role) and are retired from all work by 75, they will have 17 different employers in their lifetime. Based on 3 jobs before upskilling or career changing, this means that they will also have 5 separate careers in their lifetime’. The blog post concludes with the assertion that:

In an era where job opportunity matters more than job security and where flexibility and mobility matter more than stability and job loyalty, the trends which have created shorter job tenure are here to stay. In an era of employment flexibility and empowered workers, employers can no longer rely on job salary and security to attract top performers and retain the emerging generation of leaders. (McCrindle Research 2014)

This statement elevates the problematic concepts of ‘personal choice’ and ‘employee-driven flexibility’, and is revealing of some of the biases and interests that emerge in McCrindle’s analysis. McCrindle’s references to ‘top performers’ and ‘the emerging generation of *leaders*’ in the final sentence of the blog post is suggestive of a number of things. It perhaps betrays McCrindle’s belief that it is only among the elite echelons of the workforce that employee-driven flexibility can become a reality. At the very least, it reveals that these are really the only segments of the workforce that matter to organisations such as McCrindle Research. While the FYA (2017a, p.1) has stated that its analyses and prescriptions are ‘informed by strong evidence, research and evaluation’, it is worth noting the absences, biases and assumptions that are embedded in McCrindle Research’s projections. Particularly when those projections are taken for granted, and continuously re-stated as constituting a key characteristic of the ‘truths’ of youth transitions and the future of work, by the FYA and all of the various agencies whose work is influenced by it. Before I turn to consider the influence of the FYA’s work on approaches to the problem of youth unemployment in the ‘Rust Belt’ city of Geelong, in the following section of the chapter I will examine how processes of economic and spatial transformation were taking shape in Geelong in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ‘Silicon Bay’: a ‘Rust Belt’ city prepares for its entrepreneurial ‘pivot’

In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the city of Geelong entered a period of reflection and transition as many of the stalwarts of its manufacturing sector finally reached the end of the line. The Alcoa aluminium smelter closed at the end of 2014, after operating at its Point Henry site for 51 years. The Ford Motor Company ceased production at its Geelong plant in October 2016, marking the end of the company’s 91-year tenure in Geelong. As had occurred in the climate of innovation surrounding Geelong’s ‘Guggenheim dreaming’ roughly a decade prior, local politicians, businesspeople and other stakeholders perceived this transitional phase as a critical moment in shaping the future of the city. The turn of the century period had given birth to the ‘Geelong: Smart Move’ campaign, and this next episode in Geelong’s history similarly called for a rethink and modernisation of city branding strategies. As an example, the City of Greater Geelong’s Economic Development Unit was rebadged as ‘Enterprise Geelong’ in an attempt to capture the new zeitgeist (Dundas 2015).

Business and civic leaders understood the importance of cultivating a mood of confidence in Geelong’s ‘post-industrial’ economic recovery, seeking to allay community concerns over job losses running into the thousands. In addition to the roughly 2000 workers affected by the closure of Alcoa and Ford, there were large numbers of retrenchments at Boral Cement, Target, and Qantas’ maintenance facility at Avalon airport (Paul 2014), and a spike in the local youth unemployment rate

following the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis. With the city's youth unemployment rate hovering above 17 percent for much of 2014 and 2015, Geelong was named as one of 20 national youth unemployment 'hotspots' by the Brotherhood of St Laurence (2016, p.3).

Across the pages of the local daily newspaper, the *Geelong Advertiser*, business magnates sketched their visions for the future of the city, while also taking advantage of new outlets for their views. Glossy magazine *Business Life*, for example, was launched in February 2016. Editor Jon Zabiegala (2016, p.7) writes that the magazine 'is here to offer a forum for businesses to reclaim a voice of positivity'. 'From Here to Diversity' the front cover proclaims, displaying a black and white image of derelict industrial buildings on the other side of a chain-link fence. This symbol of the hum-drum, monotone certainties of the past contrasts with the vibrant potentialities and dynamism of Geelong's future, this image appears to suggest. Inside the cover, a range of local business and civic leaders, including Rebecca Casson, Committee for Geelong chief executive, and Matt Fletcher, president of Entrepreneurs Geelong, ponder the identity of the 'New Geelong' (Belmont 2016, pp.16-23). A key prediction is that, where large multinational companies facilitated much of Geelong's growth in the past, the activities of small and medium-sized businesses will drive the city's economic development into the future (Belmont 2016). Elaine Carbines, CEO of G21, and Bernadette Uzelac, CEO of the Geelong Chamber of Commerce, also contribute opinion pieces which seek to highlight the unique capabilities and achievements of the region. Carbines (2016, pp.24-25) suggests Geelong is 'poised to embrace the "ideas boom"': the city is an exemplar of many of the initiatives promoted by the National Innovation and Science Agenda that was announced by the Turnbull Liberal-National Coalition Government in 2015.

In Geelong, as in many other 21<sup>st</sup> century 'Rust Belt' places, 'diversification' is the watchword underpinning economic growth strategies. The move towards advanced manufacturing, the establishment of a local 'social insurance cluster', as well as efforts to reimagine Geelong as a globally-connected 'knowledge city' are emerging as key strands in this diversification. The G21, the 'formal alliance of government, business and community organisations working together to improve people's lives in the Geelong region', has championed the city's developing credentials in advanced manufacturing (G21 2014, p.2). The G21 (2013, p.8) argues that despite the move away from heavy industry in Geelong, manufacturing still constitutes a major proportion of the region's value-added production. With the financial assistance of the GRIIF (the Geelong Region Innovation and Investment Fund, one of two local assistance packages established jointly by the Victorian and Federal governments in anticipation of the closure of the car manufacturing industry), Carbon Revolution, a manufacturer of carbon fibre automotive components, commenced operations in Geelong (Australian Government n.d.). A carbon fibre research and development facility has also been established at Deakin University's Waurn Ponds campus, and these developments may herald the beginnings of a regional specialisation in carbon fibre technologies (G21 n.d.).

According to Rebecca Casson (2016), the CEO of the Committee for Geelong, the relocation of several State and Federal government agencies to Geelong, including the Transport Accident Commission, WorkSafe, and the National Disability Insurance Agency, is significant not only nationally, but has the potential to establish Geelong as 'a global hub for social insurance'. The Committee for Geelong suggests that Geelong's developing 'social insurance cluster' is a successful example of a 'smart specialisation' strategy, a place-based strategy for innovation and economic growth that utilises existing regional assets and capabilities. The smart specialisation model has the backing of agencies such as the European Commission (2012, p.11), which suggests that such a strategy can assist regions to 'become – and remain – competitive in the global economy'. Correia and Denham (2016, p.10), in their report on the findings of an international study tour of successful



‘Second Cities’ conducted by the Committee for Geelong, suggest that while ‘diversification provides a more stable and sustainable economy in the longer term, specialisation may be a path to short-term growth’. Correia and Denham (2016, p.10) explain that in the ‘smart specialisation’ strategy for economic growth, Second Cities identify and support those industry sectors in which they possess advantages given their resources, infrastructure and knowledge base, so as to ‘complement the economies of capital cities, rather than compete with them’. The example that they highlight is the de-industrialising US city of Cleveland, which has developed a regional specialisation in the form of a ‘Health Tech Corridor based on shared industry, hospital and university specialisations’ (Correia & Denham 2016, p.2). Correia and Denham (2016, p.2) report that Cleveland’s ‘Health Tech Corridor’, which ‘has flourished through specialisation in knowledge clusters in cardiac care, cancer research and general healthcare’, is able to ‘differentiate Cleveland from other cities and medical clusters’. Correia and Denham (2016, p.43) further note that ‘Cleveland, and other cities, do not have the “Social Insurance” (SI) cluster that Geelong has. This SI cluster could partner with existing Education and Medicine (Eds & Meds) research clusters to form a unique EMSI cluster’.

A number of recent developments are claimed to have also boosted Geelong’s credentials as a city of design and creativity. Perhaps in recognition of Geelong’s history of invention and innovation (Geelong is said to be the birthplace of such iconic domestic devices as the Hills Hoist, the modern refrigerator, and the Ford ute), in 2017, the city was recognised as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) City of Design, becoming one of 31 cities around the world, and the only city in Australia, to earn this designation (COGG 2017a; Mills 2018). Also in 2017, a community consultation initiative led by the City of Greater Geelong (2017b) saw the city’s residents vote in support of ‘a clever and creative city’ as the preferred vision of Geelong’s future. Although the political and business establishment points to the ongoing influence of Deakin University in stimulating innovation locally, Geelong ranked number 18 on a 2017 index of 25 knowledge cities. The Knowledge Cities Index was developed by a team of researchers in the Faculty of Business, Government and Law at the University of Canberra, to predict which Australian cities will be most resilient in the face of technologically-driven labour market and economic change (Pratchett et al. 2017). This result suggests that Geelong still has some way to go before its credentials as a ‘knowledge city’ are recognised on a national or international stage.

In these local discourses of economic transformation and renewal, Geelong’s new generation of entrepreneurial leaders have claimed an authoritative voice, advocating a vision of the Geelong region as ‘Silicon Bay’. The particular formula for innovation and economic growth that they favour is one in which technology start-up companies play a major role. A key figure is Nick Stanley, the founder of start-up ‘accelerator’ Runway, who suggests that Geelong already has many of the makings of the ‘ecosystem’ required for start-ups to rise and thrive (Cannon 2016, p.32). It is claimed that the region is brimming with the kinds of opportunities and supports that enable start-ups to ‘scale up’, as the Geelong Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Map (‘GEEMap’), a joint initiative of local government, business and education institutions, aims to illustrate (see Figure 18 below).

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 18: GEEMap, the Geelong Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Map (Entrepreneurs Geelong et al. 2016)

Figure 19 (below) depicts a section of the GEEMap in closer detail, where the resources for ‘Education & Learning’ in the ecosystem are displayed. As is shown here, among the ‘organisations

that provide access to entrepreneurial and related education and skills development' are the GRLEN, Upstart Entrepreneurial Challenge, Deakin University's 'Spark' program, the Gordon Institute of TAFE, and Newcomb Secondary College's P-TECH program (which provides students with the opportunity to gain work skills and qualifications through school-industry partnerships) (Entrepreneurs Geelong et al. 2016). In a post on the *Geelong Startups* blog, titled 'The rise of social enterprise in regional Victoria', Stanley's colleague at Runway, Leighton Wells (2017), observes that 'for people in and around the Geelong region, there is a clear entrepreneurship pathway that takes you all the way from school – through to launching your business on a global stage'. Wells (2017) suggests that the Upstart Entrepreneurial Challenge, an entrepreneurial education program targeted at secondary school students, and the Spark program supporting emerging entrepreneurs at Deakin University are the key elements making this pathway possible.

<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>

Figure 19: A selection of the GEEMap in closer detail (Entrepreneurs Geelong et al. 2016)

With the redevelopment of the Federal Mills buildings in North Geelong to form a tech innovation precinct and co-working space, many of Geelong's start-up businesses operate from the same physical spaces in which, one hundred years prior, the city's textile workers laboured.<sup>31</sup> Since 2015, Geelong's tech influencers and aspiring entrepreneurs have convened annually at the Pivot Summit, which describes itself as a 'one-day Summit of game-changing insights into emerging technology, start-ups and social enterprise' (Pivot Summit 2018). 'Pivot' is a nod to Geelong's heritage as the 'Pivot City', as well as a reference to 'the critical moment in a young business's lifecycle when it either "pivots" to respond to market forces / to capture that essential niche / to seize an opportunity – or it stands still and fails' (Pivot Summit 2018). The 2017 Summit made the symbolic link with California's Silicon Valley explicit, bringing the co-founder of Apple Computers, Steve Wozniak, to Geelong to share his insights on tech innovation and building a business empire.

### The GRLEN and the 'gig economy': embodying enterprise

The FYA's enterprise skills agenda is translated into the Geelong context through the work of organisations such as the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (GRLEN), and it is a key influence on approaches to the problem of youth unemployment in this de-industrialising locale. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a large number of the workforce development practices and programs that the GRLEN conducts as a non-profit community service organisation are energised and underpinned by a focus on such key concepts as 'trending industries' and 'portfolio careers' (in a 'portfolio career', multiple part-time, contract, self-employment, and/or freelancing 'gigs' are combined to form the equivalent of a full-time position). Geelong Careers, for example, is 'an online, one-stop labour market hub' developed by the GRLEN (2017, p.11) 'as a community resource to support [Geelong] residents to make informed career decisions linked to the regional

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<sup>31</sup> As I noted in Chapter 3, across Geelong a number of sites have been transformed as part of efforts to revive and repurpose these disused industrial spaces, with art, crafts and artisanal production emerging as key elements in this creative revitalisation. This arts- and culture-led program of urban renewal is not unique to Geelong, but rather appears in a range of 'Rust Belt', or otherwise economically marginal, places, the regional Victorian city of Ballarat among them. An ABC News report from 22 September 2018 highlights Ballarat's efforts to recast itself as the 'Venice of Australian art' through hosting the inaugural Biennale of Australian Art on the site of a former meatworks. With the Biennale attracting many thousands of tourists to Ballarat, the event's artistic director suggests that 'I think we're going to see a Ballarat renaissance' (ABC News 2018).

economy'. The Geelong Careers website is structured according to the eight key 'trending industries' in the local labour market in which the GRLLLEN observes there are existing skill shortages or areas of new growth and demand. The GRLLLEN (2017, pp.20-21) understands the purpose of Geelong Careers as connecting local job-seekers, and particularly young job-seekers, with the kinds of information - in the form of 'research and the latest data' – that will enable them to tailor their skills development and career planning strategies to areas of emerging labour market demand.

The GRLLLEN understands the task of preparing the Geelong region for the coming of the 'gig economy' as a strategic imperative.<sup>32</sup> In recent years, the terms 'gig economy', 'sharing economy', 'collaborative economy', and 'on-demand economy' (among others) have emerged to describe the range of new service economy businesses operating across digital platforms, prominent examples of which include ride-hailing service Uber, food delivery service Deliveroo, and freelance services platform Airtasker. While the gig economy has been touted as enabling a 'peer-to-peer' transactional model, a more accurate description of the business model utilised by companies such as Uber is that it allows the company to extract profit from its role as a digital intermediary, or 'platform', across which producers and consumers can connect and exchange goods and services (Stanford 2017a). Digital platform businesses occupy an emergent niche which has been made possible by more than three decades of labour market deregulation (or 're-regulation'), de-industrialisation and de-unionisation, and in which these employers seek to classify, in ways that are legally contested in a number of jurisdictions, the workers they engage as 'independent contractors'. Gig workers are generally not eligible for the holiday or sick pay, superannuation, protection from unfair dismissal, or other entitlements that would be their due if they were classified as 'employees' under Australia's labour market laws and regulations (and those of many other jurisdictions). As I noted previously, the Australian Industry Group (2016) has looked on these developments with enthusiasm, suggesting that the rise of these temporary, task-by-task forms of employment may represent a new era in employment relations. According to the AIG and a range of other employer and industry groups, the many workers now embracing the flexibility inherent in the gig economy are typically doing so not out of necessity or desperation but out of a personal preference to top-up their earnings or to build a professional portfolio of diverse skills and experience.

In industrialised democracies such as the UK and Australia, the number of workers seeking employment in the 'gig economy' has risen steeply in recent years. In the UK, a 2019 study conducted by the Trade Union Congress and researchers at the University of Hertfordshire has found that, with the fear of unemployment widespread, and almost all new jobs created after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis precarious in nature, as many as one in 10 working age adults now work on gig economy platforms, up from one in 20 as recently as 2016 (Partington 2019). 'Younger workers are most likely to work via platforms', the study found, 'with nearly two-thirds of those working once a week being aged between 16 and 34' (Partington 2019). The study also found that men are more likely than women to undertake gig work, and that most workers use more than one platform to earn a living (Partington 2019).

The findings of a national survey commissioned by the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet have been able to shed light on the extent and impact of digital platform work in Australia. As

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<sup>32</sup> For a portion of my candidature, I was engaged as a 'researcher in residence' at the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network. As part of my work on the Expansive Learning Network project, I assisted with the design and organisation of the GRLLLEN's 2017-18 Gig Economy seminar series. I also delivered a presentation on 'The Gig Economy and the Future of Work' at the first event in the series. The presentation can be viewed here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ze\\_bcPxGbnE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ze_bcPxGbnE)

in the UK, young people (aged 18-34) and males are more likely than other demographic groups to seek employment on digital platforms (McDonald et al. 2019, p.3). Digital platform workers are more likely to live in a major city than in a regional or remote area, to identify as living with a disability, to be a temporary resident, and to speak a language other than English at home (McDonald et al. 2019, p.3). While ‘current platform workers are commonly paid per completed task or job (59.0%), rather than for the time or hours they work (22%)’, the researchers found that workers spent an average of 4.9 hours per week on unpaid activities necessary to obtain work and manage work flows (McDonald et al. 2019, p.5). The study also highlighted gig workers’ lack of awareness of their basic conditions of employment, and inability to secure protections and entitlements of the kind enjoyed by workers in ‘standard’ forms of employment. For example, McDonald et al. (2019, p.4) note that over 30 percent of respondents do not know if the main platform on which they work has a dispute resolution process, and ‘over 20% of current platform workers do not know if their platform provides them with insurance or requires them to take out their own’ (in the vast majority of cases, gig workers are responsible for obtaining their own work-related insurance). Indeed, a full 40 percent of the gig workers surveyed ‘did not know how much they earned per hour’ (McDonald et al. 2019, p.5).

In common with the Australian Industry Group, the GRLLLEN anticipates that gig employment will become the predominant mode of labour market participation in the future, and it seeks to mobilise a diverse array of local stakeholders around this emerging phenomenon. The GRLLLEN’s 2017-18 Gig Economy seminar series, the aim of which is to ‘prepar[e] Geelong for a rapidly changing employment future’ (see Figure 20 below), is an important local reverberation of the Foundation for Young Australians’ concerns to foster in young people the types of capabilities, skills and dispositions that will allow them to navigate future labour markets characterised by almost constant churn and change. In this seminar series we see a crystallisation, not only of the FYA’s influential work, but of a range of contemporary social, political, economic, and governmental changes and challenges, including: the changes to local labour markets wrought by de-industrialisation and ‘neoliberal’ globalisation; the emerging threat of technological unemployment brought about by the advance of automation, robotics and AI; and the risk that rising unemployment and underemployment will make ‘precarity’ an increasingly mainstream experience for young people.

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 20: Flyer for the first event in the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network’s Gig Economy seminar series

The GRLLLEN adopts a broad definition of the ‘gig economy’, pointing to research published by the Grattan Institute (Minifie 2016, p.35) which suggests that a third of Australian workers are operating in non-traditional types of work. On this basis, the GRLLLEN goes beyond a narrow focus on the digital platform businesses, collecting a range of quite different working arrangements and employment types – from working mothers employed casually or part-time, to semi-retired professionals dabbling in consultancy gigs, for example – under the banner of the gig economy. As the flyer for ‘Exploring the Gig Economy’, the first event in the series, reads: ‘if you are a parent, teacher, student, job seeker, an employee or employer - this affects you!’ (see Figure 20). This way of framing the emergence of the gig economy serves to cultivate a sense of shared ownership and responsibility among the various community stakeholders – from unions, industry, and education and training organisations to future gig workers themselves - who must prepare for the coming of the gig economy era.

The GRLEN's proposed schedule for the seminar series included as many as eight events, to run across 2017 and 2018, covering the various impacts and implications of the gig economy for the Geelong region.<sup>33</sup> The proposed event themes included: education and training for the gig economy; the impact of new technologies on the future of work; the social infrastructure needed to support gig workers (a discussion of the ways in which institutions and services such as superannuation and financial services could and should evolve to meet the needs of this emerging cohort of workers); Geelong in a hypothetical 'post-employment' future (and the significance of a universal basic income scheme within this); and a special case study event on gig work in the creative industries. While workers, employers, and entrepreneurs, among other players in the local education and employment ecosystem, would be invited to share their insights on the gig economy and portfolio careers, 'experts' and thought leaders from further afield were also canvassed as potential guest speakers (the longlist included a representative from the Foundation for Young Australians, and US author, consultant and speaker on the future of work and the future of learning, Heather McGowan).

It was hoped that the seminar series would appeal to a broad array of stakeholders in the local community. Despite extensive efforts to stimulate interest in the series, including promotional campaigns across social media, and appeals to contacts such as the Geelong Careers Teachers Association to spread the word within schools, there were very few young people in attendance at the first event. Attendees were overwhelmingly drawn from the clique of local bodies and groups that the GRLEN consults with or connects to in its day-to-day operations: other community service organisations, local government, political and business groups, bureaucrats in the Department of Education, and public and private education and training providers.

## Conclusion

What I have sought to do in this chapter is to trouble and unsettle the notion that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the problem of youth unemployment can be 'solved' through young people developing and exercising their capacities for 'enterprise'. Particularly when the responsibility for dealing with that problem is understood as resting primarily with the individual young person. I have also attempted to make problematic the assumption that the emergence of the 'gig economy' is the natural and inevitable outcome of processes of technological change. The particular ways in which organisations such as the GRLEN understand the trajectories of the 'gig economy' and future labour market transformation are typically 'technologically determinist' in orientation. Such a perspective fails to recognise the ways in which processes of technological change are mediated by social, economic, cultural, and political factors. As I argued above, digital platform businesses have emerged with the intention to exploit a grey area in labour law, a grey area that has been made possible by more than three decades of labour market deregulation (or 're-regulation'), de-industrialisation and de-unionisation. Economist Jim Stanford (2017a) places the rise of these digitally-mediated forms of employment in historical perspective. The major features of gig work, Stanford (2017a, pp.382-384) argues, including irregular on-call scheduling, working from home with one's own tools and equipment, and piece work compensation, have a long history in capitalism. However, these features became less prominent, for a time, with the rise of the 'standard employment relationship' in the 20th century. In the interests of challenging the 'technologically determinist' perspective, Stanford (2017b) poses a series of provocations: Is the 'gig' economy really driven by the inexorable, autonomous force of technology? Why must processes of 'disruption' necessarily involve the further erosion of labour laws and regulations? Taking Uber's 'disruption' of the taxi industry as an example, why not use the new

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<sup>33</sup> At the time of writing just two events in the series had been successfully convened, in part due to budgetary limitations.

technology (a clever dispatch system) to improve taxi service in such a way that employees' working conditions and entitlements are preserved?

In a similar vein, Mazzotti (2017) observes that processes of technological change are 'never neutral, let alone natural. To say a mechanized procedure is more "efficient" than its predecessor is not an adequate historical explanation for its success'. There is a rich tradition of critique which understands that advances in automation and technological innovation do not occur along a natural or inevitable trajectory, but rather, the direction taken is but one of a number of possible paths. As an example of this critique, Mazzotti highlights the work of Marxist scholar Harry Braverman. In his 1974 book, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, Braverman argues that:

The capacity of humans to control the labor process through machinery is seized upon by management from the beginning of capitalism as the *prime means whereby production may be controlled not by the direct producer but by the owners and representatives of capital*...The fact that many machines may be paced and controlled according to centralized decisions, and that these controls may thus be in the hands of management, removed from the site of production to the office – these technical possibilities are of just as great interest to management as the fact that the machine multiplies the productivity of labor. (Braverman 1974, pp.193-195, emphasis in original).

In the industrialised countries in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, automation of the production process was taking place through the introduction of numerical control machinery. Braverman observed that, in reconfiguring the relationship between human workers and the instruments of production, these processes of technological innovation involved a progressive de-skilling of occupations. Where once the occupation of machinist was understood as a skilled role, the introduction of numerical control technology saw this role divided among three separate operatives, 'each representing far less in terms of training, abilities, and hourly labor costs than does the competent machinist', and each of whom 'is required to know and understand not *more* than did the single worker of before, but much *less*' (Braverman 1974, p.200, emphasis in original). 'The process has become more complex', Braverman (1974, p.200) remarked, 'but this is lost to the workers, who do not rise with the process but sink beneath it'. As Mazzotti argues, the value of Braverman's critique is in its suggestion that 'other kinds of automation were possible...but *were not pursued because they would not have had the same social effects*' (Mazzotti 2017, emphasis added). This is not to suggest that processes of automation, such as those Braverman observed, were and are pursued by management with the intention of eroding the skill base of occupations, but rather, in the context of a capitalist economic system oriented to the objective of profitability, the imperative of securing and maintaining those conditions that are most conducive to continued capitalist accumulation emerges as particularly influential where the trajectories of technological innovation are concerned.

A critique of this kind is missing from the mainstream, contemporary discourses around young people's 'enterprise'. These discourses form powerful orthodoxies through which the complex problems of youth unemployment and labour market transitions are made knowable and (supposedly) manageable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As George Morgan and Pariece Nelligan (2018) highlight, participation in the globalised, precarious labour markets of contemporary capitalism involves a form of entrepreneurial selfhood that they term the 'just-in-time self'. Just-in-time workers, Morgan and Nelligan (2018, p.ix) maintain, 'accept the challenge of dancing on the hot coals of new capitalism, responding enthusiastically to its random gyrations, and reinventing themselves to fit the emergent

vocational niches'. The work of the Foundation for Young Australians and the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network, with its focus on 'enterprise skills', the 'gig economy', and 'portfolio careers', has a key role in fostering the kinds of individuals who can adapt to the emerging skill and occupational requirements *just-in-time*. The following chapter builds on many of the concerns and themes that I have introduced here. In that chapter I will take the analysis of young people's enterprise in a de-industrialising city in a slightly different direction, to consider the representations of young people's enterprise in *GT Magazine*, and their gendered, classed, and aesthetic dimensions.

## Chapter Seven

### *GT Magazine* and the Figure of the Enterprising Young Person: The Gendered, Classed and Aesthetic Dimensions of Enterprise in a De-Industrialising City

#### Introduction

In earlier chapters I problematised the concepts of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’, identifying and analysing the ‘conditions of possibility’ which enabled these complex, contested, often ambiguous concepts to emerge, at different moments since the 1980s, as promising a ‘solution’ to the problem of youth unemployment. While this chapter continues the work that I have been doing in problematising representations of young people’s ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’, the analysis that I will develop in this chapter is a ‘step sideways’ in some respects. It is not a genealogy, but it is informed by the genealogical work that I have undertaken in earlier chapters. The methods of data collection and analysis that I will employ here are content analysis and discourse analysis. As I outlined in Chapter 1, content analysis is a method of textual analysis that ‘consists of breaking down or fragmenting the text into pertinent units of information for their subsequent coding and categorisation’ (Ruiz Ruiz 2009, p.7). Discourse analysis is a method of qualitative data collection and analysis in the tradition of Foucauldian critiques of language (Wodak 2001). The practice of discourse analysis, Gee (2014, p.20) suggests, examines ‘how speakers and writers use clues or cues (namely, syntax and discourse) to shape the interpretations and actions of listeners and readers’. Discourse analysis can also have a political dimension, insofar as it is an inquiry into the ‘relations between discourse and other elements of the social process’, into the ways in which systems of meaning are shaped by, and in turn shape, relations of power (Fairclough 2010, pp.8-10).

The ‘archive’ of texts that I will analyse in this chapter is comprised of a selection of issues of one particular publication: *GT Magazine*. *GT Magazine* is a weekly, large circulation magazine in Geelong with a significant focus on the activities and aspirations of enterprising young people. As an ‘urban lifestyle magazine’ – a consumer magazine that seeks to fuse the identity and consumption habits of its readers with the branded ‘lifestyle’ of a given locale (Greenberg 2000, p.231) – *GT Magazine* plays a key role in the re-imaging and reimagining of the ‘post-industrial’ city of Geelong in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In this chapter I will focus in on the ‘figure’ of the ‘enterprising young person’ as it is represented in *GT Magazine*, analysing the gendered, classed and aesthetic dimensions of this figure.<sup>34</sup> Feminist theorist of techno-science Donna Haraway (2008, p.4) argues that, ‘figures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material–semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another’. Recent work in the sociology of youth has demonstrated that a focus on ‘figures’ can open up new analytic possibilities for exploring the ways in which ‘youth’ are represented and governed in neoliberal arts of government. As I will explore further below, youth studies researchers Peter Kelly and Steven Threadgold have made some productive contributions to this emerging field of inquiry. Kelly (2015) puts Haraway’s concept of figure to work in seeking to ‘re-enchant the sociological imagination’. Kelly (2015, pp.617-619) argues that the analysis of figures

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<sup>34</sup> In collaboration with one of my supervisors (Peter Kelly), I developed a version of this chapter into a journal article, ‘Young people and the gendered and aesthetic dimensions of “enterprise”: Stories from a “Rust Belt” city’, which was published in the *Journal of Youth Studies* (Noonan & Kelly 2019).



of youth appearing, for example, in works of contemporary fiction and entertainment media can open up a space for embracing and appreciating the ambivalence and irony ‘that characterise all our lives at different times and in different spaces and places’ and yet that are all too frequently ‘written out’ of what he suggests is an increasingly ‘governmentalised’ youth studies. Threadgold (2019, p.3) suggests that ‘figures of youth can illustrate how one thing can be used as a stereotype, cliché, meme, target, scapegoat, folk devil, stigma, discourse, and signifier. A figure can be all these things, sometimes at once’. He suggests that, just as politicians or business advisors are concerned to construct or invoke particular representations of young people in order to advance a particular agenda, similarly, in researching and writing about young people, youth studies researchers, whether intentionally or not, are responsible for bringing into being particular figures of youth (Threadgold 2019, p.2). Threadgold (2019, p.3) seeks to trace how figures of youth ‘are positioned across different discursive and ontological spaces’ in order to stimulate youth researchers to be reflexive about how their own work may be implicated in processes of governmentalisation.

The analysis that I will outline in this chapter reveals a preoccupation in *GT Magazine* with the aesthetics of youth, gender, class and race, a preoccupation that serves to highlight particular kinds of industry and enterprise, and particular kinds of enterprising selves, as more desirable and appealing than others. Youth, gender and aesthetics converge in the figure of the confident, empowered ‘Can-Do Girl’, an ideal that, youth studies researcher Anita Harris (2004) suggests, is considered most capable of transforming the opportunities in precarious, globalised labour markets to her advantage. As will be examined below, the story of 24-year-old Geelong businesswoman Mia features elements of the ambitious Can-Do Girl. As Mia says, ‘I’m meant to own millions and millions of dollars’ worth of companies one day, I just know that’ (King 2016c, p.6). An examination of the gendered, classed and aesthetic dimensions of enterprise is significant not only for understanding the nature of 21<sup>st</sup> century labour markets and the demands they place on those who participate in them, but also for making sense of the ‘post-industrial’ economic trajectories of ‘Rust Belt’ locales such as Geelong. As cities seek to position themselves in the globalised, technologised, knowledge economy, urban redevelopment and place marketing become central strategies in the rebranding and marketing of these places as centres for economic investment, production and consumption that appeal particularly to members of the ‘creative class’ (Florida 2005, 2014).

To begin, the chapter will consider how the gendered, classed and aesthetic dimensions of 21<sup>st</sup> century youth labour markets have been theorised by a range of scholars. There are three key strands of scholarship that are particularly relevant here, the first of which explores the emergence of the imperative to imagine the self as an enterprise, against a background of labour markets that are increasingly globalised and precarious; second, the elevation of young women as privileged subjects of educational and labour market capacity (and the significance of class and race within these representations); and third, the growing body of scholarship that considers the significance of ‘aesthetic labour’ and ‘affective labour’ in contemporary labour markets. Following this discussion, I will offer some general comments on the nature and content of *GT Magazine*, including an analysis of people featured on the cover (hereafter, ‘cover stars’) for the 2016 period by gender, race, and type of industry. I will then examine how the discourse of the ‘enterprising young person’ is represented in *GT Magazine*, outlining a selection of themes that emerged as significant in my analysis. I will also examine in detail two stories, those of Chris and Georgia, and Mia, taking an in-depth focus on the visual and textual aspects of their representation in *GT Magazine* as exemplars of enterprising young people. In the discussion section towards the conclusion of the chapter, my aim is to unravel and untie some of the key threads in the material-semiotic knot that is the figure of the ‘enterprising young

person', in order to explore the complex entanglements of gender, class and aesthetics in *GT Magazine's* representation of this figure.

### Theorising the gendered, classed and aesthetic dimensions of 21st century youth labour markets

The challenges and opportunities encountered by young people in the globalised, precarious labour markets of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been shaped by a fundamental shift, a shift that has been conceived variously as the move from a 'Fordist' to a 'Post-Fordist' mode of production (Bauman 2012, pp.56-59; Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, p.62), from the 'first modernity' to the 'second modernity' (Beck 2000), from 'heavy modernity' to 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2012). A major feature of this transition has been the increasing 'informalisation' of employment relations, a process which Beck (2000, p.50) suggests women are disproportionately affected by, and which includes 'more part-time work, fluid boundaries between the formal and informal sectors, home-based work, a lack of legal regulation'. The 'Brazilianisation' thesis that Beck (2000, p.2) outlines in his book *The Brave New World of Work* suggests that the 'nomadic multi-activity' that is the characteristic form of labour market participation in South American countries is now a 'rapidly-spreading variant' in the so-called highly developed economies. In analysing the impact of processes of Brazilianisation on youth labour markets in Australia and the UK, Furlong and Kelly (2005, p.213) suggest that while 'there is some evidence to suggest an increase in precarious forms of employment for young people', these processes impact on particular populations of young people more heavily than others. The effect of 'entrenched structured inequalities' is such that 'less advantaged young people are over-represented in insecure forms of employment' (Furlong & Kelly 2005, p.213).

In what he identifies as the time of 'heavy modernity', Bauman (2012, p.116) argues that, 'the frozen time of factory routine, together with the bricks and mortar of factory walls, immobilized capital as effectively as it bound the labour it employed'. In the era of 'light' or 'liquid' modernity, access to the means of movement, of lightness, is distributed unevenly, and 'keeping fluids in shape requires a lot of attention, constant vigilance and perpetual effort – and even then the success of the effort is anything but a foregone conclusion' (Bauman 2012, p.8, 20). Neoliberal governmentalities and 24/7, flexible capitalism, Kelly (2006, 2013) argues, require all (would be) labour market participants to imagine the self as an enterprise - as an active, self-creating, economically-rational individual - and to carry the responsibilities for the consequences of their differing abilities to be 'enterprising'. At first glance, Kelly (2013, p.15) observes, 'the self as enterprise does not have a gender, or an ethnic background, or a particular age, or a specific geographic location. Though this may not be entirely accurate':

It is possibly more accurate to imagine that gender neutrality assumes masculinity. That no ethnic background assumes 'whiteness'. That no age barrier means a productive, enterprising adulthood that runs from the mid-20s to the mid-40s. That having no place in effect means that cosmopolitan, post-industrial urban geography is what makes enterprise understandable, thinkable, possible. (Kelly 2013, p.15)

However, as researchers studying the construction of 'girlhood' and femininities in the contemporary period have noted, in the neoliberal, 'post-feminist' contexts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, young women emerge as sites of 'luminosity'; they are conceived as a symbol of immense educational and labour market capacity, of confidence and ambition, as a subject worthy of investment and governmental attention (McRobbie 2009, p.54; Harris 2004). In the UK, McRobbie (2009, p.54) notes that in the context of the competitive, individualistic values promoted by New Labour, the young woman who has benefited from the equal opportunities now available to her 'can be mobilised as the embodiment

of the values of the new meritocracy'. Harris (2004) identifies the 'Can-Do Girl' and its counterpoint, the 'At-Risk Girl', as two key subject positions that have a particular significance in contemporary risk society. Alongside the triumph of the Can-Do Girl, a self-made, confident young woman who is 'flush with the gains of feminism [and] embarking on new education and career paths', there persists 'a concern, even a moral panic' that at least some young women are not succeeding as they should be (Harris 2004, pp.15,44). It is this idea, Harris (2004, p.16) observes, 'that good choices, effort, and ambition alone are responsible for success that has come to separate the can-dos from the at-risks'.

McRobbie (2009, p.54) writes that 'the attribution of both freedom and success to young women, as a series of interpellative processes, take different forms across the boundaries of class, ethnicity and sexuality, producing a range of entanglements of racialised and classified configurations of youthful femininity'. The rising educational attainment and professional achievement of young women throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have been abetted and celebrated by a decentralised 'confidence movement': a range of corporate and non-profit, often transnational, organisations, whose professed mandate is the empowerment of girls and women (Banet-Weiser 2017, p.265). In the emergent cultural genre of 'confidence chic', young women are enjoined to 'empower oneself' through their consumption choices (Favaro 2017; Banet-Weiser 2017, p.268). However, persistent class and racial inequalities remain significant in the production of the differential education and career outcomes of young women; the 'Can-Do Girl' is in fact a class elite (McRobbie 2009, p.68; Harris 2004, p.44). According to McRobbie (2007a, p.727), a growing body of evidence reveals the inequities newly generated by 'changes to welfare regimes, the decline in state funding of education, and the emergence of competitive meritocratic systems of reward', evidence which indicates that:

Middle-class white girls and those from well-off, or privileged Asian and black families, become part of the new competitive elite, that lower middle-class girls and some of their working-class counterparts are now expected to gain degree level qualifications so as to position themselves at certain levels of competence and capacity within the flexible labour market. It also suggests that 2 percent of girls who leave school with no qualifications are now singled out more forcefully as educational failures and that, for these, there are now fewer routes back into formal education as post-school learning is now based on fees, loans and parental support. (McRobbie 2007a, p.727)

Weis' (1990, 2004) studies of processes of identity formation among young men and women in a de-industrialising, working-class US community (a town she termed 'Freeway'), revealed the impact of economic restructuring in precipitating a moment of critique and upheaval of the traditional gender relations that predominated in the local community. This moment of rupture allowed new forms of subjectivity and selfhood to emerge among young Freeway women. In 1985, Weis first observed the boys and girls of Freeway in secondary school, at a time when Freeway girls were beginning to perceive the instability of the male breadwinner model, as the livelihoods of their fathers' generation were cast into disarray with the wind-down and eventual closure of the local steel mill. As a point of historical comparison, Weis drew on a study conducted by McRobbie (2007b) in 1975, less than ten years earlier, among a group of 14-16-year-old girls in a working-class community in the UK. These young women, McRobbie (2007b, p.97) found, constructed their femininity in much the same ways that their mothers did in relation to particular understandings of home, and reproductive labour. Weis' work offers critical insights into the ways that emerging ideas of female independence, self-definition and enterprise are translated and adopted in a de-industrialising, working-class context in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and more broadly for understanding the shaping of masculine and feminine working-class

subjectivities in the context of transformations in the production model and changing social institutions.

Butler's (2006) ground-breaking work on gender performativity troubles and unsettles the categories of 'male' and 'female', 'masculine' and 'feminine', and also provides a productive springboard for thinking about the ways in which contemporary labour markets, which typically feature a high proportion of service sector employment, demand of workers the production and performance of stylised presentations of self. Gender, Butler (2006, p.191) contends, 'ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow'. Rather, it is constituted through repetitive acts of discourse: 'the effect of gender is produced through...bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds [which] constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self'. The 'cultural feminisation of labour', Adkins (2001, pp.669, 674) asserts, is bound up with a broader 'aestheticisation' of economic life in late capitalism, including the stylisation of work, workplace identities, production processes and products. This cultural feminisation of labour is such that 'in a range of jobs both women and men increasingly perform the aesthetics of femininity' (Adkins 2001, p.674). The desegregation of occupations in terms of gender has occurred against the background of the political-economic shifts associated with de-industrialisation, and calls into question the easy association, made in early discussions of feminisation, between service occupations and women (Adkins 2001, p.673). Contemporary analyses of the gendering of jobs question these assumptions 'by stressing that such gendering is by no means fixed but rather is continuously made, remade, and contested' (Adkins 2001, p.672).

There is now a growing body of scholarship that considers the significance of 'aesthetic labour' and 'affective labour' in contemporary labour markets (Pettersson McIntyre 2014; Williams & Connell 2010; Ball, Maguire & MacRae 2000). Aesthetic labour is, in essence, 'employment based on "looking good" and/or "sounding right"'; the concept describes the employment of workers with certain embodied capacities and attributes that favourably appeal to customers and which can be mobilised, developed and commodified by employers for commercial benefit (Warhurst & Nickson 2007, pp.104, 107). Farrugia, Threadgold and Coffey (2018, p.273) explore the ways in which young people performing 'front of house' bar work in Melbourne's night-time economy engage in 'affective labour', suggesting that this labour involves the creation of 'affects', 'embodied sensations that are shared between workers and clientele within the "affective atmosphere" of a bar'. Farrugia, Threadgold and Coffey (2018, p.273) observe that in performing affective labour, the young worker draws on their own sense of gendered embodiment, as well as on their own consumer tastes, 'mobilising these in order to provide the sensations and experiences offered to clientele of the bars in which they work'.

Against this theoretical background, this chapter explores the gendered, classed and aesthetic dimensions of enterprise in a de-industrialising city, through a focus on the ways in which the figure of the 'enterprising young person' is represented in the textual and visual content of *GT Magazine*. It is to a description of the content of this magazine that I now turn.

### Young people's employability skills, innovation and enterprise in *GT Magazine*

*GT Magazine* is a glossy, full-colour magazine supplement published with the Saturday edition of the *Geelong Advertiser*. This newspaper is owned by News Corp Australia and is printed and published from offices in central Geelong. The circulation of the *Geelong Advertiser* in the 12 months to March 2016 was an average of 18,574 on weekdays and 32,489 on Saturday (*Geelong Advertiser* Group 2016, p.4). *GT Magazine* is primarily a vehicle for property listings, and discussions of trends in fashion and home decorating. The magazine can be situated within the genre of the 'urban lifestyle

magazine’, a type of consumer magazine that Greenberg (2000, p.231) suggests seeks to fuse the identity and consumption habits of its readers with the branded ‘lifestyle’ of a given locale. Greenberg (2000, p.231) observes that, like its 19th-century mass media predecessors, which arose with the industrial metropolis, the ‘urban lifestyle magazine’ emerges as a ‘panoramic navigational tool’ for a landscape of equally monumental flux: the post-industrial city. In the restructured post-industrial city, economies of scale based in manufacturing have shifted to economies of scope geared toward high- and low-end services, toward the production of commodities that are ‘heavily semiotic’ and design-intensive in nature (Greenberg 2000, p.231; Lash & Urry 2002, p.194).

The post-industrial city, Greenberg (2000, p.231) argues, is ‘a divided city increasingly fractured by lines of class, education, race, and ethnicity’. And the class fraction which assumes importance in the eyes of the new cultural producers and commentators is the entrepreneurial ‘new urban middle class,’ a group that both produces and consumes sophisticated, contemporary fashions and tastes as it embodies a middle-class habitus (Greenberg 2000, p.231; Bourdieu 2010). In this sense the ‘urban lifestyle magazine’ can be understood as playing a key role in re-imaging and reimagining the ‘post-industrial’ city. As Greenberg (2000, p.228) argues, ‘the space of the city is produced not only materially and geographically but also in the social imagination and through changing modes of cultural representation’.

The sample of texts to be analysed consists of all issues of *GT Magazine* published in 2016, a total of 50 issues. A breakdown in content of the March 5, 2016 issue, as an indicative example, reveals that out of the total of 96 pages, the ‘Real Estate’ section comprises 57 pages, and the ‘Lifestyle’ and ‘Home’ sections 20 and 13 pages, respectively. An analysis of the dedicated advertising spaces in this issue (not including those located in the ‘Real Estate’ section, nor any endorsements of products or services incorporated in the journalistic content of the magazine) found that the largest proportion of advertisements (eleven out of a total of 24) were related to building, maintaining or decorating a home, offering either property development, property services, or home furnishings.

In 2016, almost 90 percent of cover stars were female, and out of the seven male cover stars in this period, five appeared with a female business partner. There was also a significant emphasis on young adulthood, with 63 percent of cover stars aged in their 20s. In terms of visible markers of ethnicity, the sample displays a lack of diversity: all 65 cover stars in 2016 were white (on the basis of their appearance, however, none of the stories in which they were featured indicated any particular ethnic identities other than white). Figure 21 below provides a breakdown of the cover stars by type of industry. The overwhelming majority of cover stars were drawn from industries based on the aesthetics of fashion and style. At 19 out of the total of 65 cover stars, ‘modelling and celebrity’ was the industry most commonly represented on the covers of *GT Magazine*. Fashion, including design, retail and styling services, was the second highest category, with 15 cover stars. The cover stars collected under ‘Other industry’ included a high-profile political adviser, two women involved in fundraising/charity, two young women who were developing a youth mentoring program, and an entrepreneur in the tourism sector. The category ‘Not enterprise related’ included two young girls aged seven and fourteen who were featured on the cover as a medical ‘human interest’ story.

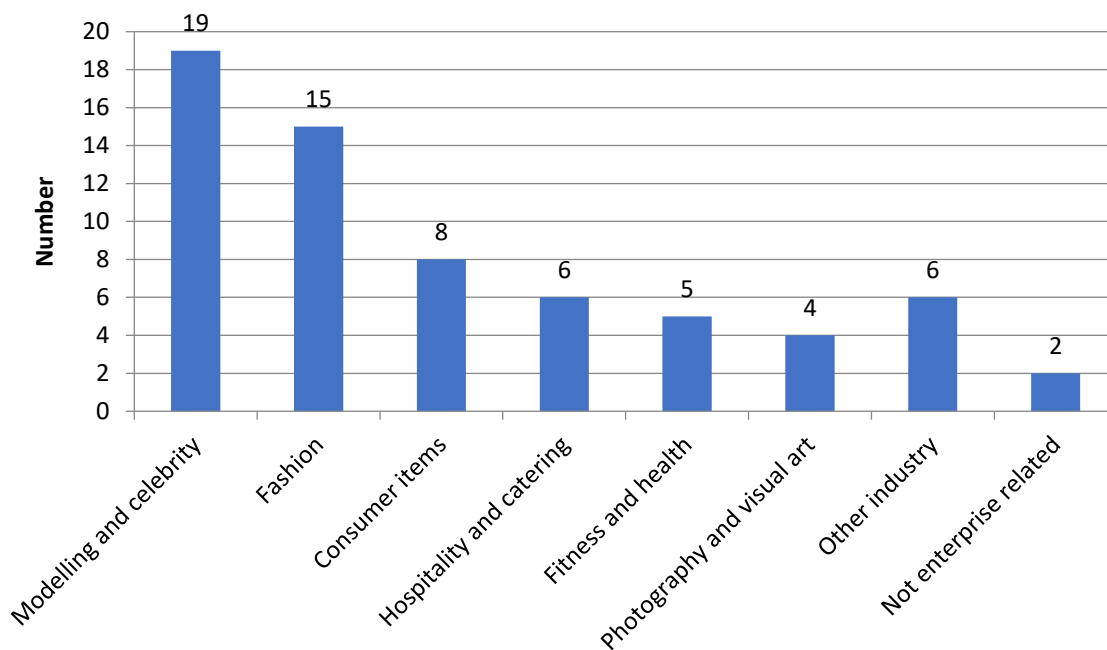


Figure 21: *GT Magazine* cover stars by type of industry

In each of the 50 magazine issues published in 2016, I analysed the cover stories and any other articles in the magazine which featured a discussion of the employability skills, innovation and/or enterprise of young people. All articles in the sample were authored by women.<sup>35</sup> These media stories profile artists and designers who are inspired by local landscapes and lifestyles, and baristas and cafe owners who aspire to be part of the region’s burgeoning cafe culture. My analysis considered the stories of young people who are engaged in a variety of artistic, creative and/or entrepreneurial pursuits, examining the risks, opportunities and challenges they encounter, as they are described both in their own words and in the words of reporters, as well as the images and stylistic elements which accompanied these stories. This particular sample of magazine issues, drawn from the year 2016, has been selected for two key reasons. First, in 2016 I entered the first year of my PhD research; this was a year in which I formulated my research interest in questions of young people’s ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’, and became particularly alert to the ways in which issues concerning young people, employment/unemployment, and enterprise were represented in local media. Second, in 2016, the city of Geelong was in the midst of a period of reflection and transition as many of the stalwarts of its manufacturing sector were finally reaching the end of the line (after a 91-year tenure, the Ford Motor Company ceased production at its Geelong plant in October 2016, for instance). In the years between 2014 and 2016 especially, the legacies of Geelong’s industrial era and future directions of economic growth were questions attracting much commentary and debate across local media and other sites.

In the following section I will outline four themes that emerged as significant in my analysis of the discourse of the ‘enterprising young person’ in *GT Magazine*, which include ‘We’ve got that young drive’, ‘The juggling act’, ‘Sacrificing stability’, and ‘Making a difference’. I will then proceed to a

<sup>35</sup> The gender composition of the journalism profession has been interrogated by Franks (2013), who suggests that although women substantially outnumber men in journalism training and enter the profession in slightly greater numbers, there is a gender division by subject matter (not to mention a significant pay gap between male and female journalists, and a relative absence of women at the higher echelons of the profession). Female journalists predominate on ‘softer’ lifestyle features, while sport, politics, and business are typically the domain of male journalists (Franks 2013, pp. vii-viii).

detailed focus on two particular stories – those of Chris and Georgia, and Mia - analysing the particular aspects of their representation in *GT Magazine*, and their experiences of enterprise. The themes that are present in the stories of Chris and Georgia, and Mia, run through those of many other young entrepreneurs featured in *GT Magazine*. I have selected these two stories for deeper analysis not because they are representative of any particular thing, but because they are ‘figures’ that are illustrative of a variety of themes and elements that I will analyse in greater detail in the discussion that follows. Following Haraway (2008, p.4), I understand ‘figures’ as ‘material–semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another’. My aim is to unravel and untie some of the key threads in those knots in order to explore some of the complex entanglements of gender, class and aesthetics in representations of young people’s enterprise in *GT Magazine*.

### ‘We’ve got that young drive’

From a stage show performer reflecting on the athleticism entailed in ‘giving her all’ eight times a week, to the group of ‘four mates’ behind the restoration of an ‘historic Geelong pub’, the youthful energy and enthusiasm that these enterprising young people brought to their endeavours was highlighted in a large number of stories.

Shaun, Thomas, Daniel and Ian, a group of ‘four mates ...aged in their late 20s and early 30s’, have restored ‘Aberdeen Street icon’ Irish Murphy’s. ‘The new publicans claim they are the youngest in Geelong’, reporter Meagan Rooth (2016a, p.12) writes, ‘and with that comes boyish enthusiasm and energy to burn. “The locals want to see us succeed,” Shaun says, smiling. “We’ve got that young drive so we’re just having a crack”’. Former regulars of the pub volunteered their time to the restoration effort by scrubbing floors and polishing signage, and ‘some even shed a tear on re-opening night’, Rooth (2016a, p.12) notes, affirming that the young men have the backing of ‘the locals’.

‘Indie surfwear designers’ Emma, 31, and Jodie, 27, have developed a range of women’s surfwear inspired by the ‘cold, dark tones reflective of wild Bells Beach swell’ (Rooth 2016b, p.6). While this duo is portrayed as shrewd and driven in their approach to business - “We have big plans in the works,” says Emma... “Our motto is keep hassling, stay curious and always chase your dream” - they also seek to embody the surf lifestyle: Emma’s day ‘is sometimes broken up by surfs before work, on her lunch break and in the evening’ (Rooth 2016b, p.6).

Dancer and entertainer Kyla, 23, is the February 6 cover star, and inside this issue she describes the challenge of touring with a stage show for twelve months. The ‘physically gruelling’ experience of performing several shows a week ‘challenged her to push beyond her comfort zone’ (Coffey 2016, p.5). ‘I’ve learnt a lot about my body and how to look after myself as an athlete who is doing an intense dance show eight times a week’, she says (Coffey 2016, p.5).

Hairstylist Josiah, 24, runs his own salon. ‘Josiah, although young, has always been driven to succeed, and has never wasted time’, reporter Stephanie Azzopardi (2016a, p.13) observes. ‘My whole life to this day has gone fast’, Josiah says (Azzopardi 2016a, p.13). ‘I left school in Year 9, qualified in hairdressing at 17, had my daughter Zara at 18, then got engaged to my beautiful fiancé, had my son Judah at 21 then started my business at 22’ (Azzopardi 2016a, p.13). And it appears that Josiah’s unstoppable momentum continues: ‘I’m in the process of hiring staff and I am excited to see where a team of talented barbers will take us. The dream is to extend the brand worldwide’ (Azzopardi 2016a, p.13).

Breanna, 32, is a trade jeweller with several years experience, and for the past few years she has been creating designs under her own label. In her interview with *GT Magazine*, she reflects on the

persistence that got her where she is today. When she discovered her passion for making jewellery, ‘Breanna dropped out of her photography course at university and enrolled in a jewellery course. “Once that was over I wrote 200 letters to as many jewellers in Melbourne as I could find asking for an apprenticeship,” she explains. “I got one reply and then got the job”’ (Azzopardi 2016b, p.10).

### The juggling act

In *GT Magazine*, the work of crafting or consolidating a career in the public eye is regarded as a particularly glamorous prospect for young women, if at times it is hectic and demanding. As they combine and coordinate multiple ‘gigs’, these models and celebrities demonstrate the importance of multitasking skills in the work of building a professional reputation and personal ‘brand’. Further, it is suggested that this must be balanced with the essential behind-the-scenes work of maintaining a ‘healthy lifestyle’ and a youthful, aesthetically-pleasing body. Fiona, 33, got her start on a reality television program and is now a model and an ambassador for various brands (King 2016a, pp.6-7). Emerging model Ellie, 20, has already worked with several major brands, and juggles modelling engagements with a full-time traineeship in sports development (Azzopardi 2016c, p.6). In the February 13 issue of the magazine, local media celebrity and fiancé (now wife) of Geelong footballer Tom Hawkins, Emma Clapham is ‘on a mission to restore balance in her life this year’, after a hectic 2015:

One minute she was blogging on her lifestyle website and the next snapping a selfie in the car on the way to a hosting gig at a champagne luncheon. Days later, she was promoting a skincare collaboration before moonlighting as a food stylist and sidling up next to Tom in VIP seats at a sporting event. The creative busy bee found herself dreaming of wearing trackpants on the couch in front of Netflix or watching the sunset from water tanks on the family farm in Deniliquin instead of getting changed on the run and fixing her make-up at traffic lights. (Rooth 2016c, p.8)

Some of the entrepreneurs regarded their business as an adjunct, a side project or a space in which to indulge a hobby, rather than a full-time career. Young couple Rachel and Trav, both 23, are each working full-time in established careers, but together they have launched furniture business *Into the Woods*. The idea for the business ‘started when the high school sweethearts were renovating their own house in Corio’, and saw a niche in the market for custom-made furniture at affordable prices (Hayward 2016, p.14). ‘If it goes really well we might think about doing it full-time but at the moment we are just enjoying it’, Rachel says of the business (Hayward 2016, p.15).

### Sacrificing stability

A number of stories were structured by the theme of ‘sacrifice’. For example, the need for perseverance when self-sacrifice appears to generate little reward, or the sacrificing of a stable career in order to pursue a passion. Brodie, 27, has worked hard to establish not one, but two businesses: a beauty therapy business and a clothing label, only a year apart (Azzopardi 2016d, p.16). Although she enjoys the sense of autonomy that comes with being self-employed, she emphasises the need for perseverance when starting a business: ‘Be prepared to put in the long hours, countless hours where you won’t make any money and the feeling of taking three steps forward and then another two back...I always like to say “business isn’t easy otherwise everyone would be doing it”’ (Azzopardi 2016d, p.16).

Holly, Nicki and Kate initially pursued careers in teaching, healthcare, and the corporate world, respectively, before ‘making the break’ to seek an outlet for their creative talents and passions. 24-



year-old Holly initially ‘pursued physical education teaching as a “safe” career path’, but after her fashion blog took off, decided to put her teaching career on hold (Rooth 2016d, pp.4-5). Nicki, also 24, trained as a physiotherapist after completing school because she wanted to help people, she says, but ‘she has not looked back’ after taking the plunge into becoming a full-time artist (Azzopardi 2016e, p.8). Moving from Melbourne to Geelong with her boyfriend, she has found artistic inspiration in the seaside landscape, and now earns a living selling artworks on her website (Azzopardi 2016e, pp.8-9).

30-year-old Kate took her career in a completely different direction after she experienced an epiphany in her 20s. ‘I found myself questioning the idea of “success” around my mid-20s, which saw me working in Melbourne as a corporate contractor manager’, Kate says (King 2016b, p.15). ‘It was around this time that I decided that the corporate world wasn’t for me and that I would focus on my passions – health and wellness’ (King 2016b, p.15). She is now a certified holistic health coach and personal trainer, and her business, *Retreat Yourself Box*, offers a package of health and wellness products, available by subscription (King 2016b, p.15).

### Making a difference

The entrepreneurial inclinations of several young people were informed by an ethical commitment to ‘give back’ and make a difference in their local community, and beyond. The radiant smile of portrait photographer Stevie, 25, beams out from the cover of the February 20 issue of *GT Magazine*, as she cradles her SLR camera. Stevie’s creative journey commenced at the age of 17 when she began to take self-portraits with a small camera, as a way of rebuilding her confidence and identity after experiencing personal trauma, Meagan Rooth (2016e, p.4) reports. She now uses her craft with the aim of empowering other women. In her *Body Love* series of portraits, Stevie seeks to capture ‘a pictorial glimpse into soul, strength, love and vulnerability’ (Rooth 2016e, p.5). ‘I believe every woman should have a beautiful photograph of herself, loving the skin she’s in’, she explains (Rooth 2016e, p.5).

‘Fashion-forward’, ‘Bell Post Hill duo’ Monique and Marko have brought together their passions for style and fashion, and helping others, in an innovative concept called *Time IV Change* – a range of six eco-friendly, vegan watches, in which different colour bands represent different social or environmental causes (Rooth 2016f, pp.8-9). The couple wants to offer a product that is both fashionable and cruelty-free: “We wanted to create something that would allow us to give back and help those without a voice,” Marko explains. “I hope we can create a ripple effect on a global scale,” adds Monique’ (Rooth 2016f, p.8).

25-year-old Aimee is the cover star of the April 23 issue of *GT Magazine*, and the wife of Geelong footballer Zac Smith. Aimee describes herself as ‘a passionate people-person’, reporter Meagan Rooth (2016g, p.9) notes, and, in conjunction with other young football wives, is volunteering on a local initiative that provides makeover and mentoring services to assist young disabled women to prepare for employment. Aimee’s ‘endearing motherly nature’ makes her a natural fit for this role, Rooth (2016g, p.9) indicates, and it appears that her desire to ‘make a difference’ in the local community is informed by her religious faith:

Aimee – who has volunteered as a Red Frog during schoolies since 2008, worked as a missionary overseas, mentored youth at her church and helped restore a run-down property to create a safe house for homeless mums on the Gold Coast – is in her element. She has a big

heart and believes in the power of women supporting women. ‘Giving back is something that’s really important to Zac and I,’ she says. (Rooth 2016g, p.9)

### We’re rolling up our sleeves and ‘giving it a go’: Chris and Georgia’s story

On the cover of the March 5 issue of *GT Magazine*, attractive young couple Chris, 28, and Georgia, 20, pose for the camera inside their new café (see Figure 22). The caption attached to the magazine cover image introduces Chris and Georgia as ‘young hearts’, inviting readers to ‘meet the ambitious couple putting a fresh twist on the traditional corner shop concept’.

### <Image removed due to copyright restrictions>

Figure 22: Chris and Georgia on the cover of the March 5 issue of *GT Magazine*.

Chris and Georgia have breathed new life into a former milk bar located only a few blocks from the Geelong CBD, and adjacent to Eastern Park, in which the Geelong Botanic Gardens is situated. The café’s garden-themed interior design, with floral and green touches, has introduced a ‘natural, breezy ease to the space’, reporter Meagan Rooth (2016h, p.5) notes approvingly. Chris and Georgia have utilised existing features of this ‘old weatherboard shopfront’ while also seeking to make their own imprint on the space. ‘Tired decorations and advertising material [were] removed from the windows to reveal the gardens out the front and streetscape to the side’, but they ‘decided to stick with the exterior paint colour, already familiar to locals. “Everyone knows it as ‘that yellow place’, so we didn’t want to change that,” Chris says’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5). The representation of Chris and Georgia emphasises the bonds of affection and commitment that underpin the couple’s new project. For these partners in both life and business (‘We spend so much time together,’ Chris says), these bonds extend to a beloved former pet that is the creative inspiration behind their business concept. The memory of their ‘happy, excitable rescue puppy’, it is suggested, fires the couple to make their joint venture a success:

The staffy cross bull terrier cross Alaskan malamute is the inspiration behind the name and character of new East Geelong café Winifred’s Corner Shop. ‘She was such a happy dog – so content and loved to give,’ Georgia remembers, shifting her focus to the window to hide the tears in her eyes. ‘We want this place to have that kind of energy.’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5)

‘The couple’s fondness for the corner shop almost rivals their fondness of each other’, reporter Meagan Rooth (2016h, p.5) observes. ‘Georgia, 20, is from Ocean Grove while Chris, 28, is originally from the Clifton Springs area. Full of youth and genuine warmth, they laugh and bounce off each other’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5). These references to the sense of energy, love and affection that the couple appreciate in each other and in their beloved former pet appear to indicate that Chris and Georgia each have a significant personal, emotional stake in the business venture, in a project that is the product of not only their passions, but of their shared history.

However, while Georgia ‘has a modelling background’, Chris previously ‘owned Groove Café’ in Ocean Grove, and it is hinted that the couple have some previous experience and awareness of the demands and personal costs of self-employment. This awareness has informed the couple’s desire to practice self-care and to strive for a degree of ‘work-life balance’, reporter Meagan Rooth suggests:

The shop is closed on Saturdays to give the pair time to recuperate and spend time with their animals – some of which are fostered. ‘We’re very aware of burnout,’ says Chris, who

remembers working 30 days in a row without a day off in his previous job. ‘We always want to put our best foot forward.’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5)

The couple’s decision to pursue their hospitality venture was not only informed by their passion for good food, but was made after a lengthy process of careful thought, planning and preparation:

The entrepreneurial duo has moved into town from Ocean Grove, where Chris owned Groove Café. They took nine months to determine their next move together, during which Chris learnt the ropes of short-order cooking at Mr Grubb at Oakdene in Wallington. ‘We took time off to see what we wanted to do,’ he says. ‘We realised we’re really happy around coffee and we like good, simple food that’s fresh and tasty’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5).

They apply this deliberative approach to the design and delivery of the menu. In fact, their attention to detail is explicitly stated: ‘We know the toasted ciabatta rolls are as good as they can possibly be. We’ve put a lot of work into perfecting them’, and ‘we’re really focused on the coffee’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5). Reporter Meagan Rooth comments approvingly on the selection of cakes on offer: ‘When *gt* visits, there’s... pistachio and raspberry friands, pistachio yoyos, florentines and apple crumble’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5) and a corresponding photograph depicts this display of sweet treats (see Figure 23 below). In another image, Georgia wears a look of concentration as she prepares a coffee behind the counter. These images, in combination with the couple’s stated emphasis on attention to detail, give the sense that Chris and Georgia are proudly striving for continuous improvement, for perfection.

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 23: ‘Outside influences’ cover story featuring Chris and Georgia (Rooth 2016h, pp.4-5)

So, while Chris and Georgia are conscious of the dangers of burnout, they are nonetheless concerned to demonstrate their enthusiastic commitment to seeing their business venture succeed, by ‘putting their best foot forward’: ‘We’re extremely passionate about hospitality,’ says Georgia, ‘I don’t think we could do anything else’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5). In both the magazine cover image (see Figure 22 above) and main image accompanying the cover story (Figure 23 above), Chris and Georgia regard the camera with bright white smiles and glowing skin. In both portraits, as she stands beside her partner, Georgia is depicted with her hand resting on a nearby bench or chair, indicating not only an ease in front of the camera, but a sense of ownership and pride in her surroundings. Much like the design elements utilised in the renovation and decoration of the café, the couple’s clothing and presentation contains both old and new, ‘classic’ and ‘modern’ elements. Alongside the retro stylings of Georgia’s hair wrap and Chris’ moustache, their clothing also communicates a more casual, perhaps gender-neutral emphasis on the practical function and comfort of shirts and jeans. They are ‘rolling up their sleeves’ – literally and metaphorically – taking a very hands-on role in the renovation of the café and its day-to-day operation as a business enterprise: ‘The couple jokes that they now smell of aromatic coffee and muffins, which is an improvement on the odour of dirt and woodchips during the renovation over Christmas’ (Rooth 2016h, p.5).

Having cultivated a warm, welcoming space that has been designed with fellow dog lovers in mind (‘Hitching posts and water bowls encourage four-legged companions to be included in the experience’, reporter Meagan Rooth [2016h, p.5] observes), Chris and Georgia, it appears, are entitled to feel a sense of pride in their efforts. Their representation in *GT Magazine* draws on notions of youth as a symbol of energy, optimism and renewal – as the magazine cover suggests, they are the ‘young hearts’ breathing new life into a dilapidated corner shop – and emphasises their relatability as ‘just a

couple of kids giving it a go'. A relatability that might just establish their legitimacy in the eyes of locals as the new caretakers of 'that yellow place'.

### Driven to succeed: Mia's story

24-year-old businesswoman Mia is the cover star of the November 12 issue of *GT Magazine*. At the time of her interview with the magazine, Mia was rebuilding her career, after a major business setback and a whirlwind 12 months. Having started her first business the previous year and 'quickly turn[ing] \$1000 into \$1 million', she 'lost it all' six months later, and, in her words, hit 'rock bottom' (King 2016c, p.6). Like Chris and Georgia, Mia has learnt from her previous mistakes in the world of business and this time is determined to 'put her best foot forward'. She is now 'confidently hitting the market' with her two, relaunched, companies, offering teeth whitening products and cold-pressed juices (King 2016c, p.6). Mia presents a picture of unwavering self-belief in the face of significant setbacks:

When her first two businesses did not turn out as she had planned, Mia had to return her new car, she was removed from her rental property and forced to move into her grandparents' house in Drysdale. Some of her friends and family begged her to give in and 'just get a normal job'. She says she was no less determined, a 'regular' job was not for her. Her stars aligned when she was put in the path of some wonderful mentors and future business partners. (King 2016c, p.7)

This time around, Mia has been careful to build connections with supportive business partners, mentors and clients, garnering an endorsement of her pressed juices from 'celebrity paleo chef' Pete Evans (King 2016c, p.7). With Mia's fortunes again on the rise, she is able to enjoy some of the trappings of success, reporter Abbey King indicates as she 'sets the scene' for her interview with Mia:

When *gt* visits, Mia's new glistening white BMW is sitting in the driveway of her recently acquired Newtown home. She and her one-year-old puppy, Honey, are busy unpacking. A large portrait of Bondi Beach [her line of teeth-whitening products is called Bondi Smile] takes pride of place on the living room wall and the space is dotted with custom-made furniture, including homemade concrete stools and pots, made by Mia herself. (King 2016c, p.6)

### <Image removed due to copyright restrictions>

Figure 24: Mia on the cover of the November 12 issue of *GT Magazine*.

The images of Mia that are presented in *GT Magazine* emphasise her confidence and competence as a successful entrepreneur. In the magazine cover image (see Figure 24 above), Mia regards the camera confidently and directly, with an understated smile, while her clothing and presentation features an interesting mix of masculine and feminine elements. Appearing in ripped jeans, and with a black leather biker jacket slung across her shoulders, the presentation of Mia also contains some 'feminine' touches, such as her red nail varnish and wavy blonde hair cascading across her shoulder. Inside the magazine, there are more images of Mia across the pages of the cover story (see Figure 25 below). In these images she appears to confidently handle the gadgetry and accoutrements associated with a modern business enterprise: a laptop slung under her arm, a mobile phone (which bears her initials on its cover). A freshly-made cappuccino is within reach as she types on her laptop and checks her phone, indicating that she has the freedom and autonomy to make a café her place of work for the day.

Her attire of glasses, a black jacket, and ‘smart’ wristwatch are signifiers of intelligence and sophistication. Offstage are those elements that reporter Abbey King (2016c, p.6) has brought to our attention – a new home in the leafy suburb of Newtown that she shares with her puppy, the ‘new glistening white BMW’ sitting in the driveway – that further enhance the aura of independence, determination and success that constructs our sense of Mia. The caption adjoining the magazine cover image - ‘young and driven: meet the 24-year-old who is determined to succeed in the world of business’ - characterises Mia’s story as one of perseverance, youthful drive and ambition.

**<Image removed due to copyright restrictions>**

Figure 25: ‘Driven to succeed’ cover story featuring Mia (King 2016c, pp.6-7)

In contrast to café operators Chris and Georgia, who bore an apparent emotional connection to a business concept that was inspired by a beloved former pet, Mia appears to have little in the way of a personal, emotional investment in the products that she offers. For Mia, teeth-whitening products and pressed juices represent a means of wealth generation. As Mia reflects on the growth of her previous businesses throughout the interview, she speaks of ‘taking millions of dollars of revenue’, and ‘we turned over nearly \$2 million in revenue’ (King 2016c, p.6), indicating that monetary gain is her main barometer of fulfillment and success. She seeks to embody the qualities of a ‘true entrepreneur’, a persona curated by the producers of her *GT Magazine* story, and one that she herself cultivates. Mia has learnt to ‘talk the talk’ of a ‘true entrepreneur’, presenting a picture of unwavering confidence and conviction, and espousing the qualities of risk-tolerance, pluck and resilience – qualities that, like the figure of the entrepreneur more generally, have traditionally been regarded as masculine (Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio 2004). ‘I think it’s really important in business that you have to hit rock bottom once’, she contends, ‘for one, you get more credibility from people and, two, if you can earn millions, lose millions and earn millions again, that shows you are a true entrepreneur’ (King 2016c, p.7). It becomes clear that Mia regards herself as a visionary, a maverick, someone whose unique talents are not likely to be recognised or supported in a conventional career pathway:

Mia has always known her place is in the business world. She never liked school and wanted to march to the beat of her own drum. She became a personal trainer for three years but found the work to be too repetitive and realised she couldn’t do it anymore. Enrolling in exercise science at Deakin University, because she was told it was ‘the right thing to do’, she lasted just one year. That is when she began to search for her first big break in business. ‘I could name 20 businesses I have tried to start up in the past, even things like the pot,’ says Mia, pointing to the homemade concrete pot. (King 2016c, p.6)

She speaks of her entrepreneurial career as a calling, as something she was born to do: ‘I have so many ideas and I’ve been very blessed when it comes to business. That’s just me, I’m meant to be an entrepreneur. I’m meant to own millions and millions of dollars’ worth of companies one day, I just know that’ (King 2016c, p.6). While particular elements of her presentation and persona carry traditionally ‘masculine’ connotations, Mia says she is motivated by a desire to empower other women, and to lift expectations of what a ‘young blonde woman in business’ is likely to be capable of:

Currently halfway through writing her first book, Mia wants to share her experience with other women to encourage them to never give up. She has also started doing some business coaching... 'My main goal is to inspire women. I want to be able to help show them they can live their dream,' she explains. 'I never really had someone I looked up to in business and I think in this generation we're taking the leap and taking risks. There's little businesses popping up everywhere – I absolutely love it, love, love, love it. Making concrete pots or sewing cushions, I love the creativity. Fifty years ago, a woman in business would have been frowned upon – so that's now definitely my mission to inspire women to follow their dreams and make it happen.' (King 2016c, p.7)

### The Young Entrepreneur: A classed and gendered 'figure'

The foregoing analysis raises significant questions about the 'aesthetic' dimensions of the figure of the 'enterprising young person', and the ways in which this figure produces and reproduces gendered, classed and racialised understandings of young people, work and enterprise. Up to this point, I have engaged with the stories of Chris and Georgia, Mia, and the many other young people featuring in the pages of *GT Magazine* as vignettes, and these brief stories are illustrative of a variety of themes and elements that I will analyse in greater detail in the discussion that follows. I understand these enterprising young people as 'figures', in the sense developed by Donna Haraway (2008, p.4):

Figures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material–semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings coshape one another. For me, figures have always been where the biological and literary or artistic come together with all of the force of lived reality. My body itself is just such a figure, literally.

In what follows I will unravel and untie some of the key threads in those knots in order to explore some of the complex entanglements of gender, class and aesthetics in contemporary representations of young people's enterprise. In adopting such an approach, my thinking is shaped by recent work in the sociology of youth, in particular that of Peter Kelly and Steven Threadgold, which has illustrated the analytic possibilities that a focus on 'figures' can enable. Kelly (2015) has put Haraway's concept of the figure to work in thinking about ways to re-enchant a sociological imagination. He analyses three figures of young people appearing in works of contemporary fiction and entertainment media: Plum and Pikelet, the respective protagonists of Sonya Hartnett's *Butterfly* and Tim Winton's *Breath*, and Michael, the young apprentice chef appearing in reality television program *Jamie's Kitchen*. 'These figures of Plum, Pikelet and Michael', Kelly (2015, p.619) suggests, 'are marked and shaped and confronted with the often cruel, sometimes pleasurable, ambivalence and irony that characterise all our lives at different times and in different spaces and places'. And yet, this ambivalence and irony is all too frequently 'written out' of what Kelly (2015, p.617, emphasis in original) argues is an increasingly governmentalised youth studies that must 'conform to the rule-bound, institutionalised and evidence-based knowledge practices that institutions, government departments, corporations, and NGOs understand as being capable of telling *truths* about young people'.

Kelly, following Zygmunt Bauman (1997, cited in Kelly 2015, p.620), is concerned to 're-enchant' the sociological imagination, an imagination that embraces a 'tolerance and equanimity towards the wayward, the contingent, the not-wholly determined, the not-wholly understood and the not wholly predictable'. Bauman's sociologies of 'liquid life' encourage an approach to the practise of youth studies that is deliberately provocative and unconventional in looking to texts, ideas and sources outside of what might be called mainstream sociology for what they can reveal about the messy complexities of young people's lives, and for stimulating new ways of thinking (Kelly 2015, pp.620-

621). It is the task of a critical youth studies, Kelly (2015, p.627) argues, to trouble and unsettle the received wisdom about what counts as ‘knowledge’ in the social sciences:

We need to foster a sociological imagination capable of unsettling both the ways that we imagine these issues, and the institutionalised intellectual knowledge practices that shape such an imagination. Such an imagination should not only recognise the ambivalence and irony that are fundamental elements of many young people’s experience of an uncertain, often dangerous 21st Century. Such an imagination should, also, in modest, but always provocative and untimely ways, challenge and trouble any governmentalised attempts to exterminate that ambivalence.

Threadgold (2018) draws not on Haraway but the work of Bourdieu to analyse the figures of ‘hipster’ and ‘bogan’ in an exploration of how, in contemporary Australia, class is made in and through forms of media and popular culture, from news and opinion, to parody and satire. In doing so, Threadgold draws on Tyler’s (2013, cited in Threadgold 2018, p.95) conception of ‘figure’, understood ‘as both a theoretical concept and as a method’ that allows the researcher to interrogate the ‘governmentalised use and abuse of nationally abject figures’ and to track their construction, usage and repetition across multiple forms of media and popular culture. As Threadgold (2018, p.75) argues, ‘the affective space between Bourdieu’s two objective social orders – the material order and the symbolic order – is one where class classifications are made and remade’:

Much of this representational work, this struggle, is done by middle class professionals working in the creative and media industries. The mental constructs of the hipster and bogan evolve from attempts to map and represent class anxieties around taste, morals and values from a privileged position in social space. Once created and disseminated, they then work to patrol and enforce those very qualities.

For Threadgold (2018, pp.76, 82), the figures of ‘hipster’ and ‘bogan’ are ‘indicative of how class “haunts” our media consumption’; they are figures that cause and delineate class-based anxieties:

Depending on where you look, the hipster is either an economic saviour or responsible for a decline in productivity. Bogans are either ugly and daggy or driving fashion poverty chic. Hipster and bogan style and behaviour can be attributed to both the poor and to billionaires. These categorisations capture both the making of, and struggles over, class boundaries and their symbolically blurry nature.

Importantly, Threadgold (2018, p.96, emphasis added) notes that ‘as figures [the hipster and bogan] are utilised in struggles over class inequalities and taste in the field of representation, *all the while obfuscating the legitimacy of class as a way of understanding these very struggles*’. This insight is particularly pertinent to the analysis that I would like to develop here, of the class dimensions of *GT Magazine*’s representation of the figure of the ‘enterprising young person’.

In *GT Magazine*, particular dimensions of the figure of the ‘enterprising young person’ are foregrounded and made ‘present’ (femininity, whiteness, middle-classness, and what we might tentatively say is a presumed heterosexuality, though a more detailed analysis of this is beyond the scope of this chapter), while others are made ‘manifestly absent’ (Law 2004) – the enterprise of young people of indigenous or non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds, or from disadvantaged or ‘poor’ backgrounds, for example. As a generation ‘coming of age’ in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the young people that appear in the pages of *GT Magazine* confront a world of work that is shaped by processes of de-industrialisation, globalisation, deregulation (or ‘re-regulation’) and de-unionisation,

which are signature features of what I have identified in earlier chapters as a ‘neoliberal’ form of capitalism. Previous studies of youth enterprise (MacDonald & Coffield 1991) have highlighted that, typically, there are various ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors that inform a young person’s decision to pursue self-employment; they are ‘pushed’ by the previous experience of the deprivations associated with unemployment and/or precarious work, are ‘pulled’ by the appeal of being one’s own boss, or perhaps a combination of the two.

Yet, *GT Magazine* has very little to say about the influence of factors which might push the ‘enterprising young person’ in the direction of self-employment, nor of their access to the necessary resources - financial, social, psychological - which make self-enterprise thinkable, doable and achievable. The entrepreneurial success of these young people is understood as almost solely the product of their own hard work and determination. The previous experience of burnout or business failure does not appear to spark disillusionment, only a drive to get it right the next time. The story of 24-year-old Mia, for example, does not illuminate the conditions which allowed the young businesswoman to ‘earn millions, lose millions and earn millions again’, other than vague references to the assistance she received from ‘supportive business partners and mentors’, and her need to ‘move into her grandparents’ house’ at a time of hardship (King 2016c). In *GT Magazine*, the aesthetic dimensions of class are pushed to the fore: the ‘enterprising young person’ is constructed as a discerning producer and consumer of middle-class lifestyles and cultural tastes for high-end, bespoke homewares, fashion, and health and beauty products. Yet the class aspect receiving considerably less attention in the magazine is the access of these young people to the key forms of capital – what Bourdieu (1986, cited in Threadgold 2018, p.44) understands as ‘economic’, ‘social’ and ‘cultural’ capital, in the form of financial resources, networks, and educational and occupational credentials, for example – making their entrepreneurial endeavours possible.

While *GT Magazine* shies away from a fuller discussion of factors which might confer a ‘head-start’ in the world of business, in their profiles of Geelong’s enterprising young people, reporters are, whether consciously or unconsciously, utilising places of residence and of education as markers of status. In the absence of any overt references to the socioeconomic background of these young people, these categories serve as proxies for class.

Taking the 50 cover stories published in *GT Magazine* in 2016 as my sample, I analysed the most common places of residence among the 65 cover stars that were featured in this period. In the majority of articles, the cover star’s suburb of residence was not indicated (n=24). Seven cover stars were not a current resident of Geelong. Among those articles which did indicate the subject’s place of residence, this was most commonly Torquay and the Surf Coast (n=9), followed by Geelong West (n=3), Highton (n=2), and Newtown (n=2). The median weekly household income in 2016 for the suburb of ‘Torquay Jan-Juc’ was \$1,799 (Surf Coast Shire 2016). For the Surf Coast Shire more generally, it was \$1,568 (Surf Coast Shire 2016). Geelong West, Highton and Newtown are also high socioeconomic suburbs, with median weekly incomes of \$1,430, \$1,607 and \$1,658, respectively (as a point of comparison, the median weekly household income for the City of Greater Geelong as a whole was \$1,242) (COGG 2016c). One particular cover story stands out as an exception to this high socioeconomic bias: that featuring Ellie, a 20-year-old model and resident of Newcomb, a suburb which in 2016 had a median weekly household income of \$994 (COGG 2016c).

Reporters made reference to the subject’s former school in ten out of the 50 cover stories. These schools included Sacred Heart College, Geelong College, St Joseph’s College, Kardinia International College, Christian College, and Lorne High School (which is now known as Lorne P-12 College). With the exception of Lorne P-12 College, these are all private schools that are located in



predominantly high socioeconomic suburbs and which charge significant attendance fees and/or boarding fees. Data from the *My School* website illustrate the relative privilege of these schools. In 2016, Sacred Heart College, a prestigious, Catholic secondary school for girls, had an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) value of 1084 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2016). A value on the index corresponds to the average level of educational advantage of the school's student population relative to those of other schools (ACARA 2015)<sup>36</sup>. An analysis of the distribution of Sacred Heart College students across the four 'Socio-Educational Advantage' (SEA) quarters reveals that, in 2016, 29 percent of Sacred Heart College students were relatively disadvantaged, while 71 percent were relatively advantaged (ACARA 2016b).<sup>37</sup>

Coeducational school Geelong College, and boys' secondary school St Joseph's College, join Sacred Heart College in the leafy suburb of Newtown. Geelong College is perhaps the second-most prestigious educational institution in Geelong, after Geelong Grammar School. The latter is Australia's most expensive school, charging more than \$40,000 for year 12 day-boarding fees (Shying 2019, p.24). Geelong College is the Geelong region's second most expensive institution, charging \$29,284 for year 12 tuition in 2019 (Shying 2019, p.24). The ICSEA value of Geelong College was 1146 in 2016, and a full 91 percent of its students were relatively advantaged (ACARA 2016b). St Joseph's College had an ICSEA value of 1065, with 36 percent of students sitting at the disadvantaged end of the spectrum, and 64 percent at the advantaged end.<sup>38</sup> As a point of comparison for these scores, the ICSEA of Geelong's largest school, Northern Bay P-12 College, located in the low socioeconomic suburb of Corio, was 875 in 2016, and 95 percent of its student population was relatively disadvantaged (ACARA 2016b).

The work of Kenway and colleagues, on the role of class in the reproduction of social, spatial and educational inequalities, provides some key points of reference for making sense of these findings. Kenway and Fahey (2015) highlight that there are particular class sensibilities inherent in the ethic of 'giving back', in the shaping of the philanthropic inclinations of the upper middle class. Utilising a methodological approach they term 'multi-sited global ethnography', Kenway and Fahey (2014) examine the globalising practices of elite schools. Such schools provide students with the opportunity to participate in global youth leadership programmes that encourage the students to imagine themselves as global leaders in various fields (Kenway & Fahey 2014, p.191). The elite school's global and regional networks and partnerships allow students to mix with what the school regards as the most desirable reference groups, while also providing students with 'opportunities to build their own global and regional networks consisting of people who are like them in social class terms even if

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<sup>36</sup> The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) was developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2015) to allow meaningful comparisons of NAPLAN test achievement by students in schools across Australia. As ACARA (2013, p.1) explains, 'ICSEA values are calculated on a scale which has a median of 1000 and a standard deviation of 100. ICSEA values typically range from approximately 500 (representing extremely educationally disadvantaged backgrounds) to about 1300 (representing schools with students with very educationally advantaged backgrounds)'.

<sup>37</sup> In 2016, the distribution of Sacred Heart College students across the four 'Socio-Educational Advantage' (SEA) quarters was: 6 percent in the bottom quarter, 23 percent and 35 percent in the middle quarters, and 36 percent in the top quarter (ACARA 2016b). In calculating the proportion of students who are 'relatively disadvantaged' I refer to those in the bottom quarter and low middle quarter, and similarly, to determine the proportion of 'relatively advantaged' students, I refer to those in the high middle quarter and top quarter.

<sup>38</sup> I calculated the proportions of relatively advantaged and disadvantaged students at Geelong College and St Joseph's College in the same way as I did for Sacred Heart College, in reference to the distribution of students on the Socio-Educational Advantage (SEA) index.

they differ according to nation, culture and religion' (Kenway & Fahey 2014, p.191). These globally 'integrative' practices, Kenway and Fahey (2014, pp.191-192) suggest, have 'the potential to produce transnational class imaginations in students', offering 'a vision of the world in which students, of a certain calibre and social standing, can always move freely and are free to imagine a world in which they are always on the move'.

In Geelong, as in other cities, schools are implicated in the production and reproduction of a 'social class divide', Kenway (2013, p.303) argues, which sees the continued funnelling of a disproportionate percentage of students from the 'independent' school sector into manual labour and a disproportionate percentage of students from the government sector into manual labour. In 'Rust Belt' places, these processes of educational segregation intersect with the dynamics of de-industrialisation and what Bakker (1996, cited in Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, p.64) terms the 'gender paradox of restructuring', which involves the 'contradictory effects of the dual process of gender erosion and intensification'. Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody are concerned to explore the implications of this 'gender paradox of restructuring' for understanding local masculinities. Many of Australia's regional towns and cities, they argue, 'have historically developed their self-concept around a particularly place-based version of "hegemonic industrial working-class masculinity" that is central to the manner in which identities, work and all relationships are valued' (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, p.66).

Even in the places hardest hit by the effects of economic restructuring, a significant number of young men continue to aim for an apprenticeship in the trades despite the almost complete collapse of the routes to industrial employment, and 'many fathers cannot *unlearn* the attitudes associated with regular skilled manual employment and local hegemonic working-class masculinity' (Kenway, Kraack & Hickey-Moody 2006, p.69, emphasis in original). Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody (2006, p.68) observe that 'such deeply entrenched ways of being male are not at all easily disposed of by the males themselves'. In a similar vein, Morgan and Nelligan (2018, p.85), in their study of young, aspirant 'creative economy' workers, suggest there are entrenched gendered subjectivities and expectations which, in different ways, limit the ability of men and women to embody the requirements of globalised, precarious labour markets for 'labile labour', in other words, workers who are 'mobile, spontaneous, malleable and capable of being aroused by new vocational possibilities'. The difficulty of adapting to the demands of creative flexibility can be particularly acute for young men from working class and minority backgrounds, who are more likely to have inherited the 'values and habits associated with what we might call Fordist masculinity' - habits associated with the masculine trade and apprenticeship traditions (Morgan & Nelligan 2018, pp.85-86). At the same time, Morgan and Nelligan (2018, pp.85-86) highlight that 'the gig economy throws up tripwires for women...for women who are primary carers or who shoulder an unequal burden of domestic labour, the uncertain rhythms of precarious work - subcontracting, "permalancing" and casual employment - are far from ideal'.

*GT Magazine* does not, cannot, is incapable (because of its genre and format) of examining some of the many contradictions, ambiguities and tensions that inhere in processes of de-industrialisation and associated social change. Nor does it concern itself with the achievements of young men and women who, in large numbers, continue to pursue the technical and vocational pathways associated with 'traditional' employment. The growing number of young women who are challenging the entrenched gender bias that predominates in many of the skilled trades, or who are taking advantage of the various initiatives designed to encourage their participation in STEM/STEAM (which key policy documents, such as the National Innovation and Science Agenda, suggest are the skills that young people need for the 'jobs of tomorrow' [Australian Government 2016a]), apparently do not qualify for

inclusion in the glossy pages of the magazine. The particular incarnation of the ‘enterprising young person’ that is privileged in the urban lifestyle media of the de-industrialising city of Geelong, is one that pushes the aesthetics of femininity, whiteness and middle-classness to the fore.

## Conclusion

In *GT Magazine*, the qualities of class, gender and race are implicated in the privileging of particular types of industry (the fields of fashion and design, for example) and particular kinds of young people (female, white, middle-class and attractive) as the contemporary exemplars of enterprise. The heightened salience of particular aestheticised, feminised understandings of enterprise that we observe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be understood as the outcome of a series of political, economic, governmental, social, and cultural changes that began in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time as the industrialised democracies were moving from a production model based on heavy industry to one based around services and information, neoliberal governmentalities sought to make and remake young people as reflexive, adaptable, self-creating individuals, who must survive and thrive in contemporary risk society. It is in these contexts that the figure of the ‘Can-Do Girl’ (Harris 2004), having been made possible by the gains of feminism, and by the rising educational attainment of women through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is considered uniquely positioned to turn the opportunities in precarious, globalised labour markets to her advantage - is considered the ‘enterprising young person’ *par excellence*. Although the figure of the ‘enterprising young person’ produces and reproduces gendered, classed and racialised understandings of young people, work and enterprise, the figure encapsulates the qualities of resilience, flexibility and determination that all young people, from the privileged to the disadvantaged and ‘at-risk’, are encouraged to embody.

However, the representations of young people’s enterprise offered in *GT Magazine* are as notable for what they ‘leave out’ as for what they ‘leave in’. A key way in which enterprise is aestheticised in *GT Magazine* is through the magazine’s normalisation of class privilege. The young people featured in the pages of *GT Magazine* are fortunate to have access to the means of movement, of lightness - qualities that Bauman (2012) suggests are particularly valued in the era of ‘liquid modernity’, and which make the entrepreneurial dispositions and endeavours of these young people possible. However, as Bauman argues, and as the work of Kenway and colleagues, and Morgan and Nelligan illustrates, access to the means of movement, lightness and flexibility is distributed unevenly – often along lines of class, gender and race. The young entrepreneurs featured in *GT Magazine*, many of whom are alumni of prestigious local schools, and with ready access to reserves of economic, social and cultural capital, are ‘free to imagine a world in which they are always on the move’ (Kenway & Fahey 2014, p.192). On the other hand, young people of working class and minority backgrounds typically encounter various ‘road blocks’, in the form of entrenched class and gender differentials and prejudices that limit their ability to enact the forms of flexible selfhood that are understood as increasingly necessary in contemporary labour markets. These are just some of the many contradictions, ambiguities and tensions that emerge in processes of de-industrialisation and associated social change, contradictions and nuances that a publication such as *GT Magazine* does not have scope to recognise and examine, but which are illuminated through a critical engagement with ‘figures’ of enterprise.

## Concluding Remarks

I would like...to resituate the production of true and false at the heart of historical analysis and political critique.

Michel Foucault (1991, p.79)

A history of the present is, however, more interested in the future. Calling into question self-evidences of the present by exposing the various ways they were constructed in the past, such histories shatter certain stabilities and help us detach ourselves from our ‘truths’ and seek alternative ways of existence. In order for such transgressions to occur, however, effective histories should also break with our current systems of rationalisation and show that there is no truth but truths, no reason but rationalities, no knowledge but knowledges of the ways people have come to understand themselves and the world. As Rajchman (1985) has commented, by using history to problematise the subject, Foucault raises the question of freedom, not as a normative category, but as a ‘real’ situation of being, our possibility of questioning ourselves and modifying the politics of our existence.

Maria Tamboukou (1999, pp.210-211)

The work that I have done in this thesis attempts to unsettle and make problematic, using methods of ‘critical and effective history’, the ways in which, at various points in Australia’s policy history over the last 30-40 years, ideas of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ have been made to function as ‘truths’ in relation to problems of youth employment and unemployment. Each of these discourses have featured the assumption that the responsibility for managing the problem of unemployment should rest primarily with the individual young person. On the cusp of the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we now find ourselves in a period of human history in which there are new and re-emerging crises of various kinds, and these crises require that we problematise, then change how we understand problems such as youth unemployment.

In this concluding chapter, I will identify and discuss four significant themes that have emerged as a consequence of the genealogical work that I have done. These include: ‘Human capital and the “purposes” of education’; ‘Gender, class, bodies and the self as enterprise’; ‘Youth labour markets: Pasts, presents, futures?’; and ‘What is ‘place’ in the Anthropocene?’. I want to suggest that these issues will have continuing impact on the ways in which young people engage with education, training and work. They also emerge from, and shape, the ways in which policymakers, politicians and commentators continue to think about the challenges and possibilities of young people entering the labour market – as labour markets themselves continue to change. I want to develop some of the discussion that follows with reference to *Employable Me*, a documentary series airing on Australian television in recent years. In order to do this, I will begin the chapter by briefly introducing the stories of some of the young people featured in *Employable Me*. In highlighting the immense challenges that young people with disabilities can experience in securing employment, *Employable Me* illustrates some of the limitations of the individualising, ‘human capital’ discourses of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ for young people with disabilities, and for a range of social groups who constitute contemporary Australia in all its diversity.

## Employable Me?

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Employable Me* documentary series, the second season of which aired in 2019, has focused a spotlight on the difficulties that young Australians with disabilities encounter in securing employment. *Employable Me* follows the stories of young Australians with disabilities such as autism, Tourette's syndrome, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and dwarfism as they navigate the world of job applications, interviews, job coach appointments and work trials.

Eric, Kathleen and Paul are among the young job-seekers who feature in Season Two of the series. Eric has cerebral palsy that affects his speech, movement and balance. He is a determined young man who wishes to pursue employment in health administration. When asked 'what do you want to achieve in life?', Eric lists his goals as: secure, long-term employment, a girlfriend/partner, a society in which people see disability as a normal part of life, and for people 'to not be afraid of getting to know someone with a disability'. Although Eric has a voice assistive device that helps him to communicate, he prefers to talk to potential employers himself rather than rely on his job coach or device to do the talking for him. Eric's mum Karen suggests that her son loves talking to people over the phone despite his pronounced speech impediment, and explains that it is common for people to hang up on Eric, believing it to be a hoax call. Eric, however, is 'annoyingly persistent' and will keep ringing back.

Kathleen is a confident, vibrant young woman with autism spectrum disorder. She is searching for her first paid job after finishing school a few years ago. Kathleen explains that, 'when I was at school, I was a bit of an oddball...my nickname when I was a teenager was Molly...people call me "the female Molly" [after Australian music journalist Molly Meldrum]'. Kathleen has a vast knowledge of popular culture and music, with a particular interest in 1980s retro pop and rock. A clinical psychologist assesses Kathleen and suggests that, unlike some other people on the autism spectrum, Kathleen's ability to read the emotions of other people is quite developed, which makes her suitable for a role in customer service. After a successful work trial at Madame Tussaud's, Kathleen applies for a casual position there, as a guest service host.

Paul has autism spectrum disorder and has been looking for work after being made redundant from his job as a kitchen hand 18 months ago. He lives in supported accommodation with his cat, Zara. Paul's hobby and passion is trains, and when he is not looking for work, he channels his energy into updating his train vlog. He is pursuing employment with his local council, and has been invited to attend an assessment centre for a business administration traineeship position. *Employable Me*, alongside initiatives such as the Remove the Barrier campaign, aims to draw attention to, and dismantle, the unconscious bias that makes it especially difficult for people with disabilities to get a job. Remove the Barrier, launched in July 2019 by Australian sports person and television personality Dylan Alcott, has highlighted that the unemployment rate among Australians with disabilities is climbing, and currently sits at twice that of the general population (Remove the Barrier 2019). Remove the Barrier seeks to reframe the dominant perceptions that employers have of people with disabilities, citing research which suggests that, by hiring people with disabilities, employers will be rewarded with employees who are more productive, loyal to the company, and typically take less leave than other workers (Remove the Barrier 2019). The campaign also highlights the importance of employers asking questions and having conversations with job applicants. Rather than the employer making assumptions about what a young person with a disability can and cannot do, it is important to open up a conversation about what they are capable of, and their particular accessibility and support requirements in the workplace (Remove the Barrier 2019; Afshariyan 2019).

## Human capital and the ‘purposes’ of education

One of the key themes to emerge from the genealogical work that I have done in this thesis is that, particularly over the last 30-40 years in industrialised countries such as Australia, young people’s engagement in education and training has been redefined narrowly around the need to develop their ‘human capital’. Even as ‘human capital’ has been talked about in different ways at different times. For example, as ‘employability skills’ from the 1980s onwards, and more recently, as ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills’ or ‘enterprise skills’. As I discussed in Chapter 4, human capital theory assumes that the investments of governments and individuals in education will, in the aggregate, enhance productivity and contribute to national economic growth, and that the individual bearer of human capital can accrue economic rewards in the labour market. Human capital discourses, such as an ‘employability skills’ discourse, seek the production of ‘docile’, productive individuals who, through cultivating the self as an enterprise, can secure less parlous participation in globalised, precarious labour markets (Kelly 2013; Kelly & Harrison 2009). The value of a program such as *Employable Me* for the present discussion is its ability to illustrate the limits of the ‘self as enterprise’ and ‘human capital’ models, models which now have so much influence in shaping how problems of youth employment and unemployment are understood and addressed.

*Employable Me* understands ‘employability’ according to the narrow, ‘supply side’ definition that I explored in the Introduction to this thesis. That is, employability is determined primarily by the skills and attributes possessed by the individual. As the narration at the beginning of the program announces, ‘with the help of psychologists, job coaches and their families, [these young people] will find their unique skills and talents’. The ‘activation’ policies which represent the predominant policy approach to the problem of youth unemployment in the industrialised democracies since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century elide the many ‘context’ factors impacting on the experiences of job seekers, such as the geography of labour markets, issues surrounding travel to work, demand within local economies, and employer attitudes and behaviour (McQuaid & Lindsay 2005, p.205). In the case of young people living with a disability, the latter factor is particularly significant. As the Remove the Barrier campaign, and the experiences of the young people featured on *Employable Me* highlight, many employers continue to harbour discriminatory and biased attitudes towards young people with disabilities. Oliver Hunter, a young man featured in the Remove the Barrier campaign, suggests that in the eyes of employers, people with disabilities ‘have to be extraordinary to be ordinary’ (Remove the Barrier 2019).

Yet, Kathleen, Eric, Paul and the many other young people who feature in the *Employable Me* series have internalised the message that to not have a job is, in some fundamental way, to have failed as a human being. As they each reflect on what having a job might mean to them, it becomes apparent that being an active, productive, enterprising member of society is something that Kathleen, Eric and Paul equate almost exclusively with participation in the labour market. In this understanding, the difficulty that they experience in securing employment reflects an individual-level failure to effectively identify their ‘unique skills and talents’ and market these to employers.

Kathleen suggests that ‘everyone wants and needs a job, so they wouldn’t sit on their butts all day. No offense to those who are unable to work, sorry’. Paul expresses his desire to be financially independent ‘rather than rot away on the pension’. We witness Paul’s despair as he is knocked back for the business administration traineeship position, and again a short time later, when his application for his ‘dream job’ as a cleaner with Sydney Trains is unsuccessful. Eric’s mother Karen suggests that ‘he wants to work because he wants to feel like an everyday human being with a job’. When asked, ‘what would having a job mean for you?’, Eric replies: ‘everything’.

The Foundation for Young Australians' 2018 report, *The New Work Reality*, argues that:

An education that builds enterprise skills, being able to undertake relevant paid work experience, finding paid employment in a sector which is growing and an optimistic mindset are the four most significant factors that can accelerate the transition from full-time education to full-time work. (FYA 2018, p.18)

For the young people featured in *Employable Me*, many of whom have applied for hundreds of jobs, qualifications, experience, and the right 'mindset' do not automatically add up to employment. They typically have spent a great deal of time engaged in short-term voluntary and unpaid roles, often in the form of 'training' and 'employability' programs or placements, in the (mostly unrealised) hope that this will provide a stepping stone to secure, paid employment. This is not to discount that there are success stories featured in *Employable Me*. Eric, for example, has established himself as a serious contender for a paid position in health administration, with a Certificate III in Health Administration, and six weeks' work experience under his belt. His initiative, determination and tenacity finally pays off when he is offered a position as an Administration Officer with his preferred employer. To be clear, I am not suggesting here that a focus on the individual is necessarily always 'bad' or 'wrong'. There are individual lives here that can be transformed and changed. As we witness Eric's joy at receiving an offer of employment, and relief that the pattern of seemingly endless knock backs and disappointment has been broken, we are able to sense the magnitude of this event for Eric. Rather, what I have argued is that, when the 'truth' of the problem of youth employment and unemployment is understood in terms of supply-side employability, 'human capital' and/or 'enterprise skills', then there are particular consequences that flow from thinking about the problem in those terms. What would it mean to think otherwise?

In a written submission to the Australia 2030: Prosperity Through Innovation inquiry conducted in 2017 by Innovation and Science Australia<sup>39</sup>, the FYA (2017a, p.3) argues that 'the type of human capital needed for Australia's future prosperity is best developed in a culture that encourages entrepreneurship and supports young people to collaborate and take a risk with a new idea'. In this context, the FYA (2017a, p.3) suggests that it is particularly concerning that 'Australia remains one of the only advanced economies without dedicated youth entrepreneurship initiatives supported by the government'. Australia's budding young entrepreneurs are the kinds of 'change agents' with the vision and drive to 'become job creators, not just job seekers' and with the creative capacity to 'develop solutions to societal issues through social innovation and entrepreneurship' (FYA 2017a, p.2). Crucially, the FYA (2017a, p.3) argues that 'we need an entrepreneurial ecosystem which includes people of a broad range of ages, genders, cultural, geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, including Aboriginal people, people who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and people with a disability'. However, as I will argue in the following section, organisations such as the FYA are silent on the specific measures that would be required to allow a range of social groups to participate in this 'entrepreneurial ecosystem' on more equal terms, and more broadly, to develop the kinds of 'enterprise skills' that are understood as increasingly necessary for successful labour market participation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>39</sup> Innovation and Science Australia is an independent statutory authority that was established to advise the Australian Government on matters of innovation, research and science (Australian Government 2019).

## Gender, class, bodies and the self as enterprise

My analysis of the key concepts of ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ has revealed that the figure of youth that is found in these discourses is an abstraction: this figure is of no particular gender, from no particular class background, and is not encumbered with a physical body.

As my analysis in Chapter 4 highlighted, in Australia, the ‘employability skills’ paradigm that emerged out of three key 1990s policy documents - the Finn, Mayer and Carmichael Reports - was explicitly framed by ‘human capital’ concerns that sought to articulate various reforms of education and training systems much more firmly to the imperatives of national economic recovery and reconstruction. However, this paradigm tended to view ‘young people’ in the abstract: disembodied, of no particular gender or socioeconomic background, and from no particular place. This shortcoming stemmed from the failure of these major policy reviews to engage, in any meaningful and thorough way, with the particular needs of the various groups – people with disabilities, people of low socioeconomic status, Indigenous Australians, and non-English speaking background migrants, among others - that they identify as being at significant risk of not making effective transitions to the world of work and ‘adult independence’ (ESFC 1992, p.96). In the intervening decades, as many of the concerns of ‘employability skills’ have been carried through into the ‘enterprise skills’ paradigm, these issues remain. As I argued in Chapter 6, while the FYA’s 2016 report *The New Basics* (FYA 2016a, p.18) identifies that the weaker performance of young Australians of Indigenous and low socioeconomic backgrounds on key 21<sup>st</sup> century skills ‘raises a serious equity challenge’, specific proposals for addressing the disadvantage that these groups face in acquiring enterprise skills are noticeably absent from the *New Work Order* report series. Indeed, the FYA (2016a, p.17) suggests that the barriers holding these groups back from developing greater capability in the area of digital literacy are, in large part, attitudinal in nature: ‘unfortunately, low socio-economic and Indigenous students...report lower levels of belief in the importance of working with computers, signalling weaker understanding of the workforce of the future’.

The analysis of *Employable Me* also highlights that there are important aesthetic and affective dimensions of the employability equation and of the ‘self as enterprise’. In Chapter 7 I pointed to the growing body of scholarship exploring the significance of ‘aesthetic labour’ and ‘affective labour’ in contemporary youth labour markets. Peter Kelly (2013, p.15) suggests that ‘the expectations and norms of the self as enterprise take on particular limits and possibilities in different labour markets’, and that there are powerful ‘demands to imagine and practise the self in ways that conform, more or less, to the norms that give shape to these fields’. In globalised, flexibilised capitalism, there emerge powerful pressures that the self as enterprise conform to a particular normative ideal. At first glance, Kelly (2013, p.15) observes:

The self as enterprise does not have a gender, or an ethnic background, or a particular age, or a specific geographic location. Though this may not be entirely accurate. It is possibly more accurate to imagine that gender neutrality assumes masculinity. That no ethnic background assumes ‘whiteness’. That no age barrier means a productive, enterprising adulthood that runs from the mid-20s to the mid-40s. That having no place in effect means that cosmopolitan, post-industrial urban geography is what makes enterprise understandable, thinkable, possible.

Linda McDowell (2009, cited in Farrugia, Threadgold & Coffey 2018, p.274) observes that in the customer-facing, relationship-focused service industries that are increasingly dominant in advanced industrial societies, the ‘idealised white, slim, young, unwrinkled, typically heterosexualised body’ is the key figure. And my analysis of *GT Magazine* suggests that particular dimensions of the figure of the ‘enterprising young person’, as it is represented in this prominent, place-based ‘lifestyle’



magazine, are foregrounded and ‘made present’: a hetero-normative version of femininity, ‘whiteness’, and ‘middle-classness’ emerges as the ideal. Other possibilities of/for enterprise are made ‘manifestly absent’ (Law 2004) – for example, the enterprise of young people of indigenous or ethnic backgrounds, or from poor, marginalised, ‘deprived’ and ‘working class’ backgrounds.

*Employable Me* suggests a number of additional points that further develop this line of analysis. The experiences of the young job-seekers featured in the documentary series indicate that the ability to ‘look good and sound right’ (Williams & Connell 2010) is increasingly regarded by employers as an essential prerequisite for employment generally, rather than only a requirement for customer-facing roles in the retail and hospitality sectors. This requirement applies not only in the day-to-day embodied performances of labouring subjects, but also at the point of entry to the labour market. It is frequently the case that young people with disabilities do not meet these normative requirements, and sometimes this comes down to a subtle, barely perceptible difference in their personality or appearance. It may be that an employer perceives that a young person with autism spectrum disorder, for example, speaks a little too loudly or enthusiastically in their interactions with colleagues or customers. Or that he or she demonstrates a style of bodily comportment that the employer deems unfavourable. In the context of an increasingly precarious, risky and competitive labour market, these differences provide employers with yet another reason to discriminate against, and exclude from consideration, young job-seekers with disabilities.

In this sense, can a discourse such as ‘employability skills’ or ‘enterprise skills’ ever be relevant or generalisable to young people with disabilities, if their particular needs in education, training and the labour market were not considered from the beginning? This points to a larger problem: that the dominant discourses around young people’s ‘employability skills’, ‘innovation’ and ‘enterprise’ continue to marginalise the various social groups and different populations who in fact constitute contemporary Australia in all its diversity. As Carol Bacchi (2009) has argued, the implications and consequences that flow from particular problem representations are not limited to the realm of discourse: they also have material impacts on bodies and lives. A failure to properly acknowledge and respond to the particular needs of marginalised populations in education, training and the labour market will have significant material impacts on the bodies and lives of young people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and migrant populations, among others.

### Youth labour markets: Pasts, presents, futures?

A key theme to emerge from the genealogical investigations that I have conducted in this thesis is that the changing structural character of labour markets over the last 30-40 years has emerged as a key factor shaping the challenges and opportunities that young people experience in the labour market. Yet, policymakers and other stakeholders are often reluctant to acknowledge these structural labour market changes, preferring to remain focused on the question of young people’s capabilities. Where these structural changes are acknowledged, they are often understood as the taken-for-granted background about which nothing can be done. The genealogical work that I have done in this thesis has served to highlight that a confluence of forces – de-industrialisation, globalisation, the emergence of a ‘neoliberal’ form of capitalism, and processes of ‘digital disruption’ and technological change – have shaped the ways in which young people engage with education, training and the labour market, and the discourses through which that participation is framed and understood. Contemporary populations of young people confront a world of work that is, in many respects, individualised, de-industrialised, deregulated, and de-unionised. However, the emergence of this state of affairs was by no means inevitable. At various historical junctures, for example, policymakers made decisions about the directions in which reform of economic, industry and labour policies should proceed. And they made these decisions in fields in which the interests of capital, workers, communities and of different

populations were contested and debated. As I noted in Chapter 6, the ways in which organisations such as the FYA and the Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network understand the trajectories of the ‘gig economy’ and future labour market transformation are typically ‘technologically determinist’ in orientation, and do not adequately account for the range of social, economic, cultural and political factors that mediate processes of technological change. In that chapter I offered a series of provocations that sought to problematise the notion that processes of automation and technological innovation occur along a ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’ trajectory.

There is growing evidence to suggest that processes of casualisation, precarisation and technological unemployment will only intensify into the future. A 2019 ABC News report, for example, notes that ‘the OECD’s latest Employment Outlook estimates that across its 34 member countries, 14 per cent of existing jobs could disappear over the next 15 to 20 years, and 32 per cent are likely to change radically’ (Khadem 2019). The report also notes that Australia’s rate of casualisation is currently one of the highest in the OECD (Khadem 2019). Even as Australia was sheltered from some of the worst impacts of the Global Financial Crisis, the economic conditions which have prevailed in the post-GFC period have had particularly harsh impacts on young people in this country. Australia has ‘witnessed one of the largest increases in underemployment across OECD countries since 2007’, with the OECD Employment Outlook observing that ‘young people with medium- and high-level education have seen increases in their probability of low-paid employment in Australia since 2006’ (Khadem 2019). But these challenges pale in comparison to the planetary crisis looming on the horizon, even as they are caught up in the same causes – the inability of capitalism to achieve growth in ways that are socially and environmentally sustainable and just. If anthropogenic climate change is not averted, then it appears increasingly likely that processes of dispossession, displacement and extinction on a massive scale – of humans and non-human species alike – will prove catastrophic for the future of the planet.

In response to these unfolding crises, a range of solutions have been proposed. A Full Employment Guarantee, Youth Guarantee and a Universal Basic Income (UBI) are some of the most prominent examples to emerge in recent years (see for example, Smith 2017; Jackson 2019; Standing 2014; Roxburgh 2019). Under a Full Employment Guarantee, for example, ‘the government would offer a job, at the minimum wage, to anyone who wanted one, up to 35 hours of employment’ (Smith 2017, p.34). Advocates of a Full Employment scheme suggest that governments can and should use their fiscal capacity to maintain conditions of full employment, as Federal and State governments did in Australia in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s (Smith 2017, p.12). In a similar vein to the Full Employment proposal, the Youth Guarantee aims to guarantee all young people under the age of 25 a place in education, training or employment (Jackson 2019). As Jackson (2019) explains, the scheme ‘would involve a complex mix of active labour market policies (ALMPs), which are a cluster of measures designed to get unemployed people back into work, preferably into industries experiencing labour shortages’.

However, what I want to suggest is that these ‘solutions’, alone or in combination, should always be understood and analysed as problematic. For one thing, in the case of a Full Employment scheme, we cannot ‘go back’ to a putative ‘golden age’ of full employment, to a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century industrial capitalism featuring a high proportion of ‘standard’ jobs. As many have demonstrated, it never was a ‘golden age’ for all those who were locked out of ‘standard’ forms of employment – women, Indigenous populations, CALD populations, and LGBTIQ populations, for example (Massey 1994; Weis 1990).

More importantly, these ‘solutions’ are problematic in the sense that they do not contribute to a rethinking of the problems of youth employment and unemployment beyond a focus on young

people's capabilities. In the context of the genealogy that I have offered in this thesis, I want to suggest that policy responses that claim to be solutions to the problem of youth unemployment should be examined and critiqued for their unexamined, taken-for-granted assumptions. We should always approach proposals for a UBI or a Youth Guarantee with caution. This is not to suggest that we should always proceed with cynicism. The point is not to categorise these various schemes as either 'bad' or 'good'. Rather, these promised 'solutions' should always be subjected to critique and discussion, and particularly in a time of danger, uncertainty and crisis on a planetary scale.

### What is 'place' in the Anthropocene?

In this thesis I have done the work of identifying the various dimensions of the ways in which the problem of youth unemployment has been understood at various points in time. And I have identified and analysed the various solutions that have been offered to the problem of youth unemployment, in a global and national sense but also in the particular place of Geelong. Throughout this thesis I have illustrated, in considerable detail, the ways in which processes of de-industrialisation, globalisation and economic restructuring made their impacts in the particular place of Geelong, shaping the character of this regional city, and the opportunities and life chances available to those young people who call this place home. Place is important, for as Donna Haraway (2016, p.31) observes, we all come from some place: 'Nobody lives everywhere; everybody lives somewhere. Nothing is connected to everything; everything is connected to something'.

Place is a key factor influencing the possibilities of, and for, employability skills, innovation and enterprise, and of meaningful labour market participation more broadly. This was so during the height of industrial capitalism. As commentators Cowie and Heathcott (2003, cited in Strangleman & Rhodes 2014, p.417) observe, industrial labour was 'tough work that people did because it paid well and it was located in their communities'. And it remains so in 21<sup>st</sup> century work contexts reshaped by processes of globalisation, de-industrialisation and digital disruption. The analysis that I presented in Chapter 7, of the stories of some of the young entrepreneurs featured in *GT Magazine*, illustrated the significance of place, in combination with class, gender and race, as key factors influencing the ability of these young people to enact the forms of movement, lightness and flexibility that are particularly prized in the era of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2012). The young entrepreneurs featured in *GT Magazine*, many of whom are alumni of prestigious local schools, and with ready access to reserves of economic, social and cultural capital, are 'free to imagine a world in which they are always on the move' (Kenway & Fahey 2014, p.192). Young people of working class and minority backgrounds, on the other hand, typically encounter various 'road blocks', in the form of entrenched class and gender differentials and prejudices that constrain their ability to transcend the limitations of the particular 'places' in which they are situated, and to enact the forms of enterprising, flexible selfhood that are understood as increasingly necessary in contemporary labour markets.

As we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, there are emerging crises that threaten to transform 'place' and 'places' in unprecedented ways. The idea of the Anthropocene seeks to conceptualise the period of geological time in which we are living as one in which the Earth's natural systems have been fundamentally transformed by human activity (Moore 2016, p.3). But more than that, the discourse of the Anthropocene opens up a space for examining and critiquing how such a state of affairs came to be. Jason Moore (2016, p.4) suggests that the concepts and tools that we so often reach for to describe and make sense of processes of change – what Moore refers to as the 'concepts of "big history"' – imperialism, capitalism, industrialization, commercialization, patriarchy, racial formations' – are concepts which describe fundamentally social processes. In critiquing those discourses that regard 'nature' as an abstraction and that continually place humans at the centre of the universe, the Anthropocene is a call to rethink dominant understandings of the place of humans in the world, and of

humans in 'place'. This is a call that young people, in large numbers across the world, are responding to. Beginning as a solo protest staged by then-15-year-old student Greta Thunberg outside the Swedish parliament, the School Strike for Climate has rapidly grown to encompass hundreds of thousands of young people in more than 100 countries.

These young people are exercising their 'creativity', 'critical thinking' and 'enterprise' in ways that seek to challenge and disrupt the business-as-usual trajectories of government, business and community (in)action on climate change. Their protests have also attracted the ire, the anger, even hate, of conservative commentators and politicians, in Australia and a range of locations (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 2018; Laville 2019; Taylor et al. 2019). Significantly, young Indigenous climate activists have been among those protesting most vocally against the destruction of their lands and natural systems (Jenkins & Hocking 2019; The Canadian Press 2019). Through their connection to an ancient, place-based culture and cosmology, many young Indigenous people are able to develop an understanding of nature, and of humans-in-nature, through lenses other than those of Anthropocentrism and Eurocentrism. Perhaps it is the powerful connection to country that their culture affords that drives these young people to defend the environment so staunchly.

The individualising discourses of 'employability skills', 'innovation' and 'enterprise' are an impoverished basis from which to build the collective forms of action and capability that will be necessary to address the major planetary crises that are imminent. Planetary crises that are placing the futures of this generation of young people, and all subsequent generations, in jeopardy. In her impassioned address to the UN Climate Action Summit held in New York in September 2019, Greta Thunberg did not hold back in castigating world leaders for their inaction on climate change:

This is all wrong. I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you! You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!

And this is the challenge that I would like to end on. With capitalism in crisis, and planetary systems in crisis, how should we imagine problems of youth employment and unemployment going forward? In terms of 'employability skills' or 'enterprise skills'? Possibly we need to do a little better than that. Indeed, the scale of the challenges facing humanity and the planet *demand* that we rethink problems of youth employment and unemployment beyond a focus on the capabilities of the individual young person.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1  
Employability Skills – Ordered Situational Map

**Individual human elements/actors**

Brian Finn – Chair Finn Review  
Eric Mayer – Chair Mayer Report  
Laurie Carmichael - Chair Carmichael Report  
Bob Hawke – Prime Minister  
Paul Keating – Prime Minister  
Jeff Kennett –Victorian Premier/ ‘Minister for Geelong’  
Louise Johnson – feminist geographer  
Jane Kenway – education studies researcher  
Peter Watkins - education studies researcher

**Collective human elements/actors**

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector  
Unions, ACTU  
Employers/industry  
Secondary schools  
Private training institutions  
Australian Education Council  
OECD  
Geelong Trades Hall Council  
Geelong Manufacturing Council

**Nonhuman elements/actors**

Finn Review 1991  
Mayer Report 1992  
Carmichael Report 1992  
Australia Reconstructed report 1987  
Working Nation white paper 1994  
Apprenticeship and training schemes  
Active labour market policy regimes

**Implicated/silent actors/actants**

Aboriginal and TSI populations  
Young parents  
People with disability  
Non-English-speaking background populations

**Political/economic elements**

Economic rationalism/neoliberalism  
‘Post-Fordist’ regimes of production e.g. flexible specialisation  
Economic recessions 1980s/1990s  
Accord politics – tripartite consensus of industry, unions, government  
Business Enterprise Scheme 1985

**Spatial elements**

International exemplars of education and training systems e.g. ‘polytechnic’ institutions in Germany, Scandinavia  
Kennett Victorian Govt - local council amalgamations to form City of Greater Geelong 1993  
De-industrialisation and spatial reorganisation of production:  
International Harvester shutdown 1982  
Pyramid Building Society collapse 1990

**Discursive constructions of individual and/or collective human actors**

Unemployed young people  
Youth ‘at risk’  
Early school-leavers  
‘Job ready’ young person as counterpoint to ‘at risk’ youth  
‘Multi-skilled’ workforce

**Discursive constructions of nonhuman actants**

‘Key competencies’  
‘job readiness’/ ‘work readiness’  
‘pathways’  
‘Rust Belt’ places – global discourse with local significance

**Sociocultural/symbolic elements**

New global interconnections made possible by development of ICT  
Individualisation of risk

**Major issues/debates**

Reform of post-compulsory education  
Marketisation of education sector  
Academic vs. vocational imperatives of education  
Equity and access

**Temporal elements**

Epochs: Globalisation, Economic Rationalism  
Episodes: Hawke-Keating Labor Governments 1983-1996  
Events: Car industry ‘crisis’ and rationalisation 1983-84, tariff reductions 1980s-1990s, International Harvester shutdown 1982, Pyramid Building Society collapse 1990  
Examples: ‘Dawkins reforms’ of tertiary education incl. establishment of Higher Education Contributions Scheme (HECS) 1987-1991

**Related discourses**

‘Welfare dependency’  
International industrial competitiveness  
‘Nation building’  
Human capital  
Performance management and monitoring logics in HR

\*Elements in blue are those that relate specifically to Geelong.

Appendix 2  
Innovation – Ordered Situational Map

**Individual human elements/actors**

Paul Keating – Prime Minister  
 John Howard – Prime Minister  
 Jeff Kennett – Victorian Premier/ 'Minister for Geelong'  
 Steve Bracks – Victorian Premier  
 Ken Jarvis – Geelong Mayor  
 Anne-Marie Ryan – CEO, Smart GRLEN  
 Louise Johnson – feminist geographer  
 Manuel Castells - sociologist  
 Charles Landry – urban studies theorist  
 Richard Florida – urban studies theorist  
 John Urry – sociologist

**Collective human elements/actors**

Bracks Victorian Government  
 Geelong Region LLEN est.2001 (known as Smart Geelong Region LLEN)  
 G21 – ten Pillar groups, including Arts and Cultural Heritage Pillar, Lifelong Learning Pillar  
 Committee for Geelong  
 Australian Local Government Association  
 Guggenheim Bid Pty Ltd.  
 Deakin University  
 Business Council of Australia  
 Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry

**Nonhuman elements/actors**

Creative Nation 1994  
 State of the Regions Report 2002  
 Arts 21 1994 – Kennett Government  
 City by the Bay Plan 1981  
 Creativity + 2003  
 Geelong Business News  
 Victorian Government Innovation Statement 2002

**Implicated/silent actors/actants**

'sticky subjects' and other groups disadvantaged in relation to mobile, flexible circuits of capital

**Spatial elements**

International exemplars of economic and spatial transformation e.g. Glasgow, Bilbao  
 1998-2003 Geelong's Guggenheim bid

**Political/economic elements**

WorkChoices federal industrial relations reforms  
 Work for the Dole introduced 1998  
 Dissolution of the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) 1998.  
 Creation of Centrelink to administer income support, employment services delivered by mix of private and public providers contracted by Aust. Government's Job Network

**Discursive constructions of individual and/or collective human actors**  
 'creative class'

**Sociocultural/symbolic elements**

New global flows and mobilities of information, people, capital  
 'Dot-com' boom

**Major issues/debates**

Tourism, arts, culture, major events as principal drivers of economic growth  
 Waterfront renewal/city centre renewal  
 Changes in education policy  
 Critique of 'pathways' and 'transitions' as descriptors of youth experience in the labour market?

**Temporal elements**

Epoch: Economic Rationalism  
 Episodes: Keating Labor Govt 1991-1996, Howard Coalition Govt 1996-2007  
 Events: 1998-2003 Geelong's Guggenheim bid  
 Examples: 2002 *Employability Skills for the Future* published by BCA & ACCI

**Discursive constructions of nonhuman actants**

'Urban renewal'  
 'Place branding/marketing'  
 The 'Bilbao effect'  
 'Knowledge economy'  
 'Lifelong learning'  
 'Network society'  
 'Cultural Capitals'  
 The 'informational city'  
 The 'creative city'

\*Elements in blue are those that relate specifically to Geelong.

## Appendix 3 Enterprise – Ordered Situational Map

