

# **Evaluation Update**

**January 2022**

**I & J Management Services**

# Skyline Education Foundation Australia

## Evaluation Update January 2022

### From adversity to opportunity

The Skyline Program invests in four key areas vital for equipping high ability students – gifted and/or academically talented, with a growth mindset, leadership potential and resilience in the face of their social and economic challenges – to find pathways to further study and employment, becoming leaders for change.

- **Support Framework:** A 360 degree continuum of educational, emotional and practical support, and resources, with strong school, companion teacher partnership and parental support framework.
- **Financial benefits:** The program subsidises and reimburses educational expenses incurred by students and access to items necessary for schooling, the costs of which would otherwise further impact families already facing social and or economic hurdles.
- **Transformative learning experiences:** The major learning components of the Skyline Program are designed with input from educators, students and alumni, and strongly focus on experiential, transformational, student centred and peer to peer learning.
- **Complementary program:** A value-adding, complementary program that supports students with optional services, from mental health support to tutorials, exam revision series, and study notes.

Skyline aims to see students transition to tertiary education or career of choice, reach their full potential and become positive members of their communities.

The original evaluation of the Skyline Program was conducted by I & J Management Services in October 2011. Informed by student feedback, program data and allied research, this report continues the annual cycle of evaluation which updates the Skyline Board and supporters on program impact.

This update draws on surveys of Skyline students and alumni at the end of a COVID-affected 2021 academic year – a period unlike any other experienced by Skyline, schools and the Victorian community. 30 alumni, 42 of 53 Year 12 students (79%) and 60 of 81 Year 11 students (74%) completed the survey. Where relevant, the evaluation update incorporates data from earlier surveys. It covers:

- key program indicators
- number of Skyline students – by intake year and school
- benefits of the program for participating students
- student ATARS
- personal, circumstantial and program factors influencing the success of the program.

## 1. Key program indicators

*Updating KPIs from the Skyline Dashboard*

Indicator	Stakeholder	Target	2019	2020	2021
Net Promoter Score	Year 11 students	≥ 60	80	75	92
	Year 12 students			83	81
	Alumni	≥ 75	90	90	93
	Schools	≥ 75	82	-	-
	Supporters	≥ 65	72	-	-
Value attributed to the Skyline experience	Alumni	≥ 80%	90%	85-90%	-
% of students whose ATAR scores exceed their pre-VCE expectations	Year 12 students	60%	-	78%	-

## 2. Summary

### *Summary of evaluation findings*

Previous evaluations of the Skyline Program have highlighted the high regard in which it is held by participating students – VCE and alumni – as well as school staff and supporters. After two years in which the graduating class of 2021 has spent much of their VCE life learning from home, and recent VCE graduates have spent almost their entire time in tertiary education off campus, the key points from the 2021 update address both things that have changed and things that have stayed the same.

1. Skyline has grown substantially, in terms of the number of VCE students in the annual intake. While this has impacted on the program’s operating model it has not diminished the value the students gain from participation. It continues to make a very positive difference in students’ and families’ experience of VCE – notably in the relief of financial stress and other stresses that flow from this.
2. However, it is likely that the growth model adopted by Skyline – in terms of selecting more students from within participating schools and engaging secondary schools with smaller student cohorts – has contributed to a downward trend in the proportion of students with ATARs above 80 or 90. The proportion of students with ATARs of 70 or above has remained fairly stable.
3. COVID has challenged the way the Skyline Program is delivered. The Skyline team has managed to retain the core features of the program while engaging and connecting with students in new and different ways – and where necessary adapting the program to the specific demands the students faced in a COVID environment (e.g. remote learning reliant on digital access).
4. The connection with Skyline alumni is evolving. Past students have always looked back on their Skyline time as being instrumental in their personal, academic and career development. That is still the case, but now there are now more opportunities for alumni to continue to grow through Skyline and for the Skyline Program and current students to grow through the alumni.
5. Skyline changes lives in powerful and far-reaching ways. Once again the feedback from VCE students and alumni illustrates the capacity of the Skyline Program to change their lives for the better – in school and beyond school, in the moment and into the future. Due to the multi-dimensional nature of Skyline (support framework, financial benefits, transformative learning experiences, complementary program) there is something in it for every student.
  - Less stress (financial, emotional, academic)
  - More confidence and motivation
  - More opportunities and greater awareness of potential pathways
  - Reinforcement of aspirations and/or the courage to explore new directions
  - Strong connections and meaningful relationships.
 Which is why Skyline students value the program so strongly.

*“Skyline financially supported my VCE schooling and I don’t think I would have been able to complete school if it wasn’t for them. They are always there for me and I’m never alone. They have provided me with a second family who I can rely on.”*

## 3. Program status

### *Updating base information on Skyline student numbers and participating schools*

#### **Skyline student intake by year and school (to end 2021)**

Since the Skyline Program commenced in its current form in 2006, 398 students from 34 schools have participated in the program (see table on following page).

The number of schools participating in the Skyline Program at any one time has changed over the years – from just three schools in 2006, to ten schools in 2010, eleven in 2016 and 26 in 2021.

**Skyline student intake by year and school (to end 2021)**

School	Intake Year (commencing Year 11)												Total
	2006-2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Keysborough SC*	18	2	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	4	4	5	51
Lyndale SC	7	1	2	2	2	1	-	3	3	2	6	7	36
Melbourne Girls College	5	1	2	2	1	-	2	1	3	2	2	2	23
Westall SC	2	-	2	2	-	1	1	2	-	2	1	2	15
Collingwood College	3	1	1	-	3	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	13
Maribyrnong College	5	2	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	2	13
Braybrook SC			2	3	2	4	2	4	4	2	3	4	30
South Oakleigh SC				1	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	13
Brunswick SC					1	2	-	1	-	2	1	-	7
Narre Warren South P-12 College							1	1	2	2	3	6	15
Kyneton HS							2	1	2	2	3	4	14
Craigieburn SC							2	1	2	-	1	-	6
Roxburgh College							2	1	-	2	-	-	5
Northern Bay P-12 College								5	5	5	6	10	31
Newcomb SC								4	4	2	1	-	11
Dandenong HS									2	2	4	10	18
Western Port SC									3	2	2	2	9
Surf Coast SC									5	2	1	-	8
North Geelong SC										4	1	7	12
Mansfield SC										2	3	3	8
Geelong HS										3	-	4	7
Yea HS										2	3	1	6
Alexandra SC										2	1	3	6
Carrum Downs SC										2	1	2	5
Melton SC											2	2	4
Hampton Park SC												1	1
Debney Park / Mt Alexander SC	9	1	1	-	1								12
Wangaratta HS	1	1	-	1	-	1							4

School	Intake Year (commencing Year 11)												Total
	2006-2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
Bayside P-12 College	4	1	1										6
University HS	4												4
Monterey SC	2	1											3
Wellington SC		1											1
Lakeview Senior College							1						1
<b>Total Skyline students</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>398</b>

\* The Skyline Program supports students in both of Keysborough College's major secondary campuses (Acacia in Keysborough and Banksia in Springvale South). In administering the Skyline Program the two campuses operate independently, and are therefore counted as separate schools in Skyline reporting.

Notes: Two students from the 2009 intake were removed from the program due to a lack of commitment. Another student from the 2009 intake moved to Mt Clear SC in 2010, and the school joined the program just for her Year 12. One student from the 2011 intake moved to England before completing school. One student from the 2017 intake moved to another school with her family and did not continue in 2018. A 2018 student was hospitalised for an extended time and did not complete VCE. One 2019 student did one 2020 student is doing their VCE over three years. Several students withdrew from school and did not complete VCE (2011, 2018 x 2, 2019). One 2020 student withdrew from the program in 2021. All of these students are included in the above yearly intake totals.

A small number of students have withdrawn from the program during their intake year. They are not included in the totals above.

In 2017 Skyline established a Skyline Program in the Geelong region which has introduced five new schools over the past four years (Northern Bay P-12 College, Newcomb SC, Surf Coast SC, North Geelong SC, Geelong HS). Skyline has also added four schools in Melbourne's south-east since 2018, with students from Dandenong HS, Western Port SC, Carrum Downs SC and Hampton Park SC joining the program. In 2019 Skyline moved further into regional areas, engaging three schools in Victoria's north-east (Mansfield SC, Yea HS, Alexandra SC) to add to Kyneton HS which joined in 2016.

With significant expansion of the Skyline Program having occurred in the past six years, 133 students from 26 different schools participated in the 2021 program.

Keysborough SC in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs has participated in Skyline continuously since the program's inception and has had Skyline 51 students over 16 years. Lyndale SC has had 36 students in Skyline from 2006 to 2021, missing only in 2016. Braybrook SC (30 students in 10 years) and Melbourne Girls College (23 students from 2007 to 2021) have also had a significant number of students participate in the program.

Northern Bay P-12 College in Corio has had 31 Skyline students since joining the program in 2017, with 10 in the 2021 intake. Dandenong HS also had 10 students in the 2021 Year 11 intake.

### Addressing educational disadvantage

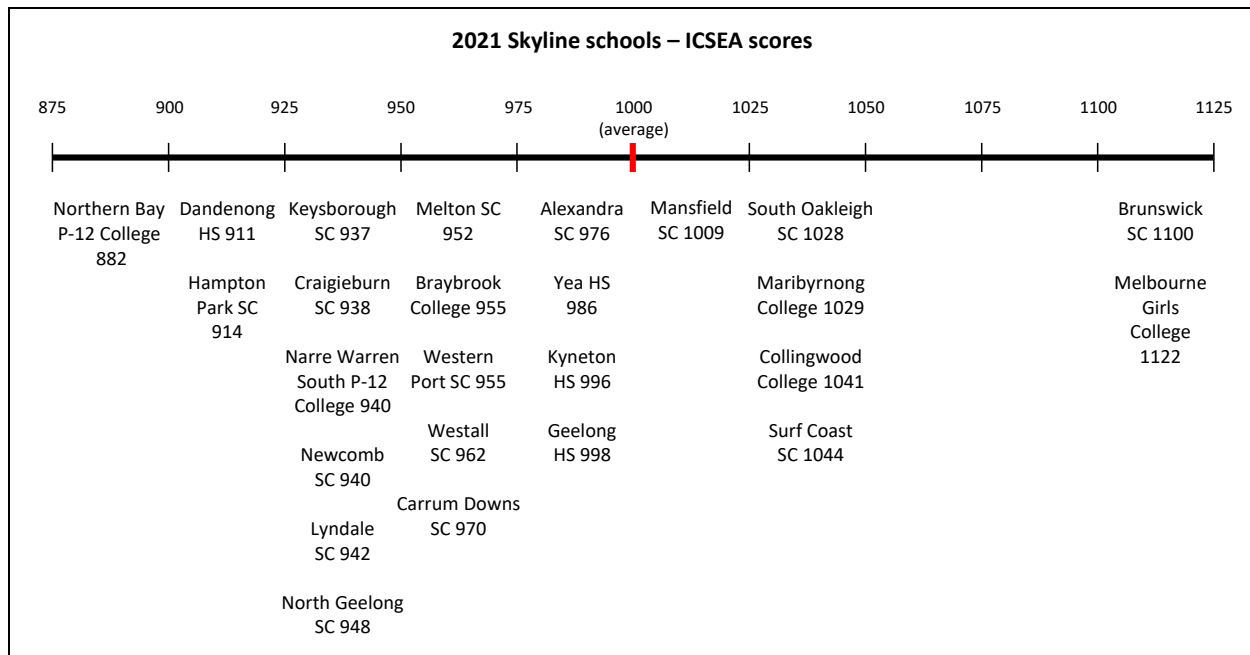
#### ICSEA

The index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA) was created by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) specifically to enable meaningful comparison of achievement data for students in schools across Australia. Key factors in students' family backgrounds (e.g. parents' occupation, school education and non-school education) are known to have an influence on students' educational outcomes at school. ICSEA is constructed taking into account both student- and school-level factors. While a school's ICSEA score is not a reflection of the circumstances for any individual student, schools above the ICSEA average of 1000 have student enrolments from families that are, on average, relatively advantaged, while those below 1000 are relatively disadvantaged.

Skyline schools are typically chosen from areas of relatively high socio-economic and educational disadvantage. That is, schools with low ICSEA values (as reported on the MySchool website, [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)). Northern Bay P-12 College in Geelong, for example, has an ICSEA value of 882, placing it among the lowest 7% of schools in Australia. Eight other Skyline schools with participating students in 2021 had ICSEA values between 911 and 948. Schools with ICSEA scores below 950 typically have at least half of their students coming from families among the bottom quartile nationally for socio-educational advantage, with on average 3% of students at these schools from families in the top quartile for socio-educational advantage. A further nine Skyline schools in 2021 had ICSEA values between 952 and 998 – below the 1000 point benchmark and indicating a student cohort with net disadvantage.

Seven of the 24 current Skyline schools have ICSEA values in excess of the 1000 point benchmark (i.e. on average students at the school are relatively advantaged), with two of these (Melbourne Girls College and Brunswick SC) having scores at or above 1100.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ICSEA is not a reflection of an individual student's circumstance. Individual disadvantage can become more conspicuous when it exists in a relatively advantaged cohort of students.



#### 4. COVID-19

When Victoria's 6<sup>th</sup> COVID lockdown was lifted in late October 2021, people in metropolitan Melbourne had spent more than 250 days in lockdown since March 2020. More than that, for most of 2020 and 2021 school students across Victoria had spent most of the past two years operating under a remote and flexible learning regime. This has been an unprecedented disruption to the normal school cycle, especially for VCE students as they work to complete their schooling and transition to post-secondary education or employment. Even provisions that brought Year 11 and 12 students back to school when other students remained at home did not diminish the uncertainty and the impact of these intermittent disruptions.

The impact of COVID on education pathways and outcomes has been acutely felt by all VCE students. From a Skyline perspective this includes the 2019 intake (who undertook their Year 12 studies in 2020), the 2021 intake (Year 11 in 2021), and most significantly the 2020 Skyline intake who spent much of both Years 11 and 12 learning from home. The inherent challenges of VCE were exacerbated for Skyline students already facing various forms of disadvantage. Learning from home, for example, became a particular challenge for students with limited access to technology infrastructure and connections essential to the success of flexible learning modes.

Recognising the risks, understanding its cohort and true to its ethos, Skyline responded to the challenges students and alumni were experiencing with their study, employment and mental health. It made strategic changes to the program and pivoted to a fully online and remote format rather than cease or restrict activities which had traditionally been conducted face-to-face. Skyline provided critical resources such as laptops, desks and access to reliable internet, and increased their direct engagement with students and alumni. It offered study assistance, supported exam preparation, facilitated connections between students and between alumni, and through a partnership with the Cairnmillar Institute offered mental health support to students in need.

## 5. Benefits for participating students

*Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations*

### Finance, focus, friends ... and family

Over 10 years the evaluation surveys have asked Skyline students what they think have been the main benefits from selection in the Skyline Program. Their responses have repeatedly demonstrated the diverse set of benefits which arise through Skyline. The 2021 students spoke of:

- easing financial stress for students and their families, allowing them to concentrate on their VCE and reducing concerns about financial disadvantage (e.g. accessing part-time work, doing without everyday items, foregoing school activities)
- access to study materials, resources and academic support (e.g. revision classes)
- personal and skills development through the masterclass series which contributes to increased self-awareness, self-belief, self-confidence and motivation to succeed
- education and career pathways guidance and advice
- awareness of university scholarships and awards
- reduced anxiety and stress related to VCE, future pathways and personal circumstances
- being part of a social and supportive network of like-minded students and formation of strong friendships
- encouragement and personal support from the Skyline Program Manager/Coordinators, Skyline Board members, Companion Teachers and school leaders, and other Skyline supporters.

*“Skyline helps me financially and with tutoring which is great for boosting my grades. Skyline helped me to know myself better, discover my skills and improve them to a greater extent.”*

*“Guidance and knowledge about VCE – especially because my parents didn't complete VCE and weren't able to provide me with answers to the many questions I had.”*

*“The main benefit would be the wise words that many of the speakers at Skyline meetings have to share with us. It is helpful to hear the experiences of others that have just gone through what I am experiencing as it clears up a lot of my queries and stress.”*

*“Forcing me to leave my comfort zone, and encouraging me to take up opportunities that I wouldn't normally take.”*

*“All the wellbeing/study techniques I've been introduced to by Skyline, which have helped me maintain a more positive and healthy mindset surrounding school.”*

*“Listening and viewing the presentations offered by Skyline, particularly in the masterclasses, has definitely reduced my stress and made me feel more comfortable with many aspects of VCE and further studies.”*

*“Community. It's good knowing I'm not alone in this journey and that it IS difficult but I have a support system to turn to.”*

*“I have gained so much confidence and my self-esteem has improved. This program has shown me that I can achieve anything I put my mind to as long as I'm motivated, dedicated and passionate about it. There is less of a financial burden on my family in regard to school equipment. I have a much wider range of support services thanks to Skyline, including my companion teacher, program managers, Skyline students and other Skyline staff.”*



*"I have had the opportunity to share my goal with others who really do want to help me reach it. That has truly supported my development. The people make the program and they have been the biggest benefit for me."*

*"The continuous support Skyline provided in my hours of need. Whether it is about financial issues, advice, mentoring, friendship – it is what allows me to have the strength and determination to pursue my dream despite adversity."*

Beyond these responses, which validate the Skyline Program, an additional idea emerged from the 2021 feedback, especially among the Year 12 students. Some described it as a strong sense of 'connection' – being both a connection to people within the Skyline community and a connection to the Skyline Program (and all that it represents). Others described this connection in terms of belonging to a 'family' – a second family that brings support, nourishment, engagement and inspiration.

*"I have learned the importance of making connection with other people."*

*"I have more confidence in myself and am surrounded by inspiring individuals that motivate me to continue challenging myself and do my best in everything. I have a second family that I can depend on and feel really comfortable around."*

*"Aside from funding, I think the main benefits were feeling that sense of support from the program. Much like a family, I felt like I could always fall back onto Skyline."*

### **Value add ('from adversity to opportunity')**

Evaluations of the Skyline Program have repeatedly found that it delivers three broad benefits for participating students. That is, Skyline adds value to the lives of young people through:

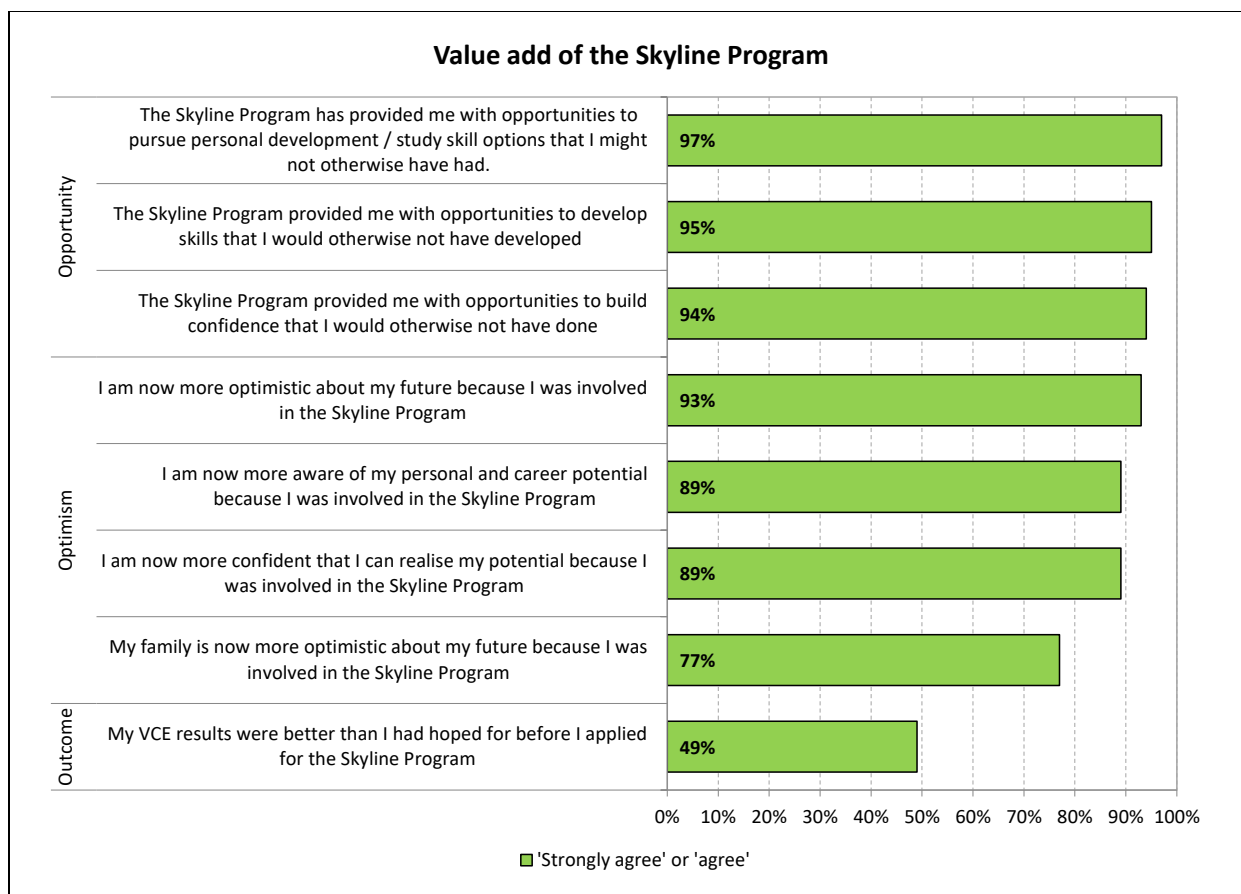
<i>Opportunity</i>	... for talented but disadvantaged young people to realise their potential.
<i>Optimism</i>	... for young people, their families and their schools
<i>Outcomes</i>	... in education, training and employment.

The program's financial support is of real benefit to participating students and their families as it allows them to place greater focus on academic endeavours rather than existence. However, it is the personal development, the pathways sessions and the wrap-around support provided through schools and the Skyline Program which makes Skyline more than just a 'scholarship'.

The results of the 2021 evaluation survey reinforce those findings. To a very high degree students report that Skyline provides them with personal and skill development opportunities – building confidence in themselves and skills that will benefit them in the future. Around 95% of survey respondents identified these factors as significant benefits from the Skyline Program.

Secondly, Skyline gives students optimism for the future. Again, around 90% of students agreed that as a result of participating in the program they were more optimistic about their future, more aware of their personal and career potential, and more confident that they could realise that potential. Through the difficulties and challenges these young people and their families experience, Skyline gives them hope for a better future.

Finally, and more for Year 11 students than the Year 12 students who have battled through two COVID-affected VCE years, 49% of students agreed that their VCE results had been/are likely to be better than they had hoped for prior to applying for the Skyline Program. 12% of students disagreed with this outcome.



These results have been remarkably consistent over the past 10 years, despite the evolution of and changes in the Skyline Program, the significant growth in student numbers and the more recent impact of COVID. In most cases the range in responses to these questions in evaluation surveys back to 2011 is less than 5 percentage points. In fact, the question about students’ awareness of their personal and career potential has now elicited almost identical results in five surveys (90% of students ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’ in 2011 and 2018, 89% in 2016, 2020 and 2021).

### Changing lives

Students were asked in the evaluation survey how their life might have been different (if at all) if they had not participated in the Skyline Program. In effect, what did they now have more of and what did they now have less of. The most dominant messages were clear – **less stress, more confidence** and **more opportunities**. The anecdotal feedback from the 2021 survey is summarised in the following table.

Skyline means more/better ...	And less/fewer ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Likely to stay at school</li> <li>▪ Academic results</li> <li>▪ Tutoring opportunities</li> <li>▪ Awareness of education and employment pathways</li> <li>▪ Opportunities to explore potential</li> <li>▪ Direction</li> <li>▪ Perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mental health</li> <li>▪ Self-awareness</li> <li>▪ Confidence</li> <li>▪ Motivation and will to succeed</li> <li>▪ Active and efficient</li> <li>▪ Skyline friends</li> <li>▪ Social skills</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Financial stress on student and parents (and less part-time work)</li> <li>▪ Emotional stress on students and families</li> <li>▪ Academic stress, due to financial and emotional stress</li> </ul>

With a significant easing of the pressure valve, the net effect of participation in Skyline is a greater level of confidence among these students about their own capabilities and their potential – as individuals, for their families and for their communities.

*“There would be pirated or second-hand resources like textbooks and school uniform.”*

*“I could have dropped out of school if it weren’t for the fact that I was chosen for Skyline.”*

*“I believe that I would have dropped out, dedicating my time to working to support my family. Or I would have finish VCE weakly, without support or knowledge of what to do afterwards.”*

*“I think Skyline helped me develop a better outlook on school. If I hadn’t participated in the workshops I would have a much more unhealthy relationship with my studies.”*

*“I wouldn’t have had this great opportunity to help build my education and skills to be a better student.”*

*“I would not see my worth or act on my courage as much, nor feel strongly about careers and uni.”*

*“I would have continued working hard, however I would feel as though I didn’t have much potential because I didn’t have much self-belief. Skyline taught me that I was gifted so I learnt to appreciate my abilities.”*

*“I’m not sure if I’d still be alive without the massive amount of support I’ve had this year.”*

### **Aspirations for the future**

The Skyline Program has the capacity to change the lives of young people and their education and employment aspirations. When reflecting on these aspirations, prior to commencing Skyline and at the end of 2021, the VCE students generally fell into one of four categories, as identified in the 2020 evaluation update. That is, where Skyline had:

- i) not significantly changed or influenced the student’s education and employment aspirations (approx. 27% of students fell into this category)
- ii) provided students with greater clarity and focus in pursuing education and career opportunities within a particular field (~36%)
- iii) increased students’ confidence that they can aim high and will achieve their long-held education and employment goal (~19%)
- iv) highlighted the importance of following a passion, even if this meant completely changing one’s goals for the future (~18%).

*“These goals have not changed, however now, I would not be completely distraught if I did not get into a degree or a place I expected to be in. This is due to Skyline allowing me to understand that there are many pathways, and not everything is a one way path.”*

*“These goals have changed, partially because of the Skyline Program. The program helped me, through content taught, that I enjoy analysing someone’s situation and making connections, listening to others and helping them.”*

*“I’ve always been interested in computers and games, never more so than during the 2020 lockdown where it was everything I did and used for the entire year. I still have a passion for this,*

*but my goal has shifted towards being a cybersecurity specialist as I feel it is something I will greatly enjoy and something that will take me further. Skyline helped and continues to help me see opportunities and motivate me to strive for greater things.”*

*“Civil engineering – because everyone kept glamorizing it (e.g. family, friends). I’ve been able to learn what my strengths and weaknesses are and most importantly explore different things that might interest me. As a result I’ve become interested in health science and am looking towards studying a health/medical degree.”*

*“Skyline helped me realise that I can put my passions like helping others and creativity into other aspects of my life.”*

*“I wasn’t going to go to university, and was actually considering doing VCAL. Didn’t have a career in mind. Now I plan on going to Monash and completing a double degree! Bachelors in Art and Fine Art. I want to work in a gallery or museum.”*

All of these outcomes are valid within their own context, no one is necessarily better than another. For most students in the first group their ambition is as clear as it ever was. The second group reported no major change in their study and career goals but, through advice and reflection that has occurred in Skyline activities or conversations with mentors and peers, they have narrowed down their intentions within a chosen field. The third group also retained their basic study and career goals, but now feel more motivated, better supported and more able to achieve them. The final group are those who have been struck by the importance of following their passion – which in some cases reinforced their pre-existing goals and in others completely transformed them.

The first positive take-out for the Skyline Program is that the mix of development opportunities and connections that it provides to students is able to simultaneously contribute to all of these outcomes – each of which is valuable to the individual student. The second is that the Skyline students also have a greater agency and understanding about the fluid nature of education and employment pathways, and that it is OK to be uncertain and to change ideas if that puts them on a path where they are more confident and comfortable.

## 6. Student ATARS

*Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations*

In 2021, 47 of the 48 Skyline Program graduates who commenced with Skyline in 2020 successfully completed Year 12.<sup>2</sup> Of these, 43 (90%) received a scored ATAR, two students completed Year 12 with an unscored VCE<sup>3</sup> and two students completed a VCAL pathway. One student is continuing a 3 year VCE (and will likely conclude their journey with Skyline).

Of the 43 students who (are known to have) received a scored ATAR, 8 received an ATAR of 90 or above, with an additional 14 having ATARs of 80 or above and 11 more having ATARs at or above 70 (total 65% of 2020 intake or 70% of VCE completers).

The 2021 ATAR scores continue a downward trend in the proportion of Skyline students who complete VCE and obtain an ATAR of 90 or above, or of 80 and above. Prior to 2017, 33% of Skyline students were known to have ATARs of 90 or above, with 57% at 80 or above. For the 2020 intake, who completed VCE in 2021, the corresponding figures were 16% and 43% - in line with the 2019 intake

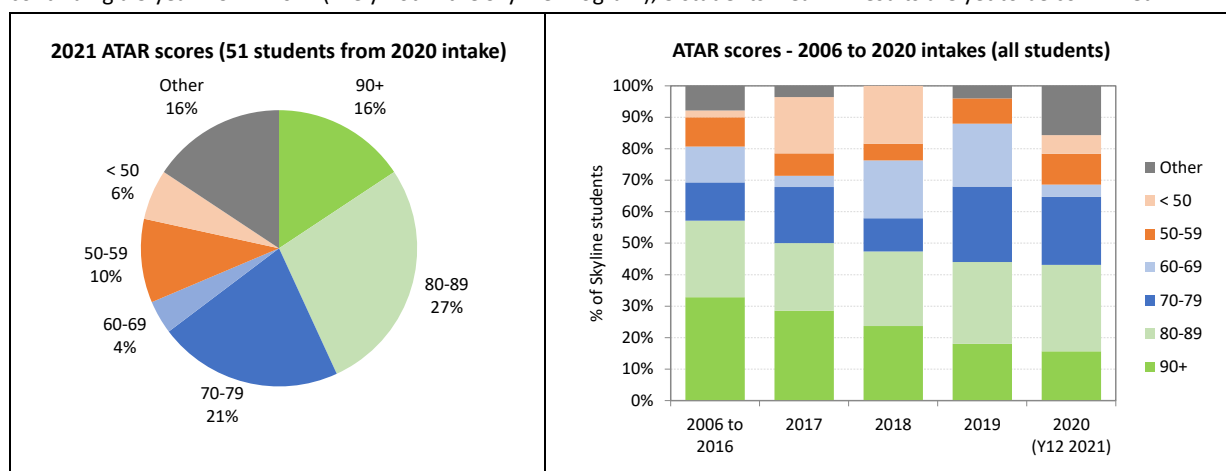
<sup>2</sup> A further 3 students have not yet confirmed their current status.

<sup>3</sup> VCAA reported a significant increase in unscored VCE results in 2020 and 2021 due to the high number of students whose capacity to successfully complete Year 12 was compromised by COVID conditions.

who in 2020 saw 18% with ATARS of 90 or above and 44% at or above 80. At the same time, the proportion of Skyline students who achieved ATARS of 70 or above has been fairly consistent over time – between 65% and 70%, except for the 2018 intake.

Intake year	% of students by ATAR group						Number of ATARs
	90+	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	< 50	
2006 to 2016	33%	24%	12%	11%	9%	2%	129 (of 140)
2017	29%	21%	18%	4%	7%	18%	27 (of 28)
2018	24%	24%	11%	18%	5%	18%	38 (of 38)
2019	18%	26%	24%	20%	8%	0%	48 (of 50)
2020 (Year 12 2021)	16%	27%	21%	4%	10%	6%	43 (of 51)*

\* 2 students elected for an unscored VCE (both have clarity on 2022 pathways); 2 students undertook VCAL pathways; 1 is continuing a 3 year VCE in 2022 (likely not in the Skyline Program); 3 students' Year 12 results are yet to be confirmed.



The downward trend in the proportion of Skyline students achieving very high ATARs is likely to be an outcome of the growth model adopted by Skyline, and in particular the selection of new schools and the increase in the number of Skyline students per VCE cohort within a school.

From the 2006 intake to the 2016 intake (students who completed Year 12 in 2017), 129 Skyline students completed their VCE and provided their ATAR scores to Skyline.<sup>4</sup> As noted above, these students achieved very good VCE results with 57% having ATARs of 80 or above.

From 2017, the Skyline Program began its expansion phase, with the addition of students from secondary schools in the Geelong region. Selection into the program in these schools in 2017 and 2018 was based on some slightly different (non-academic) criteria to other schools. The January 2021 Skyline Evaluation Update showed that putting aside the ATAR scores for students from schools in the Geelong region presented a different picture, with the results for the 2017 and 2018 intakes above the long-term average, and the 2019 cohort slightly below average in terms of scores above 80 and above 90, but on par for scores above 70.

Further expansion occurred in 2019, with the first intake of students from Victoria's regional north-east and extra schools in Geelong and Melbourne's south-east. The results for the 2019 intake (2020 VCE completers) were influenced in part by lower results for students from Skyline's expansion into smaller regional secondary schools (e.g. Alexandra, Yea, Kyneton, Western Port) where Skyline found high levels of disadvantage but fewer students with academic potential at the very high level.

<sup>4</sup> Prior to 2009 the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) was known as Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER).

Keeping in mind that selection into Skyline occurs from the intersection of student cohorts with BOTH high socio-economic disadvantage AND high academic potential, two factors may have contributed to the trend in ATARs. That is:

- i) selecting a larger number of students from within a single school means that the net must be cast wider to capture students, thereby lowering the entry thresholds into the consideration set
- ii) engaging schools with fewer VCE students means that on average Skyline is less likely to find any or many students who meet both selection criteria.

The practical implication of both these logistically and administratively sensible growth-driven factors is that there is likely to have been a relaxation of either one or both of the disadvantage and academic criteria. If Skyline has had larger intakes with a slightly lower academic potential threshold, a reduction in academic outcomes should be expected.

While it is probable that the COVID pandemic has also had an impact on academic outcomes, especially for students disadvantaged by learning from home models, the downward trend in Skyline ATARs was already emerging prior to 2020. However, COVID shutdowns and learning from home have influenced the proportion of VCE students who did not finish Year 12 with an ATAR, instead having opted for an unscored VCE or shifted to a VCAL pathway.

## 7. Post-school education and employment pathways

*Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations*

When asked what they planned to do in 2022, the 2021 Year 12 students identified a mix of different university, vocational, employment and life options. Where known, first preference options for university courses are shown below. Actual course acceptances have not yet been received.

Education Institution	Proposed Course	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monash Uni x 12</li> <li>▪ Deakin Uni x 7</li> <li>▪ Melbourne Uni x 5</li> <li>▪ ACU x 4</li> <li>▪ RMIT x 4</li> <li>▪ La Trobe Uni x 2</li> <li>▪ Victoria Uni x 2</li> <li>▪ AIT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Biomedicine x 5</li> <li>▪ Commerce x 3</li> <li>▪ Paramedicine x 2</li> <li>▪ IT x 2</li> <li>▪ Media x 2</li> <li>▪ Psychology</li> <li>▪ Psychology / Criminology</li> <li>▪ Psychology / Nursing</li> <li>▪ Arts</li> <li>▪ Education / Arts</li> <li>▪ Language Translation</li> <li>▪ Business</li> <li>▪ Music</li> <li>▪ Youth Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Engineering</li> <li>▪ Civil Engineering</li> <li>▪ Science</li> <li>▪ Physics</li> <li>▪ Computer Science</li> <li>▪ Health Sciences</li> <li>▪ Nursing</li> <li>▪ Physiotherapy</li> <li>▪ Occupational Therapy</li> <li>▪ Radiology / Pathology</li> <li>▪ Vision Science / Optometry</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gap year x 3</li> </ul>

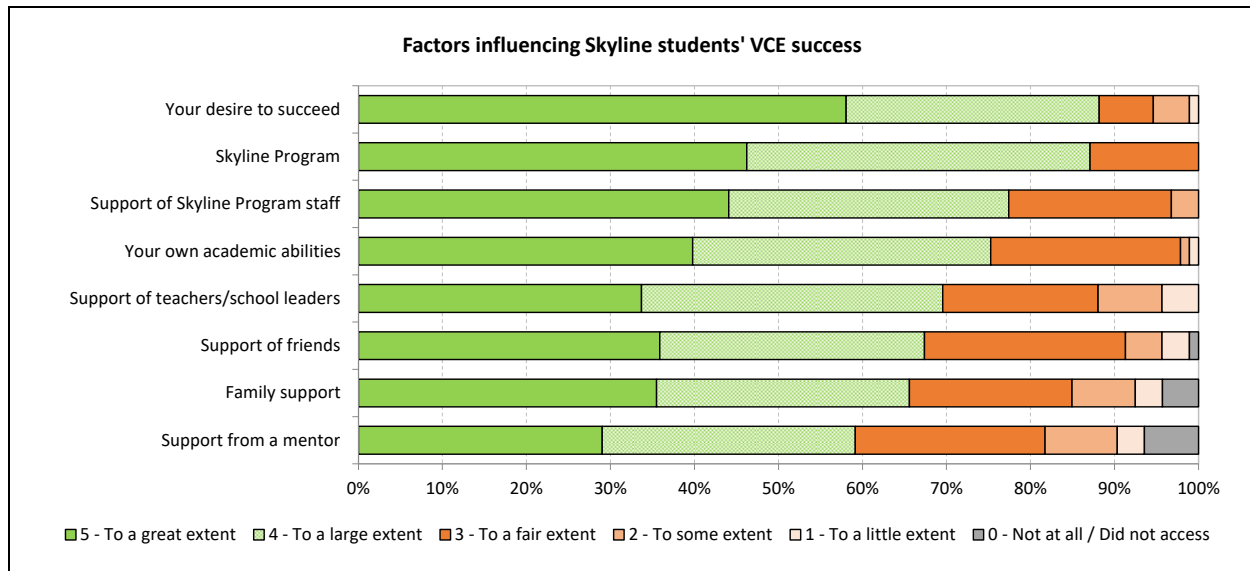
## 8. Factors influencing program success

*Updating analysis and commentary from previous evaluations*

### Factors influencing VCE success

When asked about the extent to which a number of factors influenced their VCE success, 2021 students continued to rate the Skyline Program very highly.

Two factors were considered by at least 85% of students as having had a 'great' or 'large' impact on their VCE success. Understandably, 88% of survey respondents thought that their desire to succeed was critical to their VCE success (vs 89% in 2020 and 92% in 2018). The Skyline Program was the second prominent factor, with 87% rating its impact as 'great' or 'large'. The support of Skyline staff (77%) and a student's academic abilities were also rated relatively highly.



The 2021 results also highlighted two distinct outcomes.

Firstly, the 2020 results were generally consistent with those from previous Skyline cohorts except that the support of friends (and to some degree teachers/school leaders) in VCE success was seen as more important than it had been in the past. It was then thought that the significant interruptions to the 2020 academic year, especially for Year 12 students, shifted the emphasis for some from an intense focus on academic success to simply getting through the year intact. The 2021 results returned to levels very similar to those reported in 2018 and earlier years. This may indicate that the disruption COVID caused in 2020 had by 2021 been factored into students' expectations of their VCE experience. That is, 2021 saw a return to a new normal, albeit a COVID-normal.

The second interesting result from this question in 2021 was the distinction between the feedback from Year 11 and Year 12 students. Notably, while the Year 11 students put relatively greater store in the support of friends, teachers and Skyline program staff, the Year 12 students had relatively higher ratings on the Skyline Program (as a whole) and the support of mentors. These differences may be explained by the perspective of being in the Skyline Program for two years, where Year 12 students can better see the value of the entire Skyline package of support and encouragement, while also appreciating the role of mentor in their preparing for transition beyond school.

### The impact of program-related factors

Evaluations of the Skyline Program have repeatedly asked Year 11 and 12 students about the relative importance of various program-related factors to their ability to successfully undertake and complete VCE and enter further study or the workforce. Historically, the answers have combined the three key components of the Skyline Program – financial support, transformative learning experiences and an educational and personal support framework.

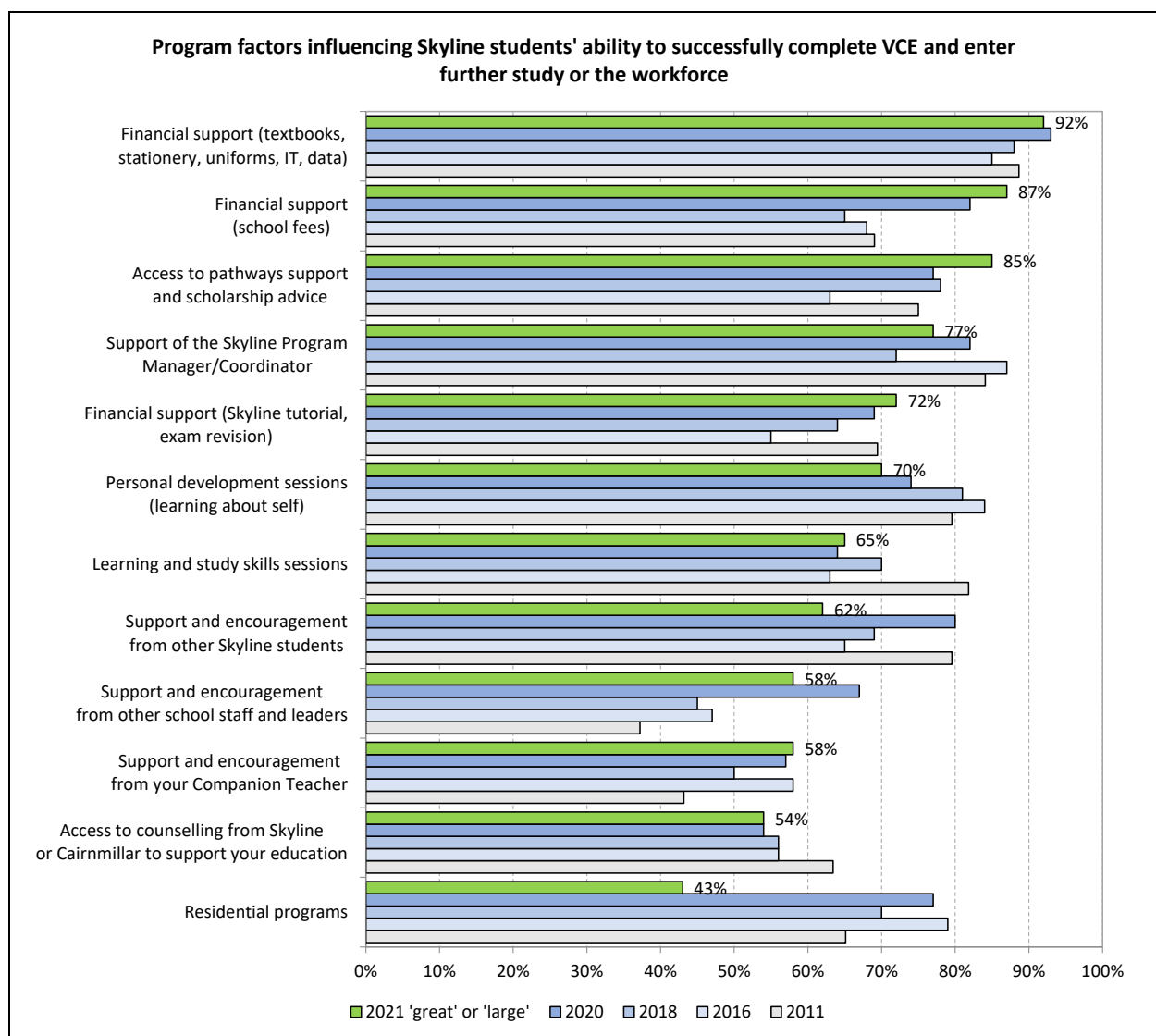
In broad terms the 2021 student responses reinforce these findings, with a few subtle changes. Among the factors presented Year 11 and 12 students identified the three most influential program-related factors to their success as being:

- financial support for textbooks, stationery, uniforms, IT and data (92%)
- financial support for school fees (87%)
- access to pathways support and scholarship advice (85%).

At least 85% of survey respondents indicated that these factors had influenced their educational capacity and outcomes to a 'great' or 'large' extent.

Three other factors had between 70% and 77% of respondents rating the impact on students' success at school as being 'great' or 'large'. These included the support and encouragement of the Skyline Program Manager (77%), financial support through Skyline tutorials and exam revision (72%) and personal development sessions (70%).

The following chart presents the aggregate 2021 student responses alongside those from previous Skyline cohorts (i.e. evaluation surveys conducted at the end of 2011, 2016, 2018 and 2020). Several key features stand out.





1. Most factors have fairly **consistent responses over time**, in terms of the % of students that rate their impact as 'great' or 'large' and the ranking relative to the other factors. There is some year to year variation and some time-based trends.
2. **Direct financial support** for textbooks, stationery, uniforms, IT, data, etc. is always identified as one of the or the most important success factor. In this area Skyline's contribution is real, immediate and highly beneficial to the student and their family. This was again the case in 2021, with the three financial factors all having more than 70% 'big impact' ratings.
3. The perceived value of the **personal development sessions** (learning about self) in 2021 was still positive (70% 'great' or 'large'), but at its lowest level on record. In 2011 the personal development and learning/study skills sessions were among the highest rating factors. They now sit mid-range. The 2020 evaluation noted that the COVID-enforced shift from a face-to-face to an online model removed many of the incidental social benefits and connections that these sessions provided to previous Skyline cohorts.
4. Two factors took a 'hit' in 2021. The first was **support and encouragement from other Skyline students**, which dropped from an 80% score in 2020 to 62% in 2021. The 2021 score is still a reasonable outcome, and is more consistent with the 2016 and 2018 results, but it does point to a loss of connection in 2021. This may be the result of the repeated and intermittent disruptions to the 2021 academic year that prevented VCE students from establishing continuity in their engagement with study, school and peer support.
5. The most significant shift in 2021 was the relatively low score given to Skyline's **residential programs**. Only 43% of students rated the impact as 'great' or 'large', compared with 70-80% in the past 5 years. Once again, COVID had a major impact on the Skyline schedule. It is notable that for this factor there was a stark difference between the responses of the Year 12 and Year 11 cohorts - with more than half of the Year 12s (55%) giving this a high score while only one in three Year 11s (34%) gave it the same score.
6. In most years the responses from the Year 12 and Year 11 students are fairly similar, although the Year 12s start to give greater emphasis to the cumulative effect of the pathways and personal development factors as they approach the transition beyond school. Apart from the different scores on residential programs, the 2021 surveys found that the Year 12 students had higher scores for the value of the **personal development sessions** (79% vs 63%) while the Year 11 students placed relatively greater value on the **counselling support** from Skyline and Cairnmillar (61% vs 45%).

## 9. Alumni

*Feedback on the transition from school to further education and employment*

A short survey of Skyline alumni in September 2021 asked about the transition from school to education and employment pathways. 30 Alumni responded to the survey.

### Pathways

Eleven of these alumni completed their VCE between 2003 and 2017 and all have now transitioned to employment in a field of their own choice. They mentioned a range of experiences during and after the transition, including:

- smooth, bumpy and turbulent transitions
- the benefits of taking a year off (before starting university, during the course or on completion)
- the excitement and difficulty of adjusting from a school to a university culture (greater independence, greater self-reliance, greater resilience)
- the challenge of striving to excel in a more competitive academic environment
- the further adjustment to a work culture (balancing work, family and self)
- the value of networking skills learned during Skyline events.

Interestingly, for two of these alumni, their current employment situation is not one they had anticipated or planned – an important point for all VCE students to note.

*“Uni was a complete waste of time. Everything I’ve learnt for my employment I’ve learnt on the job. The only thing I took from Uni was personal growth and development, nothing from an educational sense.”*

*“I was working part time in a contact centre whilst studying. Once I finished tertiary education I was retained by the employer. I was not keen to pursue further studies or a role related to my tertiary degree. I now work (in a professional role for a major Australian company), and all the skills required for my job have come through on the job learning, online learning or company funded programs where needed. The breadth units from my tertiary degree have been invaluable for critical thinking required in my role.”*

The remaining alumni who participated in the 2021 survey completed their VCE in 2018, 2019 or 2020. As at September/October 2021 none of these had completed a tertiary course, although some were on the verge of doing so at the end of the 2021 academic year. For this cohort any discussion around transition is mainly focused on the school to university or vocational education, without yet extending to full or significant employment. This cohort also has the distinction of having COVID directly impact all or up to two-thirds of their post-school learning journey. Their feedback is therefore similar to but also more focused on immediate transition issues than the pre-2018 cohort. Comments noted:

- (as above) the excitement and difficulty of adjusting from a school to a university culture (more interesting and fulfilling, greater independence, greater control and self-reliance, greater resilience)
- getting through enrolment processes, getting used to different workloads and no-one checking to see if your assignments were submitted
- the challenge of COVID and its impact on pre-conceived ideas of tertiary study and life (e.g. accentuating the potentially solitary and less interactive model of tertiary education).

The value of Skyline’s pathways advice and personal development sessions was mentioned.

*“At first I found it a very big change, but I found that Skyline helped surround me in a positive environment which helped me feel more prepared for university.”*

*“I’m grateful for Skyline’s career counselling. It helped me prepare for tertiary education.”*

*“Transitioning at the beginning was difficult as everything was so new. However, I received a lot of support from my old high school and Skyline who have provided me with emotional and practical support to help me excel at university. Now that I’ve almost completed my undergraduate course I believe that the support I received really made me feel a lot more confident and motivated to reach my full potential.”*

## Connections

The survey also asked alumni whether, since completing their VCE, they had kept in touch with people they first met during their time as Skyline students. The responses demonstrate the potential for Skyline to generate strong relationships with only 4 of the 30 respondents saying that they had no contact with people from their Skyline days. 80% were still in touch with other Skyline students, 47% were in touch with Skyline staff (or people who were at the time Skyline staff) and 27% were still in

touch with a Companion Teacher. The contact profile was fairly similar for both the pre-2018 and the 2018+ VCE completer cohorts.

## 10. Net Promoter Score

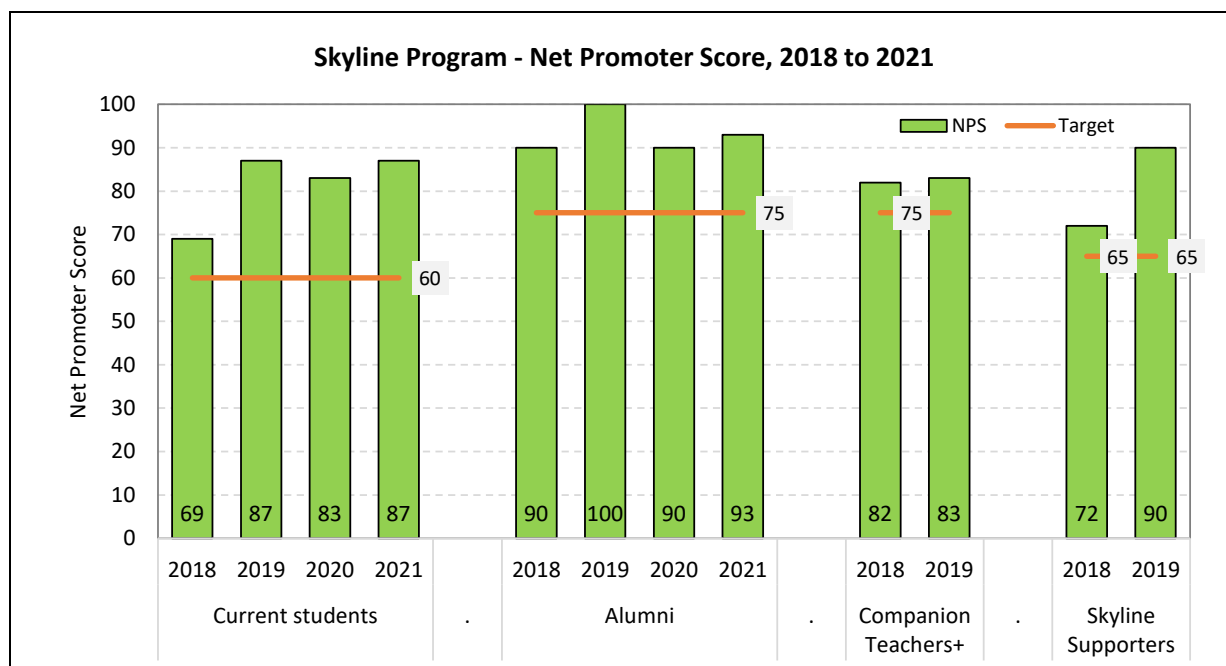
*Updating NPS results from previous evaluations*

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a metric to measure customer loyalty. The NPS is based on a single question – “On a scale of 0-10, how likely is it that you would recommend [name] to your friends, family or business associates?” Respondents that give a 6 or below are called Detractors, those with a score of 7 or 8 are Passives, and respondents with a score of 9 or 10 are Promoters.” To calculate the NPS, subtract the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters. An NPS that is positive (i.e. higher than zero) is felt to be good, and an NPS of +50 is excellent.

The NPS was first calculated for Skyline in 2018. Skyline has now set targets for the program including an NPS for different stakeholder groups.

The October 2021 survey of Year 11 and 12 Skyline students asked respondents if they would recommend Skyline to a student who was eligible to apply. The Alumni database records similar responses to this question. The results (shown below) continue to exceed the Board targets and demonstrate the high regard students have for the Skyline Program.

2021 student survey/alumni database	Responses	Promoter 9-10	Passive 7-8	Detractor 0-6	NPS
Current students	93	90%	7%	3%	+ 87
Year 11 students	51	94%	4%	2%	+ 92
Year 12 students	42	86%	9%	5%	+ 81
Alumni	81	93%	7%	0%	+ 93



Note: NPS for school-based personnel includes feedback from Companion Teachers and Principals.

## 11. Social Return on Investment (SROI)

*Brief summary of research findings*

Skyline's 2019 Social Return on Investment (SROI) research conducted by Think Impact examined the value created in a typical two-year program. The research found that for every dollar invested in the Skyline Program approximately \$12.19 of social and economic value was created.

Additional research in 2020 – *Growing value in uncertain times: A Social Return on Investment Evaluation of Skyline Education Foundation activities*, Think Impact, 2020<sup>5</sup> – found that in the context of COVID-19 the value of Skyline's impact increased to \$13.20. The key findings from the 2020 SROI analysis were that:

- Skyline helped to maintain student outcomes and grew value in 2020, despite the negative influences of the COVID-19 lockdown and remote learning
- students experienced the most value (83%), with 'stronger self-identity' being the most highly valued outcome
- alumni experienced 7%, with 'sense of self and purpose' the most highly valued outcome
- parents and siblings of students each experienced 4% of the total value
- the federal government experienced 2% of the value.

Notably, the research found that if Skyline had chosen to cease all face-to-face program and support activities and not pivot to online and remote delivery, the value created through the program would have reduced to \$1.70 per dollar invested. The modelling assumed that the only value associated with this stripped down model would have been created through financial assistance in the form of external scholarships and reduced household stress. While students and families put great store in this immediate financial assistance, by pivoting to an online and remote model Skyline was able to retain and grow the longer-term value of the program for students through provision of resources and educational and personal support at a time when negative external influences may have prevented this value creation.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://skylinefoundation.org.au/social-return-on-investment/>