



ACTION4YOUTH CASE-STUDY:

NCI - WHY A WHOLE OF SCHOOL APPROACH IS IMPORTANT FOR CAREER EDUCATION - BECOME EDUCATION



Photo Troy Snook

In 2023 [Action4Agriculture](#) launched a new program to assist disadvantaged youth into agricultural careers. Funded by the [National Careers Institute](#) the program, called [Action4Youth](#), provides dedicated agricultural careers education by supporting teachers to create relatable content to ensure students see the link between their classes and the outside world, and therefore desire to attend school and learn.

Action4Youth incorporates three phases: EXPLORE-CONNECT-SUPPORT and in the EXPLORE phase students and teachers have access to the [BECOME](#) program including the web app and curriculum-aligned teaching resources, which allows students to visualise, design and examine pathways to possible careers.

Liv Pennie is the CEO and co-founder of BECOME and she firmly believes in the importance of quality career education for young people.

The gap between evidence and practice in what works for young people is more chasm than gap. The traditional experience of 'careers' in schools hasn't been great; as a field it's suffered from a lack of imagination and innovation and as a result it's often not a strategic priority in schools that have many competing priorities and pressures,"

Liv says.

In order to address this problem Liv and her team created the BECOME program with a vision that doing careers education well is a vessel for good wellbeing outcomes.

What's often not understood is that this work, done properly, is powerful for shifting the things that are really important in schools - engagement and wellbeing, as well as preparing students with the skills to explore, design and navigate their future lives and careers in a rapidly changing world. By having the chance to explore broadly and think deeply about your future, coming up with possibilities that excite you and learning how to navigate towards that, students build awareness, aspiration and agency over their lives."



Liv Pennie delivering Become Education PL at Bomaderry High School

To achieve optimum effectiveness careers education should begin early, ideally from upper primary years, and continue across the whole of school in secondary years. Early exposure to possible careers allows young people to pivot and tweak their ideas and aspirations, to explore broadly and to think deeply. It gives young people the grace of time rather than the pressure of decisions that may occur in the final years of school. "It is much better to practice and test ideas in a low stakes environment than once they've left school and invested time and money in an untested pathway only to discover it's not quite right and feel like a failure," Liv says.

The [Become program](#) is therefore purpose built for Years 5 to 12 and, fusing technology with research, it engages students and opens their minds to the broader possibilities of career areas rather than narrowing them down to a decision. It encourages and equips not only careers advisors but all teachers and parents to play a valuable role in student futures.



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As Action4Youth focusses on youth who may not have the opportunities and advantages of others Liv's vision for BECOME aligns perfectly. "I want all young people to have the chance to define success for themselves and the opportunity to design their future rather than have it defined for them by who they are and where they are. Building awareness, aspiration and agency in young people can be a great leveller, addressing major inequality challenges."

Another opportunity for young people to imagine their potential careers is to introduce them to young people, not dissimilar to themselves, working in different fields. In addressing the gaps between awareness and opportunity in the field of agriculture, initiatives like [Young Farming Champions \(YFC\)](#) can play this role. YFC is a network of early-career professionals working in agriculture that can provide inspiration and mentorship to both primary and secondary students. Liv believes role models such as YFC [Danielle Fordham](#) are powerful influencers helping young people to broaden their ideas of what's possible for them.

"Danielle grew up in western Sydney with no family history in agriculture so a career in the field wasn't in her natural line of sight for people from her area or background. We know from our data that in a single school, on average, 48% of students aspire to the most common five careers for that school - 'people like us have jobs like this'. We want to develop students' awareness, aspiration and agency so they can have a future designed by them not defined for them. Danielle is a great example of someone who has changed lanes,"

Liv says.

In 2023 Action4Youth and BECOME have created 19 curriculum-aligned lesson plans to support teachers and career practitioners to explore jobs in agriculture, identified 130 unique jobs in the dairy, wool and fishing industries and connected with 400 students in 22 schools. Taking a whole of school approach we're helping disadvantaged young people to actively explore the whole world of work and in particular challenge the preconceptions they may have had about how varied and rewarding careers in agriculture could be.



Danielle Fordham - centre from row - with students and teachers at Lake Illawarra High School