New transition advisers will work to improve links to further education, training and employment for secondary students in schools throughout the state.

The specially trained teachers will work with careers advisers as part of a school-based career and transition team.

They will have the specific task of identifying target groups of students and will link them to available opportunities or implement school-based programs that address their needs.

Program manager Julie Bell, leader of the education department’s vocational learning team, said transition advisers would work alongside careers advisers to promote the “active engagement and retention of targeted students”.

She told 25 teachers who attended a four-day training session in Sydney last term that their role was to support the transition of adolescent students to post-school options, “whether that’s work, further education or training, or some activity beyond the school”.

Mrs Bell said the initiative – funded through the School to Work program – and supported by Priority Action Schools and Schools in Partnership programs was closely linked to the DET middle years and 15-19 year olds strategies.

Transition advisers would be charged with the task of developing a rapport with groups of students identified as having particular needs, including those who want further advice and support about career pathways, disengaged teenagers, or ethnic groups “who have issues about going into the workplace or accessing community resources outside school”, Mrs Bell said.

This could involve organising workplace community-based learning opportunities for students, with the transition adviser working as an advocate to establish networks with other school staff and community groups. But Mrs Bell stressed the role supported rather than replaced the work done by careers advisers.

“This initiative is designed to add value to the work that the careers adviser is doing,” she said.

A DET internal evaluation of a pilot program in 17 schools (known as the pathways mentor program) found that principals and careers advisers commented positively on the “complementary nature” of pathways mentors whose role “supports and strengthens the work of existing careers and transition support teams”. The evaluation is on the vocational education in schools website https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/directorates/vet_schools/index.html

The report’s author, Dave Turner, an Adelaide business education consultant, said the experience of the pilot program clearly showed that the work of the pathways mentor complemented the role of careers adviser.

Denise Latta, careers adviser at Dubbo College senior campus, who was involved in the pilot program, said working with a pathways mentor provided “additional support”.

“It allows time for more specialised projects to occur with targeted groups of students,” she said.

Robyn Ralph, a former pathways mentor who will become transition adviser at Dubbo College, said initiatives to support the college’s Aboriginal students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, were successful.

An Aboriginal youth leadership program resulted in four Year 9 girls at the college’s Delroy campus working with DET staff and the local council to develop a personal presentation TAFE course. A boys group at the college’s Dubbo South campus established a lunchtime basketball competition, which involved putting a proposal to council.

“We’ve had a lot of indigenous students take on opportunities ... because of this program,” Mrs Ralph said.

The success of the college’s careers team could be attributed to effective communication.

“We meet on a regular basis, we’re always planning,” Ms Latta said.