



Career education opportunities are a must



**BERNADETTE
GIGLIOTTI**

It goes without question that young Australians have displayed resilience and flexibility over the past two years of this pandemic – they've taken every challenge in their stride.

I wish I could say the same for education policy across the country that should be preparing them for a future where flexibility will drive opportunity.

Australia's schooling system does not have the capacity to deliver the skills training that enables young Australians to participate in the workforce in a sustainable and long-term fashion.

This failure is having disastrous effects on both our young Australians and the national economy, contributing to national skills shortages which is stifling businesses and limiting opportunities for young people. Now to be clear, I am not blaming our educators. This is not the fault of schools or our hardworking teachers that already have enough on their plate. However, it highlights a clear gap in the system and demonstrates why more resources are needed now, which will pay big dividends in the future.

Without a trained and committed focus on each individual student's career development, schools cannot convert skills training into real-world outcomes.

But what does this mean? Essentially, career education is the key to ensuring young Australians are prepared for a future of work in an uncertain and unpredictable economy.

While 'skills' are vital, too often the skills debate ignores the fundamental element of career education – the key ingredient which instils in

young people the ability to make informed choices about their career, not just when they leave the school gates, but as their career progresses through their working life.

Skills training must be linked to the world of work that students will experience today, and in 5-10 years' time, enabling them to make informed choices along the way.

Career education does this by preparing students for ongoing learning and teaching critical decision mak-

ing needed for their future development. This not only sets them up for success, it sets Australia up for success.

Researcher Dedrie Hughes has highlighted that for every one percentage point increase in efficiencies through having more students engaging in learning related to their aspirations and goals would translate to £494 million per annum being better invested.

Every one per cent decrease in unemployment benefits can save up to £44 million, and every percentage point increase in productivity through improved matching labour supply and demand can generate £10.6 billion each year in increased production [at 2004 rates].

Access Economics has also recognised the benefits of career development for the Australian economy through greater employment participation rates to maintain our standard of living.

Career education supports young people to engage in their education and transition well from school, increasing their opportunity to achieve higher incomes and contribute to productivity as the population ages.

So, as we look to rebuild our economy from the ravages of the pandemic, we need to take care of the cohort who has been upended, young Australians, and ensure they can support the businesses that are key to our recovery as a nation.

By investing in more career edu-

cation in schools, we will have a better chance at achieving this.

Bernadette Gigliotti is the CEO of The Australian Centre for Career Education