

The Australian Centre for Career Education

Response to the

Employability Skills Training – Consultation Paper

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## ***Introduction***

The Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE) welcomes the opportunity to provide our written feedback to the federal Department of Employment on their consultation paper *Employability Skills Training*. The ACCE is a not for profit education charity with over 40 years of experience in career education programs and the training of career practitioners in Victoria and more recently nationally. The ACCE is the trading name of the Career Education Association of Victoria, the CEAV Institute (RTO 22523) and the CEAV Careers Counselling Australia (PBI).

The ACCE has a membership base of 700 members nationally from a wide range of educational settings including but not limited to primary and secondary schools, TAFE, higher education, Industry associations, governments, Corrections Victoria Training providers and private RTO's. More recently the ACCE has extended its work to interstate and international career practitioners working with young people in educational systems.

The CEAV Institute is the training division of the ACCE and is a private RTO providing accredited and pre accredited courses and professional learning in career development. The CEAV Institute specialises in customising training to meet the needs of employers to upskill their workforce in career development practice.

CEAV Careers Counselling Australia is a Public Benevolent Institution and provides professional careers counselling to the most disadvantaged in the community using our pro bono model of delivery.

The ACCE is a founding member of the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) and provides advice to state government on the development of suitable resources for use in career education curriculum and career counselling. The ACCE developed the Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework, the Ready, Set, GO! Work Readiness Program for rural and remote young people and is a leading association in the delivery of career education programs in schools, the local community, and industry. The ACCE is a member of the Council for Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria (CPTAV) and provides resources and training through the Strategic Partnerships Program SPP to the Office of Schools Education.

In this paper, the ACCE provides our response to the ***Questions to Stakeholders***. Assisting a young person in making a successful transition from school to work or further study is an enormously satisfying outcome for a career professional. As this task becomes more challenging many governments are keen to improve the quality of career services to maximise successful transitions to learning and work.

The recent *ELGPN Guidelines for Policies and Systems Development for Lifelong Guidance*<sup>1</sup> builds on the *OECD career guidance policy review*<sup>2</sup>, as well as research by the World Bank<sup>3</sup>, European Union and the European Centre for Vocational Training.

The ultimate goal of these current guidelines is to “help improve the quality and efficacy of the career learning experience for all EU citizens” (ELGPN, Pg.7). It is an attempt to improve consistency across very different political systems.

The European Council (pg. 5) defines lifelong guidance as:

*“A continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions, and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used.”*

Since 2000<sup>4</sup> Europe has focused its attention on making lifelong learning a reality in Europe and as a result there is strong policy impetus to strengthen career guidance.

We have used our research in international best practice models of delivery to improve the transition of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 to form our response in this paper.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss our responses further and look forward to the development of Training Provider panels to action this very important initiative for young jobseekers in Australia.

### **Questions for stakeholders**

- 1. Job seekers can participate in employability skills training from their first day in jobactive. What groups of job seeker would benefit most from completing the training before the five month mark? For example, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or young people with a disability.**

Young people who have not made a successful transition from compulsory or post compulsory schooling – the group identified as NEET (Not engaged in education, employment or training) would benefit from engaging with work readiness programs. One of the core issues to disengagement from formal study or training is the lack of self-awareness preparation that occurs between the ages of 8 and 14. This early stage of career development is fundamental to the development of career decision making behaviours. Young people who have missed out on self-development activities while at school, or because of socio economic circumstances, youth offenders or youth with cultural barriers are best placed to be referred into work readiness programs. This group includes young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or young people with a disability and young

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-6-guidelines-for-policies-and-systems-development-for-lifelong-guidance>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/careerguidancepolicyreviewhomepage.htm>

<sup>3</sup>

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20640082~menuPK:540092~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html>

<sup>4</sup> See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2001:0678:FIN:EN:PDF>

people from a range of CALD backgrounds. **Identifying the barriers to career decision making is a critical first step to training in employability skills.**

2. **What arrangements should be put in place to ensure highly disadvantaged job seekers, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers are appropriately represented and referred for training?**

The success or otherwise of this program will greatly depend on the capacity of the Jobactive Provider to build partnerships with the Indigenous Communities they are seeking to support. **All Job active providers should be qualified in career development practices. At a minimum they should all hold a Certificate IV in Career Development Practice** with the appropriate elective units in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers and be registered with the Careers Industry Council of Australia(CICA). At least 10% of all Jobactive Providers should hold CICA Professional level registration. In this way the underpinning knowledge required to identify the employability needs of this targeted cohort is well in place before the panels are selected.

3. **Participation in employability skills training will become compulsory once a job seeker has been in job active for five months subject to extenuating circumstances. How will job seekers, job active providers and training providers respond to the compulsory nature of the training?**

Work readiness programs need to be designed to reflect modern workplace practices. Career Incubators that reflect agile workplaces and provide simulated global real world projects are the best approach in engaging youth. Task development should include access to international and national projects and involve a range of stakeholders. The programs need to be engaging and creative and include the industry voice in the design and development of curricula. **As close to real world experiences as possible.**

**Are there any other extenuating circumstances not covered in the above examples?** Life is not linear and therefore there will be unexpected circumstances that will need to be considered to ensure full engagement in the program. It is imperative that this initiative is not seen as punitive by the young person **but as capacity building**. Training providers should conduct rolling entry campaigns to reflect the agile nature of workforces. **Training providers should offer flexible entry every three weeks to allow for ongoing enrolments.**

4. **What is the best way for job seekers who cannot attend for 25 hours each training week to participate in the training?** Training providers need to develop a range of scenarios to allow for multiple delivery modes. **All jobseekers should be on an individual career learning plan that meets their capability and builds their capacity to become good career self-managers.** This should be determined at the initial careers guidance interview before enrolment in an employability program takes place.

**How practical is it to have two five-week blocks for these job seekers?** Every Training provider should provide professional careers guidance **BEFORE** the jobseeker commences a work readiness program to ascertain the individuals' learning career goals. This should then form the basis a comprehensive Career Learning Plan that builds in a timetable for delivery. In this way multiple models of delivery should be available to the Jobactive provider and the jobseeker.

5. **What limits should be placed on job seekers' access to employability skills training?**

None – limits would not be required if careers guidance was made available from the outset of this program. International research suggests professional careers guidance is the catalyst for engagement in the workforce. The European situation is different to Australia. A citizen's right to vocational guidance is enshrined in article nine of the European Social Charter<sup>5</sup>.

It states:

*“Everyone has the right to appropriate facilities for vocational guidance with a view to helping him/her choose an occupation suited to his/her personal aptitude and interests.”* In a changing labour market, a similar statement by the Australian Government would be useful to ensure that a comprehensive range of services are supported by appropriate funding.

6. **Should there be an upper limit on the number of training providers per Employment Region?** The emphasis here should be on quality not quantity.

**If so, what should that limit be?** There should be large, medium and small providers available in each employment region to ensure that all jobseekers can be provided for. They should all be registered with the Careers Industry Council of Australia for quality assurance measures.

7. **What practical limitations might there be on providing training to all job seekers in an Employment Region within 90 minutes travel time?**

Transport issues will have the biggest impact on the capacity of some jobseekers to meet their obligations to the training. **It should be no more than 60 minutes from their home base as this is more realistic in the current workforce daily commute.** Youth who cannot drive are reliant on public transport a 90 minute commute would be punitive for many. If the distance is too far to travel and connecting services are not available than there is less likelihood of continued attendance and completion. Training providers should also be prepared to offer training in spaces such as public libraries that can be easily accessible to job seekers.

8. **How can training providers be encouraged to form partnerships or consortia to deliver both blocks of training which also meets the needs of a diverse range of young people?**

**Colocation of training providers is the best approach here.** Training providers must be able to demonstrate partnerships prior to panels being established. This will allow for multiple venues, resources and qualified careers guidance officers to be offered for training purposes.

9. **How could the Department best ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other diversity groups have access to training providers with appropriate cultural competence?**

**Training Providers must be able to demonstrate cultural competence through the delivery of programs that are designed and developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders or are developed through consultation with the diverse target groups.** Training providers should employ qualified careers guidance officers from culturally diverse backgrounds. Currently there are few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander qualified careers guidance counsellors across Australia. This needs urgently addressing.

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<sup>5</sup>

<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168048b0>  
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### Should the employability skills training include accredited units and be delivered by RTOs?

Yes, as there is a degree of quality assurance with the delivery of programs. RTO's must adhere to compliance Standards and in this regard can provide both the jobseeker and the government with some measure of consistency in the delivery of content and assessment. It allows for other providers to draw attention to poor practice and to alert ASQA to the situation. By offering accredited units, industry and employers will have some way of monitoring the quality of delivery between providers. Monitoring is important in ensuring that a programme remains on track and continues to deliver against its objectives. It is an activity that needs to penetrate every aspect of a service as part of the management of that service, and is strongly related to the quality approach adopted by the organisation.

### What are the advantages and disadvantages to the job seeker, the training industry, jobactive providers and employers?

Accredited training provides all stakeholders with evidence of competency that can be measured to industry standards. Units can be customised in Block 1& 2 for development of competency related to specific industries. Accredited training also provides a measure for the delivery of work placements, OHS and industry Immersion and provides employers with security for insurance purposes if the placements are organised by the RTO.

#### 11. If so, how might accredited units be delivered within the two blocks of training?

Learning Plans need to be developed that accurately represented the jobseekers career readiness stages and career management skills. Programs can be developed by the RTO to identify beginning, intermediate and advanced employability knowledge and the appropriate units packaged from multiple training packages to reflect the job seekers stage of career readiness. **RTOs need to have qualified career practitioners who can: conduct pre training career guidance interviews and vocational assessments.**

#### 12. How should training providers adapt the training to address the cultural and social diversity of young job seekers including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth?

Training Providers must be able to demonstrate cultural and social diversity through the delivery of programs that are designed and developed with the diverse needs of these target groups in mind. Training providers should employ qualified careers guidance officers from culturally diverse backgrounds and with sound disability knowledge and skills.

#### 13. What are the advantages and disadvantages of specialist youth or community organisations being involved in delivery of the training?

Specialist youth or community organisations may not have the expertise in training and career development to effectively deliver employability skills training. While they may have the social work counselling capability, they may perpetuate existing issues with barriers to engagement and development of competency. **The best approach is to ensure that all Training Providers have career development qualifications to Professional level.**

#### 14. Employability skills can be defined and categorised in different ways, and stakeholders will have differing views on the relative importance of particular employability skills. What skills should be included in an employability skills training course specifically designed for young job seekers?

The Core Skills for Work Framework (CSFW2013) is reflective of the modern workforces with its shifting labour market, changing industry requirements and advances in technology. This

changeability requires the job seeker to self-manage their career. The inclusion of 'Manage career and work life' in the CSFW, acknowledges the fluidity of the labour market and the fact that career decision making skills are needed on many occasions in one's life. The ability to successfully transition from education and training to the workforce and be self-reliant in making career decisions leads to sustainable employment. Training providers that engage qualified career practitioners to assist learners to develop career management skills, achieve better learning outcomes, will lead to sustainable employment and in turn, a healthier economy. (ref ELGPN research).

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#### **Key messages from the ELGPN Guidelines**

- Career development matters for policy makers concerned about education outcomes, equity for citizens and labour market participation
- Career Management skills are an essential part of the educational experience
- Access to career services must be addressed within a curriculum and through ICT and other resources
- The data collected through career development services must be used to assess effectiveness
- Career Education requires policy makers, education leaders, career professionals and other stakeholders to collaborate in order to ensure better program design, equitable access and smooth transitions to further work and learning.
- Accessing career information is a career management skill and young people need to be able to understand, source, evaluate and apply career information
- Career development practitioners need to be qualified so they can give the public confidence in the services provided

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<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.elgpn.eu/publications/elgpn-tools-no-6-guidelines-for-policies-and-systems-development-for-lifelong-guidance>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/careerguidancepolicyreviewhomepage.htm>

<sup>8</sup>

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTEDUCATION/0,,contentMDK:20640082~menuPK:540092~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:282386,00.html>

- Broad access to career development services requires substantial investment of public funding
- ICT can be used to enhance existing services
- The majority of young people need some form of career education to address engagement, attainment and to make a smooth transition to learning and work at a time when careers and working environments are rapidly evolving.

**15. What elements of employability skills training would give an employer the confidence to provide a young job seeker with a job or a work experience opportunity?**

**Problem solving skills:** *the ability to recognise they ( the jobseeker) don't have all the answers but they know how and where to find the answer*

**Teamwork skills:** *inclusive and values that ensure the jobseeker can identify and embody the organisations work values.*

**Communication skills:** *linked to customer service*

**Personal presentation:** *appropriate to the organisations work image and product outcome,*

**Reliability and integrity**

**Digital literacy**

**Career development** *(career management skills), interview skills and industry ( product) awareness experiences.*

**16. What subject matter should be included in the second block of training?**

Block 2 should include all topics as listed in the Consultation Paper and an employer recruitment campaign, whereby employers from large organisations such as Coles; Target; Deloitte; TABCorp run a week of authentic job interviews and provide feedback to jobseekers on their career portfolios.

**17. What form should industry awareness experiences take and what might the implementation issues be?**

There are a range of options that should form part of the Training Program including:

- Career Incubators – businesses offer real world problems to be solved during the training program onsite or off site
- Mentoring – older workers conduct group training sessions in product knowledge and workplace values and work ethic
- Workshop scenario simulations – identifying real work issues working in teams
- Demonstrating agile project management

The main issue in relation to implementation will be insurance of the jobseeker. Working with RTO's will assist in minimising the risk factors in relation to workplace insurance.

**What is the best way to ensure that both blocks of training are high quality and meet the needs of employers and job seekers?**

An assessment of current employability skills should be conducted prior to the commencement of training. A qualified career practitioner should carry out the assessment during a career guidance interview, prior to the job seeker commencing the Employability Skills Training. At this point a career action plan should also be developed collaboratively with the job seeker. At milestone stages in the training, an assessment of the job seekers progress should be conducted. Upon completion of the Employability Skills Training, job



seekers should be provided with another career guidance interview where the career action plan is reviewed and employment goals are refined. One of the key purposes of providing quality career guidance is to build the capacity of the job seeker to become more resilient to the changing labour market. It is imperative that at the conclusion of the training program the jobseeker has a career tool kit that includes strategies for dealing with change.

**19. How can the training be made as work like as possible?**

The effective use of Career Incubators as a of model delivery. This is where jobseekers are attending a training space that imitates the workplace. Tasks are assigned as project work and jobseekers are employees of a company and take on the role of the project. They work in teams and are immersed in the day to day activities of a work place.

**20. What are most effective modes of delivery for this type of training?**

Training providers need to set up work spaces that look like and feel like real work environments; they should include hot desking; virtual work spaces; call centres; conference calling; product knowledge; and be timed to work place practices. There needs to be a range of experiences to allow development of knowledge of employer and employee expectations.

**21. How could employers play a role in assessing young job seeker's employability skills in a way that provides maximum value to the job seeker without unduly imposing on the employer?**

Employers should be invited to conduct recruitment campaigns that are experiential in nature allowing job seekers to apply for work and go through a 'real interview' process without the fear of failure. These campaigns can be two or three days in duration and be run across the year allowing the Training Provider to set up and establish an Employer Campaign as part of the Training program.

**22. What role might assessment tools play and what tools are available for this task?**

Assessment tools should only be used in the hands of qualified careers practitioners trained in the use of the tool. Jobseekers (and Jobactive providers) can be vulnerable to shysters in the market who may peddle a product for sales and offer no training or validation of the tool against international evidence of its usefulness or otherwise. Assessment tools can be costly and of little benefit if it is administered by someone who is not qualified to understand the findings.

Assessment tools deal with different areas of career development so a one size fits all approach may not suit all jobseekers. A different tool for different cohorts may be needed at different stages in the training. It is imperative that assessments are used only to determine the barriers to career decision making and what has caused an unsuccessful transition into employment or training. Therefore, the tools available need to be used by accredited professionals in the delivery AND analysis of the data the tool provides. Training Providers should present their assessments tools and the personnel accredited to administer and counsel jobseekers in the findings from the tools. Different assessment tools are required for different cohorts. Deciding this should be part of the selection process.

23. Which state level employability skills training programs are working well and have features that can be adopted nationally?

The Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework – Learning Outcomes from the My Capabilities section of the Framework is working well in the Learn Local settings. A range of alternative community providers are using the framework to develop their work readiness programs.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/careers/carframe/Pages/tafeace.aspx>