CONDITIONS FOR CAREER PRACTITIONERS IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS



Victorian School Career Practitioner Working Conditions



SUMMARY

The Victorian Government is investing in the career education services that school students receive to improve student outcomes, transition to work, and workforce development. The 2018 Parliamentary report from the *Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools*¹ made numerous recommendations for school career support aimed at upgrading the quality and amount of professional career guidance students in Victorian schools will receive. Recommendations included standardised qualification benchmarks for school career practitioners, establishing full time equivalent (FTE) ratios for practitioners with students, and supporting career service benchmark planning.

In 2021, the Yarra Regional Careers Network in collaboration with CEAV surveyed career practitioners to understand the working conditions for career practitioners in schools. Results from the survey highlight several inconsistencies in the grade level that career practitioners were employed at, the responsibilities they performed, and the amount of time they had to devote to career services. Some practitioners reported a lack of direction about their role from school leadership (not being provided with a position description) and time constraints or work conflicts that impact their ability to provide quality careers guidance and services to students. Notably, there was significant reclassification/incorrect classification of career practitioner roles to lower pay grades most evident in Government schools. Despite the downgrading/reclassification of the role, many career practitioners were still required to take on responsibilities associated with higher pay grades.

Individual school leadership decisions had led to this reclassification of career practitioners at lower pay grades, while still expecting them to manage higher pay grade activities and responsibilities. Due to the management responsibilities inherent in all career practitioner roles, career practitioners employed in Education Support Roles in Government Schools need to be recognised as working within the Level 1 Range 4.

To ensure Victorian students and their families have access to quality career education and services, and that career practitioners are correctly classified and remunerated, CEAV makes the following recommendations to the Australian Education Union:

¹ Parliament of Victoria Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee (2018) *Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools*. Victorian Government Printer, August 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is imperative that career practitioner qualifications, experience, and role definitions are clarified.
- A clear employment classification and corresponding pay scale is established to support professional career practitioners and career education support staff employed in Education Support Roles.
- Education Support Roles in Government Schools be recognised as working within the Level 1 Range 4 as a minimum. For those in Education support roles, the role involves qualified professionals who manage their areas with a high level of autonomy and develop curriculum and resources across the senior levels of the school. Over time, this is expected to extend to more junior levels of a school. Career practitioners in Education Support positions should be on at least Level 1 Range 4. The description of the requirements of this level are:

Range 4 is distinguished by broader management responsibility, particularly in the areas of finance, human resource, delivery of professional student support services and/or clinical management and other support functions. Range 4 is responsible for managing a range of functions under a wide range of conditions, subject to the size and complexity of school operations.

Source: Dimensions of Work Education Support Class, Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, 2019.

They should not perform higher duty tasks at lower pay grades and must be given clear options to:

 a) upskill through accreditation to become an accredited career practitioner at a higher pay grade;

- receive a penalty payment in line with the additional tasks and responsibilities they undertake, or
- be paid at a higher Education Support grade in accordance with the tasks and responsibilities they perform.

It is also important to support minimum quality standards for career practitioners and services in schools so that career practitioners can perform their role. This should be linked to student numbers in secondary schools. Total time allocation in schools for career education should be at least:

- 0.5 FTE for schools with student numbers in Year 10-12 of under 200
- 1.0 FTE for schools with student numbers in Year 10-12 of between 200 and 400
- 1.5 FTE for schools with student numbers in Year 10-12 of between 400 and 600
- 2.0 FTE for schools with student numbers in Year 10-12 of over 600
- Schools with over 400 students in Year 10-12 should have an allocated (min) 0.3 FTE administrative support.

The Government's aim to start career education earlier in schools will impact the availability of the current career workforce and the minimum estimates provided above. As career services roll-out to primary classes, the ratio of career professionals/time allocation to student numbers must be adjusted upwards to accommodate the increasing workload.



BACKGROUND

The Value of Career Education

All students should receive quality career education and career support from primary school though to secondary school.

The Victorian Government is committed to providing better quality and more career education in government schools. In 2017, the Careers Industry Council of Australia and McCrindle conducted research among school-based career practitioners. Their survey showed that career practitioners had severe time limitations or were required to perform other duties that impacted their ability to deliver career advisory services and guidance:

- 53% of career practitioners surveyed worked part time
- Only 42% could devote all their time to career development.

In 2017, the Victorian Government's Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee was engaged to enquire into careers education in Victoria. The terms of reference included, but were not limited to:

- examining the relationship between career advice activities and workforce participation of young Victorians;
- 2. investigating the extent to which career advice activities meet the needs of school leavers;
- examining the challenges advisers face helping young Victorians transition from education to the workforce;
- considering strategies to improve the effectiveness of career advice activities for school leavers;
- 5. investigate the career advice needs of young people in regional Victoria and ways to address these needs; and
- exploring what other jurisdictions both in Australia and overseas have in place that could be implemented in Victoria.

The report from the 2018 Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools ² was released by the Parliament of Victoria in August 2018. It contained significant improvement implications for The Department of Education and Training Victoria, schools, school career practitioners, students, employers, and regional and disadvantaged students. Some of the key findings included, but were not limited to:

- Students wanting 'hands on' experience and tailored guidance, and the time and expertise to support them.
- A lack of comprehensive assessment of the quality and effectiveness of career development services.
- Great variation in the quality and frequency of career development services.

- More time to provide career development services to students due to high workloads and competing responsibilities.
- Inadequate human resources or funding for career development to ensure quality of services for students.
- One-to-one meetings with a school career practitioner regularly throughout schooling.
- More time and resources to form relationships with employers and industry groups.

The recommendations from the report most relevant to this submission are:

Recommendation 5: That the Department of Education and Training require government secondary school principals to report on their school's career development services in their Annual Implementation Plan.

Recommendation 6: That the Department of Education and Training require each school to publish its career development program on the school's website for students, parents, teachers, and employers to access.

Recommendation 7: That the Department of Education and Training make career development an explicit component of the school curriculum in Years 7-12 by designating career management as a 'capability' within the Victorian Curriculum.

Recommendation 13: That the Department of Education and Training mandate secondary schools employ one career practitioner for every 450 students enrolled.

Recommendation 19: That the Department of Education and Training require all school career practitioners to have, or be working towards, at least a Graduate Certificate in career development.

Recommendation 21: That the Department of Education and Training explore strategies to retain in the government sector the school career practitioners it funds to attain a Graduate Certificate in career development.

Recommendation 22: That the Department of Education and Training ensure that at least one career practitioner at each school is a registered teacher.

Notably, the report recognised the importance and value of career education as essential to supporting student success through education and across their lifespan. Following its release, the Victorian Government responded to the report with its strategy, *Transforming Career Education in Victorian Government Schools*. The strategy outlined the government's intention to invest over \$100 million in redesigning career education in schools. Part of the funding included training more than 400 new career practitioners and introducing career profiling for all Year 9 students in government schools across Victoria.

² Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools (2018), Parliament of Victoria, https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_ uploads/EEJSC_58-04_Text_WEB_RwD0HN5C.pdf

The Government's aim to start career education earlier in schools will impact the availability of the current career workforce. As career services roll-out to primary classes the ratio of career professionals/time allocation to student numbers must be adjusted upwards to accommodate the increasing workload. It is essential that the school career workforce is supported with effective role clarifications, pay grades, and standards to ensure staff and career programs in schools are effectively supported.

CEAV and Yarra Careers Group and School Career Practitioner Survey, 2021

Survey Purpose and Methodology

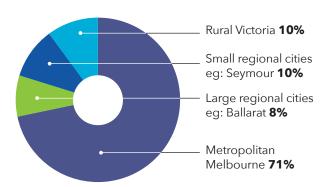
In early 2021, CEAV surveyed its members in Victorian schools in collaboration with the regional careers network, the Yarra Careers Group. With additional career activities expected to roll out in Victorian government schools, the research aimed to gauge:

- The current activities and value being delivered by career guidance services and practitioners in schools.
- The impact of individual school's decisions on career practitioner staff.
- How the Government's best practice recommendations were being delivered.
- If practitioners were meeting their professional development requirements.
- The ratios between career practitioners and students.
- The accredited training standards of careers practitioners in schools.

The online survey involved 56 questions related to the activities of career practitioners in Victorian Schools. 354 career practitioners responded to the survey. It is estimated that there are around 600 career practitioners in Victorian schools, so it is estimated that over half of all school career practitioners responded to the survey.

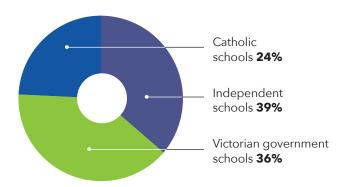
Over 71% of the respondents were from metropolitan Melbourne and the remainder represented large regional cities like Ballarat and Geelong (8%), small regional cities such as Seymour and Morwell (10%), and practitioners in rural Victoria (10%).

Respondent School Location (n=338)



The respondents represented a large cross section of the population with representatives from Government schools, Independent schools, and the Catholic sector. Around half of the respondents were teachers and half were not currently employed as teachers.

Employment by School Type (n=176)



Expected Impact of The Strategy on Career Practitioners

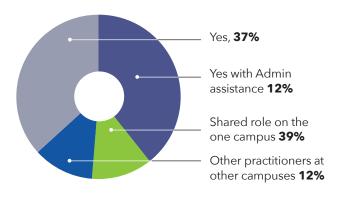
Many benefits from the strategy, *Transforming Career Education in Victorian Government Schools*, have been implemented yet there are many future initiatives to roll out. CEAV anticipates that the increased requirements on the current pool of career practitioner resources may not deliver the expected benefits and that there will be inconsistencies across schools if recommendations are not aligned to resourcing needs.

The 2021 CEAV and Yarra Careers Group survey identified that the career practitioner to student ratios, and time allocation for career guidance and services was insufficient in many schools. Without adjustments to these critical career resources, many students will not have adequate access to qualified career practitioners, essential career services, or appropriate levels of career guidance.

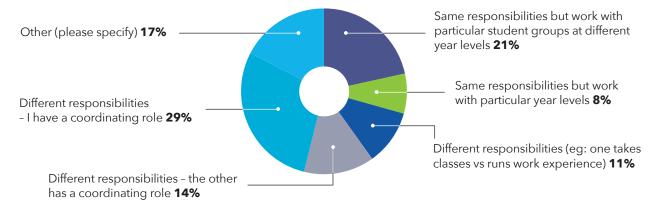
Respondent Profile

Respondents were asked if they were the only career practitioner in their school.

Are you the sole career practitioner at your school? (n=351)



How is your role shared? (n=167)



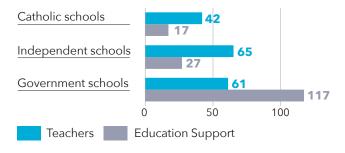
Of the 127 who were the sole career practitioners at their school with no administrative support, 3 had a time allowance of 0.1 or 10% FTE and a further 5 had a time allowance of 0.2 to devote to career education and support.

49% of the career practitioners were employed as teachers and 51% were employed in Education Support roles (n=333):

- 97% of respondents held a tertiary qualification in the field of career education (a career specialisation is a post-graduate qualification).
- Respondent career practitioners recognised in teaching positions are paid according to their teaching level.
- The other half of career practitioners are employed in Education Support positions.
- 25% reported their qualification was in something other than education or career development.
- Only 8 respondents had no formal qualifications (n=338).

The following graph identifies Teacher versus Education Support respondents by the type of school they said they were employed within:

Respondent roles by school (n=168 / n=161)



It is important to note that 115 respondents stated their school either had no qualification requirements for them to perform their role, or they were not aware of them.

Of the 118 Education Support practitioners in Government Schools, nearly a third reported that their position was originally a teaching position but had recently been reclassified (or incorrectly classified) as an Educational Support Position. Over 60% of these were reclassified to Level 1, Range 3: salary between \$67,187 and \$78,634 and over 20% were reclassified to Level 1, Range 2: salary between \$57,514 and \$66,077.



Reclassified or Incorrectly Classified Practitioners

Respondents employed in an Education Support role were asked if their role had been reclassified (incorrectly classified) and whether they were ever required to supervise students in a teaching capacity:

	Government School	Independent or other schools	Catholic school	Total
Type of School Education Support respondents were employed within (n=165)	72%	18%	10%	100%
Number of Education Support respondents who reported being reclassified from a teaching position	35	10	7	52
	30%	31%	44%	32%
	(n=115)	(n=32)	(n=16)	163
Number of Education Support respondents who reported they were required to supervise students in a teaching role	41	8	4	53
	36%	26%	25%	32%
	(n=115)	(n=31)	(n=17)	163

(i) Employed in Government Schools

When asked whether their role has been reclassified from a teaching position to an Education Support Position, 30% of respondents said that their position had been reclassified. 48% of Government school career practitioners in an Education Support position were unaware of what dimension they were employed under. Of those that did know, the majority were employed under Administration/ Operations (44%) and the rest were employed under Professional Services (8%).

When asked about their pay level, those who responded were most commonly paid as Level 1 (n=114):

- 2% Level 1 Range 1
- 21% Level 1 Range 2
- 63% Level 1 Range 3
- 9% Level 1 Range 4
- 3% Level 1 Range 5
- 3 respondents were paid at an 'other range'.

Despite being classified as Education Support, 36% of the respondents reported that they were required to supervise students in a teaching role (without a teacher present).

(ii) Employed in Independent Schools

Of the Independent School career practitioners employed in an Education Support position, 31% reported that their position had been reclassified/incorrectly classified from a teaching position.

Pay levels among these respondents varied greatly:

- 23 earned over \$70000.
- 2 respondents earnt between \$65000 and \$70000
- 2 earnt between \$55000 to \$57500
- 1 earnt between \$45000 and \$47500
- 3 declined to respond.

26% reported being required to supervise students in a teaching role.

(iii) Employed in Catholic Schools

Among the Catholic School career practitioners who were employed in an Education Support Position, 3 were employed as Category C but most, (11 of the 17) were employed as Category B. 3 others reported that they were not in any of these categories. It is important to note the differences between Category in relation to earnings:

- Category D are stood down during school holidays and are not paid at these times.
- Category B work during school term and are paid for school holidays.
- Category C work 45 weeks of the year and are paid for 7 weeks of holidays per year.

Their Levels determine pay rates and varied from 2.6 (\$66078 in Oct 2020) to 5.3 (\$99718 in Oct 2020). One respondent was not in one of these levels. There were 16 respondents who answered the question of whether the role had been reclassified from a teaching position. Of these, 44% were in a role that had been reclassified/incorrectly classified. 25% reported that they were required to supervise students in a teaching role. Over 70% said that they were required to deliver career curriculum classes.

32% of the respondents in Education Support roles have been reclassified (incorrectly classified). With classroom teacher salaries in Government schools between \$72,058 to \$108,003 for starting teachers, this is likely to have delivered significant overhead savings to many schools (see respondent pay ranges below).

Education Support Respondent Pay/Level by School Type						
Government School (n=114)		Independent or other schools (n=31) FTE Rate		Catholic school (n=18)		
Level 1 Range 1	2%	\$45,000 - \$47,500	3%	Category A	5%	
Level 1 Range 2 \$57,514 - \$66,077	21%	\$47,501 - \$50000	0%	Category B	61%	
Level 1 Range 3 \$67,187 - \$78,634	63%	\$50,001 - \$52500	0%	Category C	17%	
Level 1 Range 4	9%	\$52,501 - \$55,000	0%	None of these	17%	
Level 1 Range 5	3%	\$55,001 - \$57,500	6%			
Level 2	0	\$57,501 - \$60000	0%			
Other	3%	\$60,001 - \$62500	0%			
		\$62,501 - \$65000	0%			
		\$65,001 - \$67,500	3%			
		\$67,501 - \$70,00	3%			
		Over \$70,000	74%			
		Prefer not to answer	10%			

Duties performed by Education Support Practitioners

Education Support respondents reported working with students across a wide range of year levels:

(n=164)	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
No. working with students	66	68	137	152	153	153

Some respondents were working with over 300 students in a year level, or hundreds of students in several year levels. 305 respondents noted they performed management duties including:

- 78% undertaking strategic planning of careers services
- 16% coordinating distance education programs with external providers
- 35% coordinating on-campus VET programs with internal or external providers
- 82% implementing/coordinating a whole school approach to careers education.

Education Support respondents reported undertaking a wide range of tasks as part of their career duties. CEAV notes that many of these duties are considered tasks that should be performed by a career professional paid at a higher pay grade:

Education Support respondents: task performed above their pay grade (n=164)	Number performing the tasks	% Performing the tasks
Management of an assistant/support staff	43	26%
Regular formal report of careers program to Senior Management	61	37%
Undertaking regular Benchmarking of careers program	61	37%
Calculate and Prepare Predicted ATARs for early offers	63	38%
Conduct training and instruction to colleagues in Morrisby or other career profiling programs	70	43%
Preparing a budget	72	44%
Conduct training and instruction to colleagues in subject selection	73	45%
Running Parent Information Sessions	83	51%
Class Lessons	85	52%
Delivery of Careers Classes	87	53%
Working with ex-student networks	90	55%
Organising of graduates for tertiary/pathway planning expos	90	55%
Meeting with students to discuss testing results	93	57%
Running information sessions on Subject Selection for parents	104	63%
Undertake strategic planning of careers service	108	66%
Run one or more Parent Information Sessions	113	69%
Assist students with interstate applications	118	72%
Implementing/coordinating a whole school approach to careers education	121	74%
Meeting with individual students in a welfare capacity to create achievable pathways through school	127	77%
Meeting with students during Change of Preference	138	84%
Meeting with students transitioning from school	141	86%
Run one on one career counselling sessions with Year 12 students	150	91%
Offering individual career counselling sessions with Year 12 students or others	154	94%
Meeting with parents and students	155	95%

While it might be expected that activities and responsibilities alter in line with position reclassification, this has not been the case for a third of the survey's Education Support respondents. Despite being reclassified in their Education Support roles, a quarter were required to supervise in a teaching capacity both in the Independent and Catholic Schools. This percentage increased to over a third for those employed in Government schools.

There were many other issues raised in relation to the work carried out by Education Support respondents including:

- Being required to counsel and support all Year 11 and 12 students in a school of nearly 900 students, plus oversee the full program on a 0.8 FTE allowance.
- Having 45 minutes per fortnight for career guidance.
- Being expected to design pathway options for any student who was denied enrolment to the school, had left when deciding on postgraduate positions or wanted to change direction years out of school, plus provide career guidance session to students.

- Writing Careers Lessons for Teachers to deliver or developing lesson plans around subject selection.
- Counselling for subject changes or in preparation for subject selection.
- Only having a 0.2 FTE allowance for careers activities but never receiving a job description explaining what was expected.
- Receiving a Position of Responsibility payment for the role three years after starting in the position that was \$1000 less than all other Positions of Responsibilities at the school.
- Reclassified career practitioners in Education Support roles are delivering higher pay-grade activities yet they are being underpaid for this work. Role reclassification means the role of the accredited career practitioner in schools has been downgraded. This is likely to lead to a further erosion in the value that career education plays in student outcomes.

Professional Career Practitioner Roles and Responsibilities

Accredited career practitioners in schools are qualified professionals who run career programs, initiate curriculum, and have a sound knowledge of a wide range of post-schooling options. Career practitioners in Victorian schools are required to manage programs, design curriculum, and lead a wide range of activities across their school including connecting with external experiences and employers. A key component of their role requires them to meet individually with students. The 2021 survey highlighted that many respondents have multiple constraints impacting their ability to provide this important support. It is important to note that the *Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools* found students wanted more of this support.

- Most career practitioners who responded maintained professional membership of the Career Education Association of Victoria (95%).
- Many respondents also maintained professional membership of the Career Industry Council of Australia (41%).
- Some were members of the Career Development Association of Australia, local industry boards, or Local Learning and Employment Networks.

- Professional expertise was also retained by attending:
 - regular career practitioner days (96%)
 - industry information sessions (81%) and VTAC briefings (91%)
 - regular career group network meetings
 - workshops on VET and other course options, and other relevant webinars.

Career practitioners are professionals who should be recognised as such.

For many of those in an Education Support career practitioner role, they lack role clarification about the career tasks they should perform and there is no standard guideline/award that ensures appropriate renumeration for the role and tasks they perform. This has resulted in many of these respondents being underpaid for their work. In addition, the reclassification (downgrading) of career practitioners is damaging the perceived value of career education as a necessary, lifelong skill that should be delivered to Victorian students to benefit the whole community.



Conclusion and Recommendations

While the Victorian government is funding improvements in resources and training to ensure students have access to quality career services, decisions at the school level are impacting the role of the career practitioner and the services they deliver. These local decisions include:

- Reclassification or incorrect classification of career practitioners, particularly in government schools.
- Reclassified or incorrectly classified practitioners required to perform higher pay-grade work/ responsibilities.

The role of career practitioner is a professional role undertaken by qualified individuals. It involves:

- managing career areas with a high level of autonomy
- developing curriculum and resources across the senior levels of the school
- managing finances
- working with the wider school community
- guiding other professional staff and reporting back to school leadership
- liaising with a wide range of professional bodies and external stakeholders.

Given the level of responsibility, ongoing professional development, and subject-level expertise, Education Support positions should be paid at a minimum of Level 1 Range 4. This minimum should be available as a cross school-type classification (award). A description of the role and responsibilities for this level are outlined in Appendix A.

- It is imperative that career practitioner qualifications, experience, and role definitions are clarified.
- A clear employment classification/award and corresponding pay scale be established to support professional career practitioners and career education support staff employed in Education Support Roles.

- Education Support Roles in Government Schools be recognised as working within the Level 1 Range 4 at a minimum. They should not perform higher duty tasks at lower pay grades and must be given clear options to:
 - a) upskill through accreditation to become an accredited career practitioner at a higher pay grade;
 - b) receive a penalty payment in line with the additional tasks and responsibilities they undertake, or
 - c) be paid at a higher Education Support grade in accordance with the tasks and responsibilities they perform.

It is also important to support minimum quality standards for career practitioners and services in schools so that career practitioners can perform their role. This should be linked to student numbers in secondary schools. Total time allocation in schools for career education should be at least:

- 0.5 FTE for schools with student numbers in Year 10-12 of under 200
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The Government's aim to start career education earlier in schools will impact the availability of the current career workforce and the minimum estimates provided above. As career services roll-out to primary classes, the ratio of career professionals/time allocation to student numbers must be adjusted upwards to accommodate the increasing workload.



Appendix A

Level 1 Range 4 role description from the Dimensions of Work Education Support Class by the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training, 2019.

Range 4 is distinguished by broader management responsibility, particularly in the areas of finance, human resource, delivery of professional student support services and/or clinical management and other support functions. Range 4 is responsible for managing a range of functions under a wide range of conditions, subject to the size and complexity of school operations. Management responsibility extends to ensuring appropriate support levels are maintained across the school. Range 4 generally provides key support and timely advice to the leadership team and school council and liaises with the general school community, the Department and other government agencies and support providers.

Professional student support services at this level will carry out their duties and responsibilities, relative to their professional discipline, with a higher level of autonomy and with minimal reliance on professional supervision. This position would generally be filled by an experienced professional. At this level a position would be responsible for the development and implementation of professional support programs within an educational environment, including guidance to other professional staff.

An education support class position supports the educational services being provided to students but must not include duties of teaching as defined in clause 2.6.1 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) or its successor. Supervision of students cannot be required except where it is an integral part of the employee's position or involves supervision of students individually or in small groups, in controlled circumstances, where the responsibility for students remains clearly with a teacher.

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