

Corporate-sponsored, AI-driven ‘career coaches’ in Australian schools spark backlash from teachers and advisers



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Australian students are about to get career advice from an AI coach backed by big corporate sponsors. But experts have questions – and warn it can’t replicate human expertise.

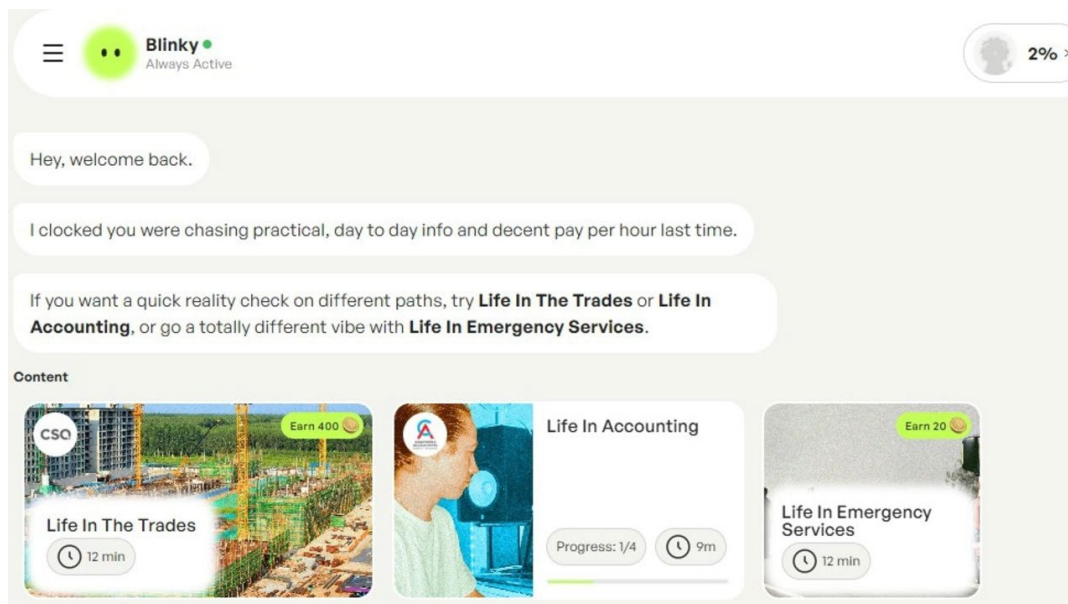
A new \$25bn investment from big US tech companies will see AI-powered career coaches rolled out in up to 1000 Australian schools, drawing backlash from teachers and career practitioners.

The peak career practitioners body warns the latest deal is a sign of the “ongoing commercialisation of career education” as big multinational corporations, banks and universities back the new technology.

And teachers on the ground say they fear their own targeted and individualised careers guidance will be replaced by advice from AI-powered robots.

But the company behind the AI career coach, Anyway, say their program offers every young person much-needed careers advice as many schools lack dedicated professionals.

Anyway is the new US-Australian branding of Year13, an Australian-founded education company designed to help young people navigate life after high school.



Anyway's AI career coach Blinky interface. Picture: Anyway

Anyway will launch its gamified AI careers coach ‘Blinky’ in up to 1000 Australian schools as part of Microsoft’s massive \$25bn investment into Australian AI infrastructure announced in April.

Anyway’s website boasts partnerships with major international corporations such as Coca-Cola, Microsoft and KPMG.

Australian Centre for Career Education chief executive Penne Dawe said her association is concerned about the increasing commercialisation of career education in Australia and Anyway's collection and use of Australian student data.



The new AI-driven careers advice platform Anyway has partnered with major multinational companies like Coca-Cola and Microsoft.

Ms Dawe also questioned whether an AI tool could deliver high quality career advice to young people.

"The platform is not a replacement for a trained professional," she said.

"Career professionals are often a trusted person in a school that young people turn to.

"The career area is incredibly complex and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to supporting someone."

qualified person to help them make the right decisions," the Melbourne educator said.

"Without discussions with a career practitioner, it is hard to judge if the advice given is going to be appropriate for an individual student.

"They need advice and support, not just a list of career options."

Mr Black also raised "huge issues" with the use of student data and partnership with "large companies".



Penne Dawe is the chief executive of the Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE), the peak body for career education in Australia.

Carey Baptist Grammar School career practitioner Trevor Black said trained professionals were best equipped to provide advice to students.

"While AI might have a role to play in helping students research their options, they need a



Trevor Black is a career practitioner at Carey Baptist Grammar School in Melbourne.



Will Stuble is the co-founder of Year13 and its new brand Anyway. Photo supplied.

Anyway co-founder and chief executive Will Stuble said all student data would be kept within Australia and remain compliant with Australian Privacy Principles law.

Mr Stuble said the student information "is not sold to third parties and is not collected for unrelated commercial purposes".

He also shut down suggestions big corporate sponsors influenced Anyway's career advice.

"Our recommendations are generated based on student interests, engagement, goals and career development inputs, not on commercial relationships," she said.

Mr Stuble said the tool would not replace qualified career practitioners, teachers, school counsellors and parents.

"The AI Coach is designed as a career exploration and career development tool," he said.

"It's designed to complement the existing educators where there are teachers or advisers already, often dealing with massive cohorts.

"However, where there isn't any dedicated career practitioner, our platform has been designed to provide the foundational guidance and support layer that we believe every student should have."

Source: <https://www.heraldsun.com.au/education/higher-education/future-of-work/corporatesponsored-aidriven-career-coaches-in-australian-schools-spark-backlash-from-teachers-and-advisers/news-story/6b084043c6f349e2c218108002fcd9ed>