



**NYCA** NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION AUSTRALIA  
INQUIRY INTO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITIONS  
National Youth Commission Australia

# CAREERS EDUCATION

'YOU CAN'T BE WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE': CAREERS EDUCATION  
IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS



## ABOUT THE NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION AUSTRALIA'S INQUIRY INTO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITIONS

The National Youth Commission Australia launched the Inquiry into Youth Employment and Transitions in March 2019 to develop ideas on how young people could be better prepared and supported in their transition from school to work, now and in the future.

The Inquiry heard from over 1,200 individuals and organisations at public hearings and community consultations across all states and the Northern Territory over a total of 47 days. Of the 1,200 people whom Commissioners and workshop leaders met face to face, more than half were young people of school age or in early adulthood, both in and out of the workforce. The Commission also convened focus groups with young people to gather information on their experiences.

The Commission convened the Youth Futures Summit in August 2020, which brought together over 1000 participants in a week-long virtual event to discuss some of the biggest issues facing young people in 2020. Participants included young people, educators, employers, community service workers and policy-makers from around Australia. The Inquiry's interim findings report, *What Future?*, and the proposed *Youth Futures Guarantee* were released during the Summit.

## THE YOUTH FUTURES GUARANTEE

The Youth Futures Guarantee lays out a framework of reforms and initiatives that will support young people to meet the challenges of the future, but these also benefit Australian businesses and the wider Australian community. The Guarantee consists of nine policy pillars reflecting the priority concerns expressed to the Commissioners at public hearings, in community consultations, in submissions and during the Youth Futures Summit.

Within each of the nine policy pillars the Commission has identified contributions from governments, organisations, businesses, and communities that will improve the lives of young people and assist their transition from adolescence to adulthood.



## EDUCATION AND TRAINING ARE A PILLAR OF THE YOUTH FUTURES GUARANTEE

Education and training form one of the nine policy pillars of the Youth Futures Guarantee because success in education and training is more likely to lead to secure and satisfying employment than early school leaving. Getting good information and advice assists young people to navigate the many pathways through the complex education and training system and increases the chances of young people getting into the job and career that meets their aspirations.

Careers education in schools has an important role in providing information and advice to young people about their education, training, and work options. Unfortunately, among the young people the Commission spoke to, few had positive experiences of their careers education.

The Commission is concerned that the quality of careers education varies considerably across Australia by schools, school systems and states and territories. While there are examples of high-quality careers education in some schools, careers education generally is poor, fragmented and underfunded. Government education departments and non-government school systems must significantly improve the minimum standards of careers education.

To improve the standards of careers education in schools across Australia, several steps need to be taken, including:

- Implementing a comprehensive careers education program in all secondary schools
- Starting careers education earlier
- Strengthening school-industry links
- Providing more funding for careers education.



## WHAT IS CAREERS EDUCATION?

Careers advice, careers guidance, careers education, and other similar terms are often used to describe activities that assist high school students in making decisions about their pathways through senior secondary school to post-school education, training and employment. There is often confusion about the meaning of such terms. The Commission uses the following definitions of the main terms used in this report to improve clarity. These are for the purposes of this report only, and the Commission accepts that these are not universally agreed upon.

‘Careers education’ means the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences in schools that assist students in making informed decisions about their senior school pathway and subject choice as well as post-secondary education and training and/or work options that enable effective participation in working life. It may include providing career information, career advice or guidance, and career skills development. This definition has been adapted from *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*.<sup>1</sup>

‘Careers information’ includes any print, electronic and spoken information that helps someone understand the employment, education and training opportunities open to them. It includes occupational and industry information, post-school education and training information, and other general information related to the world of work.<sup>2</sup>

‘Careers advice or guidance’ is advice that helps students plan for their transition to work, such as choosing a career that suits their interests and skills, developing a career pathway, and selecting suitable subjects.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission uses the term ‘careers advisor’ to refer to the worker who provides careers advice or guidance in schools. The role usually assists students with their work experience, senior school subject choice and pathway, and post-school study choices. This role has several titles in schools across Australia, including careers advisor, careers counsellor, guidance counsellor, among others.



## CAREERS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

At its best, careers education includes a student-focussed and comprehensive program that seeks to identify a student's aspirations, interests and strengths and provides information and activities that allow the student to make informed decisions about pathways to their desired career. As one careers advisor put it to the Commission:

We look at what the student needs. We look at the pathways for every one of our students that talks about vocational pathways. We look at what they're interested to do. Do they need to develop personal skills and customer skills and people skills? Do they need the vocational skills for working in a particular area?

Alison Weeks, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast QLD, 26 September 2019

Unfortunately, many young people told the Commission about how their experience of careers education fell well short of these standards. As an example, one young person told the Commission:

So, in total, over my schooling years, I had two careers sessions; one where I got given a copy of a resume and said 'that's how you do it'. And then the other was, 'What do you want to do at university?', to which I said, 'I have no idea'. And they didn't give me any options.

Jemille McKenzie, Bendigo VIC, 27 June 2019

The Commission accepts that careers education in schools varies across the country in quality. The young people we spoke to tended to express negative views of the careers education they received. In contrast, the Commission heard from careers advisors providing substantial careers programs. For example, a rural school the Commission was told about:

.. try where possible to enable students to see and hear firsthand information about opportunities that are available to them as a career. Careers program at my school offers students in year nine, ten and eleven many opportunities

to explore their pathways through programs such as Personal Best, Beacon, VCAL, VET, work experience, structured workplace learning, community service, careers camp, excursions to the careers expo, guest speakers, year 12 Pd day, careers week and we have computer programs such as careers tools and career voyage.

Beth Crossman, Career Teachers Network, Echuca VIC, 13 May 2019

Another careers advisor told the Commission:

Our career program starts in Year 10. So, I have all of our Year 10 students, once every fortnight throughout Year 10, we have a futures class. One whole term is dedicated to making good choices around university pathways, around vocational pathways, what do I do if I don't know what sort of pathway I should follow.

Alison Weeks, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast QLD, 26 September 2019

Most schools seem to offer careers education that is comprised of three main components:

- Work experience
- Assistance with careers information
- Careers advice

### Work experience

Work experience in Australian high schools is usually offered to students in years 9 or 10. It involves one to two weeks with an employer. At its best, work experience develops students' skills and knowledge of the workplace as well as allow students to explore career options within a chosen industry or occupation.



For many students, their work experience was not a fulfilling or purposeful experience. The major barrier is finding the right employer who is willing to provide useful work experience. One young person told the Commission:

I called up and looked at over twenty different places that held my interests. I am mainly interested in graphic design, game design, visual arts, and illustration. Every single one except for two companies said that they were a) too small to handle students, b) were too busy to take students on board and teach them or c) don't accept work experience students and only take interns because they have the skills and practices needed to work for the company effectively. This is an issue because without the work experience students there to learn from professionals and to see exactly what is happening, we can never find out what it's like to work in a particular industry.

Jake Barbic, Melbourne VIC, 5 March 2019

The difficulty Jake faced is not uncommon. In their submission to the Commission, the Careers Advisors Association of NSW wrote how 'red-tape' may be making employers balk from taking work experience students:

The challenge is sourcing suitable work experience host organisations and requesting their compliance with, and the school's compliance with, the ever-increasing administrative and regulatory burdens necessary to allow these programs to operate. Whether for the forementioned or other reasons, there has been a clear decline in the willingness of industries and organisations to accept students for work experience opportunities.

Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT Submission, 16 September 2020

Despite these barriers, some schools actively encourage their students to undertake work experience beyond the minimal one week. The Commission was told about one school where:

We encourage work experience. We have students out during school holidays every term, doing work placement as well. And I'm a firm believer that it's about experiences. It's not about me preaching to someone about what jobs are. It's about 'I'm interested in doing Marketing'. Well, let's get you out and have an experience either at a marketing information session, go to

the Robina Hospital and go to one of their health information days. And the more experiences that a student can have, the better the decision they make.

Alison Weeks, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast QLD, 26 September 2019

For work experience to remain a part of careers education in schools, it will be necessary to overcome the reluctance of employers to take students.

### **Assistance with careers information**

Access to good careers information is essential for young people to make informed decisions about their post-school future. There is a lot of information available from multiple providers including:

- Education and training providers that publish course information.
- Industry bodies provide information about a range of occupations in their industries (e.g. National Disability Services runs the Carer Careers website with information about careers in disability and aged care services).<sup>4</sup>
- Professional bodies provide information about their professions in a range of industries (e.g. Engineers Australia provides information about engineering careers).<sup>5</sup>
- Large employers (e.g. governments and large business) also provide information on careers.

Careers information can be found on websites and in printed materials. It is provided to young people electronically and physically through open days, school visits and careers expos or information days. This information is important in expanding the understanding of what is available, how a young person can combine different interests, and what a career might be like.

For example, one young person told the Commission about her experience of a Careers Expo:

Also, we had the Careers Expo. This, out of all of the events, was my favourite. I have to admit, I talked to the Law place a few times. I went back there probably one too many times. But I went to many different things, and that helped me realise that maybe I didn't want to do something or maybe it

actually opened my eyes to medicine more when I started talking to a doctor and everything.

Emily Mitchell, Year 11 student, Echuca VIC, 13 May 2019

She went on further to explain:

I was a bit vague as to what I wanted to do. I knew I was heading down a Law path because I like that area and everything. But it's not until I got there, and I was in awe the entire time I was listening to the women talking about Law. I knew that's what I wanted to do. Then I talked to medicine, and I can't say I'm much of the get in there and do a whole lot of stuff with patients, but I love chemistry and everything. So, I talked to her about doing maybe like biomedical science 'cause I love science. It just opened up so much more for me. That's when I really started looking at courses for it and talking to my teachers about it.

Emily Mitchell, Year 11 student, Echuca VIC, 13 May 2019

There is no shortage of careers information. A simple web search will yield a lot of information but not all of it will be relevant or appropriate for the individual. The Commission was told:

Young people are searching for information but the things that tend to be presented to them first in a search list aren't necessarily the ones that are most relevant. They're the ones that have come from the organisations that have got the biggest marketing budgets to promote their particular services.

John Gelagin, The Smith Family, Sydney NSW, 24 October 2019

Students need assistance to find the right information and evaluate it for its usefulness to their needs.

In addition, students face the challenge that much of the information available is national or state-based. This is not always relevant to local areas, particularly rural and

regional locations. As the Commission was told:

...one of the challenges that I find, is most of the information that comes through is national or at least state-based. And you look at it and you go, well actually, those jobs are in the mining areas, it's not in the Gold Coast.

Alison Weeks, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast QLD, 26 September 2019

This challenge was addressed in Geelong with the aim of keeping young people within the community and overcoming the perceived disadvantages of the community. The Commission heard about Geelong Careers, which provides local information about work and study options in the Geelong region:

We built Geelong Careers so that young people can take away with them wherever they go, in that mobile way that they live, information to help inform their study and their career choices for the future.

Marianne Messer, Geelong Careers, Geelong VIC, 28 March 2019

A major component of careers education in schools is assisting students to access and evaluate relevant information that contributes to informed decision-making about further education, training and work.

### **Careers advice**

Students need to make critical decisions about their senior secondary school education and their post-school options. The options available to students in most schools are very broad. Choices include an academic pathway leading to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) and university or a vocational pathway. Vocational pathways might include vocational subjects offered by the school or local TAFE, or a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. It is also possible for students to take vocational subjects while taking the academic pathway. Decisions also need to be made at the end of school such as whether to apply for post-secondary study, which course and which institution.

Careers advice should assist students make the best possible decisions. High-quality careers advice assists students to make these decisions as well as developing their interests and aspirations and align these with the student's ability and the available study options. As the Commission was told:

The foundation advice we give to everyone is to choose the subjects that they'll be best at and most successful in and that they will enjoy. And then, if they're not a science student, then they shouldn't do science. If they've loved doing business, they should do that. They shouldn't choose it because it counts towards ATAR or it doesn't.

Alison Weeks, All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast QLD, 26 September 2019

## WHY IS CAREERS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS GENERALLY INADEQUATE?

The Commission has identified three main reasons why careers education in many schools is inadequate:

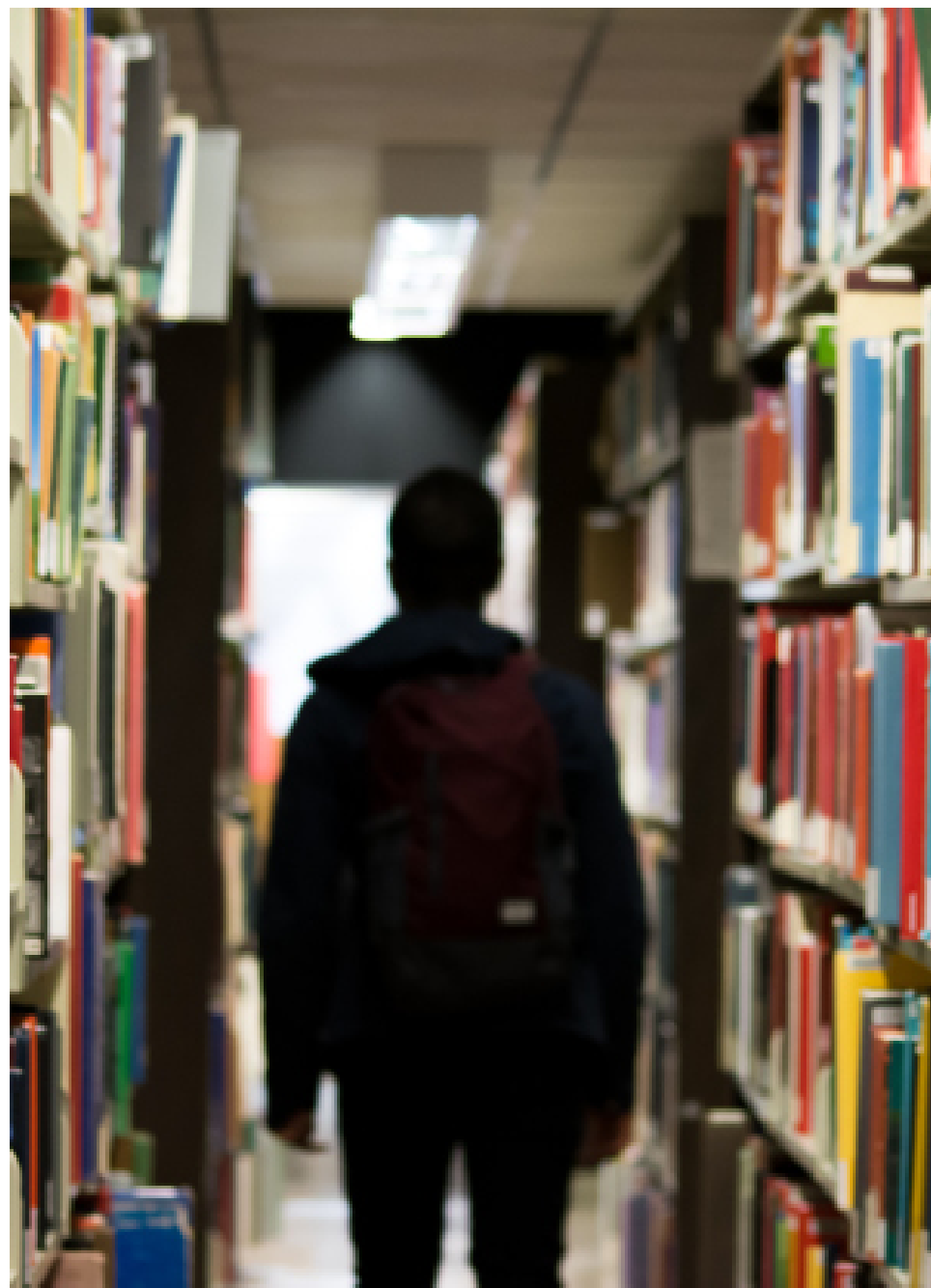
- Careers education is not well resourced
- The careers advisor role is not valued
- Careers advisors may not be properly trained or qualified.

### Lack of resources in careers education

Research by the Career Industry Council of Australia showed that careers education is not funded sufficiently in many schools:

1 in 2 schools with 1,000 or more students have less than \$3 per student to spend.<sup>6</sup>

The lack of funding means that the careers advice role is often part-time and combined with other school roles. For example, the Commission was told:





I was working three days a week, I was the careers advisor, the VET coordinator, so coordinating both school-based and external VET courses for students, and teaching business services as a subject.

Jenine Smith, Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT, Sydney NSW, 28 October 2019

The combining of the careers advisor role with a VET role is common in schools because as VET was introduced into schools:

The person in the school that had the knowledge about the labour market was the careers advisor, so they picked up VET coordination.

Bernadette Gigliotti, Career Education Association of Victoria, 20 August 2018

In their submission to the Commission, the Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT wrote:

The importance of a quality and tailored Career Development Education program implemented by a full-time, professionally qualified individual is well recognised among the regulatory bodies, however, disappointingly, many schools allocate less than a part-time allocation for this role.

Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT Submission, 16 September 2020

This means that careers advisors have insufficient time to ensure students get the information, advice and support they need to make good decisions about their futures. This was highlighted by the Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT:

Further, the amount of time a Careers Adviser may spend with a student to inform and prepare them in their decision-making, as well as working with parents to assist in their knowledge of current employment options, is significantly impacted by the time allocation provided to the Careers Adviser's role in their school. Preparing students for post-secondary work, study and training is not about dictating. The challenges stem from Careers Advisers not having an appropriate time allocation which is conducive to providing a comprehensive Career Development Education program which fully informs students of their options.

Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT Submission, 16 September 2020

It also means that the careers advisors focus on the upper years of high school because:

... they didn't have time to do the work in years 7 to 9, those early years where they wanted to.

Andrew Harvey, La Trobe University, Bendigo VIC, 26 June 2019

Increasing the number of careers advisors in schools is a potential solution but will require additional funding. The Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT told the Commission:

As an association, we would also like to work towards a ratio of a minimum of a full-time careers advisor for every 500 to 600 students in a Year 7 to 12 school.

Jenine Smith, Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT, Sydney NSW, 28 October 2019

### **Careers advisor role is not seen as a desirable**

Recruiting more careers advisors is not easy. One of the main problems is that the role is not perceived as important or desirable by many teachers. Daniela Ascone, Thingq Group (which supports schools careers education programs), told the Commission:

We are seeing people who are, what I like to call, organically inheriting the role of a careers advisor in a school by default, who have possibly been the sports teacher or the geography teacher for the last 3 years - 30 years and they've been given this role as careers advisor in schools from 500 to 2000 students. We have supported and mentored many of these people in schools, and they are really quite frightened about having that role, it is such a critical role in a school, and it does form the basis of young people's futures.

Daniela Ascone, Thingq Group, Melbourne VIC, 5 March 2019

As an example, she went on to tell the Commission:

One teacher came to one of our training courses said he inherited the role of

careers advisor because he happened to be late for a staff meeting and that was the last role that was on the table and needed to be allocated.

Daniela Ascone, Thing Group, Melbourne VIC, 5 March 2019

This anecdotal evidence is supported by the experience of one school principal, who told the Commission the difficulty in introducing a new careers programs for Year 9 students:

So, the first thing they have found is they can't find the number of careers practitioners to hit the ground in schools across the state, and roll it out to students, when every Year 9 student this year is supposed to be having a one-to-one interview with somebody. They are having trouble finding the people.

Dale Pearce, Bendigo Secondary College, Bendigo VIC, 26 June 2019

Andrew Harvey suggested that the problem could be related the view that careers advisors lack standing in the teaching profession. He summed it as:

Being a careers advisor is not a career.

Andrew Harvey, La Trobe University, Bendigo VIC, 26 June 2019

### **Not all careers advisors have the qualifications, training and experience**

Having the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience is critical for careers advisors in schools. Careers advisors need to be able to engage students, liaise with employers, have a good knowledge of employment prospects, knowledge of school and post-school study options.

Unless you have a holistic understanding of how a person makes the decision, no amount of information brochures that you give them is going to help. That can only be in the remit of qualified practitioners.

Bernadette Gigliotti, Career Education Association of Victoria, 20 August 2018

There are courses available in career development to assist careers advisors to obtain some knowledge and skills. The Careers Industry Council of Australia's professional standards require a graduate certificate in careers education or higher<sup>7</sup> However,

these standards are not always met in schools:

The Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners clearly recommend minimum education standards for individuals charged with the responsibility of delivering Career Education, however, it is not uncommon for schools to employ individuals with no career education-specific tertiary or teaching qualifications.

Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT Submission, 16 September 2020

However, the relevance of these qualifications was questioned by one human resources professional who spoke to the Commission:

I will say as an HR practitioner of some standing, with some success having managed the career of hundreds and thousands of people, the problem with our career practitioners, they're not taught anything that's actually terribly useful. So, whilst it might be great about practice and how to have conversations and model career development, it's not the stuff that really makes it different about what's happening in the labour market and how that applies to individuals. And an overreliance on the vocational system, particularly measuring aptitudes. Ruling people out or ruling them in and focusing on the reasons why not rather than why.

Katea Gidley, Career Ahead, Dandenong VIC, 15 March 2019

Given that schools seem to have difficulty in filling the role of careers advisor, it is to be expected that not all will have a career development qualification.

The Commission is of the view that all careers advisors should have the relevant skills and knowledge mentioned above. The graduate certificate in careers education should provide the minimum level of skills and knowledge required.

## IMPROVING CAREERS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

While some schools have excellent careers education, overall there is a dire need to improve the standard of careers education in schools. The Commission has identified four ways in which careers education can be improved:

- Ensuring that every school has a comprehensive careers education program
- Starting careers education earlier
- Strengthening school-industry links
- Providing more funding for careers education.

### Comprehensive careers education program

Careers education should be central, core business in every school.

Bernadette Gigliotti, Career Education Association of Victoria, 20 August 2018

The Commission believes that every school should provide a student-focussed and comprehensive careers education program that allows young people to learn about the world of work and the future of work and its implications for employment choices. Such a program should assist students to identify their aspirations, interests and strengths through information and activities for informed decision-making about pathways to their desired career or occupation. It is the responsibility of education departments and school systems to ensure the staff and resources are available for schools to implement a comprehensive careers education program.

A careers program should adapt to the changing world of work. The Smith Family spoke about how they were:

... advocating for a more modern approach to careers support and careers learning that reflects the modern workforce. It reflects the skills that are required in the modern world of work and the knowledge that young people need to navigate that world of work. It starts early, it's got consistent timely career support, it's authentic, which tends to mean partnerships with employers and with industry, and yet underpins the 21st Century employment market.

John Gelagin, The Smith Family, Sydney NSW, 24 October 2019





Such programs already exist but are not universal. For example, the Commission was told about the Work Education syllabus (see box) developed in New South Wales. Unfortunately, Work Education is not seen by schools as necessary for all students. Jenine Smith, Careers Advisors Association of NSW and ACT, told the Commission:

Young people told the Commission that they were not taught about their rights and responsibilities at work. A lack of knowledge of rights can sometimes lead to underpayment or mistreatment at work. One young person told the Commission:

My first job I landed was in 2017, at a local pizza bar, which is a great chance to experience a busy environment. Learnt the ropes quickly. However, I was very below the minimum wage, and they would only pay me cash in hand. I didn't know it was illegal. I didn't have that prior knowledge or experience.

Rebecca, Youth Council, City of Salisbury, Adelaide SA, 16 June 2019

The Commission believes that a comprehensive careers education program should include teaching students about workers' rights and responsibilities.

The New South Wales curriculum is what's called Work Education, which unfortunately is currently only run in school for those kids that are of a low learning ability. Whereas I think the content is something that could be used across the board to make more students work-ready and give them the confidence to be able to go out into the workforce.

Jenine Smith, Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT, Sydney NSW, 28 October 2019

The **Work Education** syllabus provides students with an opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the world of work, the diverse groups within the community, and the roles of education, employment and training. They develop an understanding of the world of work as dynamic, how and why it may change, and what this may mean for their future.

Through their study of Work Education, students prepare for the working world by developing understanding of themselves in relation to work, recognising their aspirations, their rights and responsibilities as workers, employer expectations and the diversity of work opportunities. This process is assisted by students' developing self-evaluation, goal-setting and decision-making skills. They develop employability skills and the capacity to prepare for and adapt to multiple transitions throughout their lives, including post-school pathways. Work Education provides opportunities for students to transfer their knowledge, understanding and skills to a range of work-related contexts.

Through exposure to work-related learning, students develop self-knowledge, contemporary work skills, entrepreneurial behaviours and resilience. They develop an appreciation of the role of collaboration, creativity and analytical skills in workplaces and the importance of diversity and ethical practices. Work Education encourages students to be self-motivated learners and to develop career management skills to navigate the new economies and be productive citizens. Research and communication skills are a key feature of the syllabus, and students are provided with opportunities to apply these to various theoretical and practical contexts.

Source: <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au>

**Recommendation 1:** State, territory and non-government education systems need to ensure that all secondary schools within their systems implement a comprehensive careers education program.

### Start careers education earlier

While most careers education starts in Years 9 or 10, the Commission believes that a comprehensive careers education program should start much earlier. This view was common among those people that spoke to Commission about this issue. For example:

It's good that the discussion is starting to build that they're talking about trying to get careers education happening from Year 7. So, the conversation starts then. So, they're not suddenly getting to Year 10, having to decide their HSC subjects and also trying to work out what happens out there in the real world in terms of employment opportunities and things like that.

Jenine Smith, Careers Advisors Association of NSW & ACT, Sydney NSW, 28 October 2019

There is no general agreement about when careers education should start. The commencement of high school is a convenient time; however, there is evidence that students begin to form views about occupations, careers and post-school education in primary school.<sup>8</sup>

The Commission is aware of primary school level careers education programs that may have some positive effects on young people's aspirations of careers and post-school education. Examples include Passions and Pathways and the Future Seekers Program. Such programs need to be evaluated and their long-term impacts measured for changes in school retention and achievement as well as post-school destinations.

The Smith Family has developed the **Future Seekers Program**, a pilot program that targets students in Years 4 to 6. The purpose of the program is to support students to increase their understanding of the 'world of work' by introducing them to a wide variety of jobs and the skill sets needed now and in the future. It aims to broaden students' aspirations about their future and encourages them to remain engaged at school and helps prepare them for future careers.

The program:

- supports students to better understand their own interests and skills and helps them develop communication, critical thinking, collaboration and creativity skills.
- engages students with a range of people from the world of work, from a variety of industry and professions. This helps widen the students' views of the world of work and better understand the transferability of skills across industries and professions.
- helps students create and explore a 'job of the future'. This contributes to enhancing their motivation around the world of work.
- facilitates students' interaction with peers, teachers, parents and community members around the world of work.

The Smith Family Submission, 30 July 2019

**Passions & Pathways**, Primary Schools & Workplaces in Partnership originated in Bendigo in 2012. A dynamic partnership between the Goldfields LLEN (lead partner), cross-sectoral primary schools, local government and businesses it gives students a taste of the 'world of work'. Primary school students engage with local businesses in their workplaces. The authentic 'work' experiences aim to lift student aspirations and reinforce the value of completing their education.

Source: <https://passionsandpathways.org.au/>

**Recommendation 2:** State, territory and non-government education systems should ensure secondary schools start a careers education program for all students at the commencement of secondary school.

## Strengthen school-industry links

For the purposes of careers education, links between schools and industry are usually student placements in businesses for work experience and structured workplace learning. However, school-industry links should be broader and enable students to engage with the 'world of work' as part of learning. This could include more real-world learning projects, particularly in high school but also primary schools.

An example of a real-world learning project is the Mindshop Excellence platform. This was described to the Commission as an:

... absolutely sensational program. It's part of the work experience program, but it's run completely differently. So, the schools actually link with a business, they put up between four and six students and those students go to that business for one week and they work. The business actually gives those students a problem at the start of the week and they have to solve it, and it has to be a real problem.

Jodie Gillett, Commerce Ballarat, Ballarat VIC, 25 June 2019

The **Mindshop Excellence** platform is a one-week employer hosted work experience program where the students act as a consultancy team to solve a real issue of concern to a host company. The students are trained in Mindshop personal and business problem solving tools and are shown how to apply the tools to the issue, reporting back to the company, the school and their parents on their final day of the program. This collaborative effort has seen some amazing solutions to many hundreds of issues.

Source: <http://www.mindshopexcellence.com/>

Structured workplace learning is another way that schools interact with industry. Structured workplace learning is where students receive on-the-job experience as part of a school subject. It is usually associated with vocational pathways, especially school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Consideration could be given to developing structured workplace learning in non-vocational subjects.

School-industry links broaden students' understanding of the world of work and enrich school learning through providing opportunities to meet and learn from industry professionals as well as solve real-world problems.<sup>9</sup> While there are significant potential benefits to enhance school-industry links, the Commission is concerned that without appropriate government support, schools and business will be burdened with additional responsibilities and so will not prioritise such links. Governments need to ensure funding is available so that more students can benefit.

**Recommendation 3:** State, territory and non-government education systems should facilitate improvements to school-industry links and support these links with appropriate funding.

#### Funding careers education

Without sufficient funding, none of the above will be possible. Additional funding should be provided to schools and allocated to careers education. This funding should be used to enhance the role of careers advisor, implement a comprehensive careers education program starting, at least, at the start of high school and strengthen school-industry links.

**Recommendation 4:** State, territory and non-government education systems should ensure that careers education is properly funded and that schools are held accountable for careers education by developing appropriate performance measures.

## CONCLUSION

While there are some excellent careers education programs, careers education in secondary schools generally needs improvement. The young people who presented to the Commission generally had negative experiences of careers education. The problem with careers education is that it is usually not seen as a core part of the curriculum and the role of careers advisor is not one that is often keenly sought after in schools.

State, territory and non-government school education systems can improve Careers education in schools by:

- Implementing a comprehensive careers education program in all secondary schools
- Starting careers education earlier
- Strengthening school-industry links
- Providing more funding for careers education.

Careers education, at its best, can assist young people learn about the world of work, navigate the many paths available to them through senior secondary school, post-school education and training and to work. Young people deserve the best help that can be provided in making the decisions that will impact their immediate post-school future and the formation of their careers identity.

Since this Inquiry commenced, the Victorian Government has introduced a plan to enhance careers education in Victorian government schools. The plan reflects the recommendations of this report. While it is still too early to measure the impact of the changes, the Commission welcomes the renewed focus on careers education in Victoria. The Commission now calls on other school systems across the country to review and enhance their careers education programs where they are inadequate.



**Victorian government schools: A systemic approach to improving careers education.**

A review commissioned by the Victorian Department of Education and Training found that careers education in Victorian government schools varied significantly in both quantity provided and quality.<sup>10</sup> In response to the review, the Victorian Government developed a plan<sup>11</sup> to enhance careers education in Victorian government schools. The plan aims to start comprehensive careers education Year 7, improve students' engagement with the world of work and make career education in government schools a priority by training more careers advisors. Specific funding has been allocated to Victorian government schools for careers education.

Careers education is one part of the Education and Training pillar of the Youth Futures Guarantee. Together, the pillars of the Youth Futures Guarantee will assist young people meet the challenges they face as they transition from school to work, from dependence to independence and adolescence to adulthood.



## ENDNOTES

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