

Submission to the Disability Employment Service Quality Framework Discussion Paper

The Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE) is pleased to provide feedback to the Disability Employment Service Quality Framework (DES Quality Framework) Discussion Paper. ACCE is a national career association, subject expert, and thought leader in career education and development. Established in 1975 by the Victorian Department of Education, we deliver over 35,000 career interventions across Victoria annually to year 9 students in government schools and equivalent settings. We are the sole provider of the Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors Service and an endorsed provider of career practitioner training by the peak industry body, the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA).

Our work includes advocacy for the profession and the community. We are committed to ensuring that all Australians have access to quality career education and development, especially disadvantaged cohorts.

Employment and workforce capacity are vital for Australia's productivity and central to government planning so that Australia has thriving communities and a productive workforce. Notably, there is national inconsistency in the delivery of career education that connects student learning and career decision-making to skills training, tertiary education, and employment.¹ This is particularly the case for young people with disability who have a greater chance of poor transitioning across the lifespan. This increases the importance of the role and quality of disability employment services.

Disability career development projects

ACCE has been involved in training, resource creation, and career development projects to support educators, parents, and young people with a disability to enter employment or skills and training pathways (especially mainstream employment). Our *Building Ability through Career Management* project (2018-2019) supported post-school pathways for young people living with disability. Funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, the program provided training in work readiness programs and included structured career education activities. It included parent information sessions and resources, training for disability professionals about career guidance, work readiness for young people with a disability, and building work readiness workshops.

In 2022, ACCE was involved in a project run by Ticket to Work (Brotherhood of St Laurence) aimed at improving transitioning from school for young people with disability through the development of a school benchmarking tool. More recently, ACCE has joined a working group with Ticket to Work, TAFE Queensland, and NDIS representatives to investigate ways to increase the number of students with disability transitioning to further education and skills training.

This submission focuses on equitable, quality career development support for people with disability as an underpinning principle in the DES Quality Framework and a deliverable of disability employment services. Career guidance in employment services has been shown to improve outcomes for jobseekers, especially disadvantaged cohorts. Including career development within disability employment services provides

¹ National Youth Commission Australia. (2022). *Careers Education 'You can't be what you can't see': Careers Education in Secondary Schools*. <https://nycinquiry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/120422-Careers-Education-Paper.pdf>

Australia with an opportunity to embrace a whole of life approach to skills, training, education, and employment for people with disability.

Recommendations

ACCE has reviewed the information in the DES Quality Framework Discussion Paper and makes the following recommendations:

1. Ensure career development is aligned to the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*² and included in the DES Quality Framework as an underpinning principle. Career development must be integrated into disability employment service delivery or within the Disability Employment Service ecosystem.
2. Ensure career development is delivered by qualified professionals who are eligible for registration on the Australian Register of Professional Career Development Practitioners.
3. Include service measurements that are based on the essential implementation of evidence-based vocational tools and career service tools that measure positive changes in participant work readiness, pathway choices, and career service interventions.

² National Careers Institute, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2022). *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development Commonwealth of Australia*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

Employment service quality and career development

Professional career guidance is fundamental to helping individuals improve their career outcomes and is an essential component of successful employment services and programs overseas. Australia has developed the Australian Blueprint for Career Development for the following purpose:

*“The primary aim of the Blueprint is to enable career development practitioners and others (e.g. teachers, parents, **employment service providers**, employers) who provide some level of support for people’s careers and transitions, to work with a nationally consistent set of career management competencies.”*

Despite this, Australia’s Workforce Employment Services do not embed career development principles within their service delivery. Career development and guidance ensures people:

- understand their strengths and skills
- identify their interests
- explore how different roles align to personal values and needs
- have career plans and understand how to reach their goals
- can conduct job searches and make employment applications.

Through career education at school, students learn about the world of work, explore their options, and make informed career choices. However, Australia does not have a career education subject in the Australian Curriculum and ACARA has advised ACCE there are no plans to include this subject. Consequently, each jurisdiction approaches career education and development differently and this has led to inequity and poor transitioning for many students, especially disadvantaged students, and those with disability.

Low employment outcome expectancy has also been identified in education systems, among family, and in social systems for people with disability³. It has resulted in the low transitioning rates seen from school to education or skills pathways and employment:

- Australians with disability are less likely than other Australians to complete Year 12 of secondary school or gain university qualifications. They also struggle to attain vocational education and training (VET) qualifications.
- Young people aged 15–24 with disability (25% or 37,500) are more than twice as likely as those aged 25–64 (7.9% or 74,900) to be unemployed and four times more likely to get their main income from a government pension or allowances compared to young people without disability (44% to 11%).⁴

In addition, those with disability are more often directed to employment in disability enterprises even though they may have the capacity to work in mainstream employment. This increases the need for the

³ ACCE. (2021). *Submission to the Australian Government’s consultation on the development of a Disability Employment Strategy (‘The Strategy’)*. <https://ceav.vic.edu.au/media/252179/submission-to-the-disability-employment-strategy.pdf>

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2010). *4430.0 - ABS Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers 2009-15*. Canberra. <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4430.02009?OpenDocument>

DES Quality Framework to include career development and planning as a quality factor and ensure it is part of disability employment service delivery. In doing so, the Australian Government can increase the number of people with disability pursuing and managing career goals across their lifespan and contributing to Australia's workforce capacity.

Importantly, career guidance and planning must be delivered by qualified career professionals who are eligible for registration on the Australian Register of Professional Career Development Practitioners. Career development and career decision making is a social science delivered by trained professionals who study career theory and undertake specific skill development. Canada, Wales, Scotland, and many other western countries have embedded career development within their employment services to improve employment outcomes for their citizens⁵.

To measure service quality and effectiveness, the DES Quality Framework should include new metrics and evaluations that assess and measure positive changes in participant work readiness, pathway choices, and career service interventions. The application of evidence-based vocational tools suited to the needs of individuals and career service tools are essential to provide robust reporting of service quality. Examples include the ERS Scale™ vocational tool and PRIME International.

While disability employment service staff may need additional training to align service quality to Australia's Blueprint for Career Development, there is also an opportunity for the disability employment service ecosystem to be aligned to career guidance services. In Victoria, Jobs Victoria has been recognised by the OECD for its integrated suite of employment services comprising Job Mentors, Jobs Advocates, Career Counsellors, and Employment Services. Through ongoing collaboration between service providers, government agencies, and programs, jobseekers are receiving differentiated support to meet their individual needs.⁶ This has enabled the Jobs Victoria Career Counselling service to support the broader community as well as deliver services from within Workforce Australia Employment Services (Career Counsellors are supporting jobseekers at 14 Workforce Australia Employment Service sites across five providers).

Career guidance in employment services is vital for jobseekers to improve their outcomes. To ensure Australia provides an equitable approach and improves outcomes for those with disability, the Australian Blueprint for Career Development should underpin employment services. Career Development should be an essential principle in the DES Quality Framework and delivered within the disability employment ecosystem.

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⁵ OECD. (2004). *Career guidance and public policy: bridging the gap*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁶ OECD. (2022). *Strengthening Career Guidance for Mid-Career Adults in Australia, Getting Skills Right*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/e08803ce-en>

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