

## **A National Skills Passport – Consultation Submission**

### **Executive Summary**

The National Skills Passport presents a significant opportunity to transform how Australians manage their careers.

This initiative provides a centralised and portable record of an individual's skills and qualifications that can be accessed by employers, educators, and other stakeholders.

To maximise its impact, the Skills Passport must be embedded within a comprehensive career development framework informed by the Australian Blueprint for Career Development. This Blueprint outlines 12 critical competencies for effective career management across personal management, learning & work exploration, and career building.

The Skills Passport should support the development of these competencies through features like:

- Self-assessment tools for identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Resources on career exploration, planning, and goal setting
- Information on learning opportunities and upskilling pathways

A key focus should be identifying individuals' learning needs through self-assessment and providing tailored recommendations for relevant courses, mentoring programs, and other development opportunities.

Transition skills are also vital for navigating career changes. The Passport should provide guidance and resources for developing transition skills like adaptability, resilience, and transferable skill recognition.

The Passport system can be further tailored to support diverse users like First Nations people, students, mid-career professionals, career changers, women returning to work, and mature workers.

It should integrate with databases like the Unique Student Identifier to leverage available qualification/training records. Self-attested credentials can be included if substantiated by evidence and verified by trusted third parties.

Ultimately, through tight integration with career development best practices, the National Skills Passport can go beyond a skills record to become a dynamic tool empowering Australians throughout their professional journeys.

### **Introduction**

The National Skills Passport is a highly commendable initiative that has the potential to bring about a significant transformation in the way Australians manage their careers. This initiative provides a centralised and portable record of an individual's skills and qualifications, which can be accessed by employers, educational institutions, and other relevant stakeholders. This aspect of the Passport can be a game-changer for individuals seeking to advance their careers as it provides them with the opportunity to take ownership of their career development and make informed decisions about their future.

However, to truly maximise its impact, the Skills Passport must be embedded within a more comprehensive career development framework. This framework should be informed by the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, which outlines the essential competencies for effective career management. These competencies include self-awareness, career exploration, career planning, decision-making, and goal setting, among others. The Blueprint provides a holistic approach to career development that considers an individual's unique skills, interests, values, and personality, helping them to identify potential career paths and develop the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in their chosen careers.

## **The Importance of a Career Development Framework**

A career development framework outlines a systematic career planning and decision-making approach. It helps individuals understand their skills and interests, set career goals, identify learning and development opportunities, and develop a plan to achieve them. By integrating the Skills Passport within a career development framework, we can ensure that it is not just a record of skills but a dynamic tool supporting individuals throughout their career.

## **The Australian Blueprint for Career Development**

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development is a national framework that outlines twelve critical competencies for effective career management. It is owned by the Department of Employment and Workforce Development.

The framework categorises competencies into three learning areas:

### **Learning Area A: Personal Management:**

- **Build and maintain a positive self-concept:** This competency involves having a solid sense of self-worth and confidence, which means recognising your strengths and weaknesses and accepting yourself for who you are.
- **Interact positively and effectively with others:** This competency involves effective communication and relationship building, which includes active listening, providing and receiving feedback, and conflict resolution.
- **Change and grow throughout life:** This competency involves being open to new experiences, learning new things, taking risks, and stepping outside one's comfort zone.
- **Manage well-being and mental and physical health:** This competency involves maintaining physical and emotional well-being by adopting healthy eating habits, getting sufficient sleep, and engaging in regular exercise.

### **Learning Area B: Learning & Work Exploration:**

- **Participate in lifelong learning supportive of career goals:** This competency involves a commitment to continuous learning, which includes taking courses, attending workshops, and reading relevant books and articles.
- **Locate and use career information effectively:** This competency focuses on researching different careers using career websites, talking to career practitioners, and networking with people in your field.
- **Understand the relationship between work, society, and the economy:** This competency involves understanding how economic trends, social changes, and technological advancements affect various industries and occupations in the job market.
- **Understand the changing nature of life and work roles:** This competency is about being aware that the world of work is constantly evolving and requires individuals to adapt to new technologies, work methods, and career opportunities.

### **Learning Area C: Career Building:**

- **Secure/create and maintain work:** This competency involves job search skills such as resume writing, interviewing, and networking.
- **Make career-enhancing decisions:** This competency involves making informed decisions about your career. It includes setting goals, assessing your skills and interests, and carefully considering your options.
- **Maintain balanced life and work roles:** This competency is about effectively managing your time and energy to succeed personally and professionally.

- Understand, engage in and manage the career-building process: This competency is about being proactive in taking charge of your career development, which includes setting goals, taking action, and evaluating your progress.

The Skills Passport should be designed to support the development of these competencies. For example, the Passport could include:

- Self-assessment tools to help individuals identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- Resources on career exploration and planning
- Information on learning and development opportunities
- Tools to track progress and achievements.

### **Self-Assessment and Learning Needs Identification**

The Skills Passport should be more than just a repository of skills and qualifications. It should also allow users to self-assess their career development competencies and identify their learning needs. This could be done through a combination of self-assessment tools, surveys, and guidance from career development professionals.

Individuals can use the Skills Passport to find relevant learning and development opportunities by identifying their learning needs. This could include online courses, workshops, or mentoring programs.

### **Transition Skills**

The Skills Passport is an essential tool that can help individuals develop and improve their skills, making them more competitive in today's job market. However, it should also pay special attention to transition skills, which are critical for people who want to shift between jobs, careers, or industries. These skills are the key to successful career transitions, and the Passport should provide detailed information on the different types of transition skills required for this purpose.

Moreover, the Passport should guide individuals in developing these skills, including practical steps and best practices. It should also offer a comprehensive list of resources to support individuals through these transitions, including training programs, mentorship opportunities, and other resources.

Women often acquire valuable skills through volunteer work, caregiving, and managing households, which might not be traditionally recognised in resumes or qualifications. The Skills Passport could allow women to document and showcase these transferable skills, making them more visible to potential employers.

By providing support for transition skills, the Skills Passport can empower individuals to navigate the constantly evolving world of work with confidence and ease. This, in turn, will help them achieve their career goals and aspirations while adapting to new challenges and opportunities.

### **Tailoring the Skills Passport to Diverse User Groups:**

Beyond the general framework suggested earlier, the Skills Passport can be further enhanced by adopting a modular approach to cater to the specific needs of different user groups. Here are some ideas:

First Nations People.

- **Increased Recognition of Traditional Skills and Knowledge:** A passport system with sections for traditional skills and knowledge could empower First Nations peoples to showcase their unique abilities to employers and educational institutions.
- **Improved Access to Education and Employment:** A passport system could simplify transitions between education, training, and employment, especially for First Nations people who have faced historical barriers. It could also connect them with targeted support services and resources.
- **Cultural Competence and Recognition:** The passport can be made more accessible for First Nations users by adding culturally appropriate language and design elements, encouraging broader participation, and fostering trust on the platform.

#### Students and Early Career Professionals.

- Focus on self-discovery and exploration: Include interactive tools for skills identification, career quizzes, and personalised recommendations for further education and training.
- Highlight internship and volunteering opportunities: Integrate with platforms offering such opportunities, allowing users to showcase relevant experiences within the passport.
- Connect with mentors and advisors: Facilitate connections with professionals through the platform, enabling personalised career guidance.

#### Mid-career professionals seeking advancement.

- Emphasise skills mapping and upskilling: Integrate tools for mapping required skills for target positions and recommend relevant learning resources and certifications.
- Showcase achievements and projects: Allow users to upload detailed descriptions of projects, quantifiable results, and leadership experiences.
- Facilitate networking and visibility: Enable connections with industry professionals and potential employers within the platform.

#### Professionals facing career transitions.

- Focus on transferable skills and adaptability: Highlight relevant skills across different industries and roles, emphasising their adaptability.
- Offer reskilling and upskilling resources: Provide curated content and personalised recommendations for acquiring new skills necessary for desired transitions.
- Connect with career coaches and transition specialists: Offer access to professionals who can guide individuals through career changes.

#### Women returning to work.

- Visibility of transferable skills: Women gain valuable skills through volunteering, caregiving, and household management. These skills are often overlooked in resumes. The National Skills Passport could allow women to document and showcase transferable skills, making them more visible to potential employers.
- Upskilling and reskilling: The National Skills Passport could connect women with upskilling and reskilling opportunities on education and training platforms, especially for those needing to refresh or adapt their skills to meet industry demands.
- Confidence-building: The National Skills Passport can boost women's confidence by providing a centralised record of achievements and qualifications. This is especially helpful for women with gaps in their formal work experience.
- Targeted support: The National Skills Passport can be utilised to identify the specific needs and challenges encountered by women returning to work. This can assist policymakers and support services in developing targeted programs and resources.

#### People living with a disability.

- Recognise skills acquired through disability-related experiences, such as problem-solving, adaptation, resilience, and self-advocacy.
- Highlight the transferability of these skills to various professional contexts.
- Offer guidance on communicating the value of these skills to potential employers.
- Allow users to disclose their disability status and specific needs during registration voluntarily.
- Offer educational resources and guidance on disclosing disabilities to potential employers responsibly and effectively.

#### Mature workers nearing retirement.

- Focus on phased retirement options and skills sharing: Include information on flexible work arrangements and opportunities to mentor younger professionals.

- Highlight volunteering and community engagement: Facilitate participation in volunteer work and social impact initiatives aligned with user skills and interests.
- Offer financial planning and retirement resources: Integrate information and tools for navigating financial planning and retirement benefits.

### **Linking with Existing Systems**

The National Skills Passport could link with several existing systems to avoid duplication.

The myGov platform is a central hub for Australians to access various government services.

Integrating the National Skills Passport into this platform could provide several benefits:

1. **Centralised Access:** Users could access their National Skills Passport directly from their myGov account, making it convenient to view, manage, and update their skills and qualifications.
2. **Secure Identity Verification:** myGov's robust identity verification processes could be leveraged to authenticate users and ensure the integrity of the information stored in the National Skills Passport.
3. **Data Sharing:** myGov could facilitate sharing relevant data between government agencies and the National Skills Passport platform. This could include:
  - Linking the Unique Student Identifier (USI) to import vocational education and training qualifications automatically.
  - Integrating with higher education databases to verify university degrees and certifications.
  - Connecting with professional bodies to validate professional memberships and licenses.
  - Importing information from government agencies like the Australian Tax Office for licenses, permits, and other credentials.
4. **Personalised Recommendations:** By leveraging the user's data in myGov (e.g., demographics, location, employment history), the National Skills Passport could provide more personalised recommendations for learning opportunities, career guidance, and resources tailored to the individual's unique circumstances.
5. **Unified User Experience:** Integrating the National Skills Passport into myGov could provide a seamless and unified user experience, reducing the need for users to manage multiple accounts and platforms.
6. **Increased Adoption:** By leveraging the existing user base and familiarity with myGov, integration could drive increased awareness and adoption of the National Skills Passport among Australians.

The yourcareer.gov.au website provides a wealth of career information and resources for Australians.

Integrating the National Skills Passport with this platform could create a powerful synergy, offering several benefits:

1. **Career Exploration:** The National Skills Passport could incorporate links and resources from yourcareer.gov.au to support users in exploring different career paths based on their skills, interests, and qualifications.
2. **Skills Mapping:** The yourcareer.gov.au platform's job descriptions and occupation information could be used to map the skills required for specific roles. This data could then be integrated into the National Skills Passport, allowing users to identify skill gaps and recommend relevant learning opportunities.
3. **Personalised Career Guidance:** By combining the user's Skills Passport data with the career information available on yourcareer.gov.au, the platform could offer personalised career guidance and recommendations tailored to the individual's unique profile.
4. **Job Search Integration:** The National Skills Passport could link users to relevant job postings on the yourcareer.gov.au platform based on their skills, qualifications, and career interests, streamlining the job search process.
5. **Transferable Skills Recognition:** The yourcareer.gov.au platform's resources on transferable skills could be leveraged to help users identify and showcase their transferable skills within the National Skills Passport, especially for those transitioning between industries or roles.
6. **Seamless User Experience:** By integrating the two platforms, users could easily access the National Skills Passport and the career information and resources on yourcareer.gov.au through a unified interface, enhancing the overall user experience.

### **Inclusion of unverifiable or 'self-attested' credentials**

Including unverifiable or 'self-attested' credentials could diminish the credibility and perceived value of the National Skills Passport in several ways. For example:

- Employers may be reluctant to trust the accuracy of unverifiable credentials.
- Unverifiable credentials could be used to inflate a person's skills and qualifications fraudulently.
- The inclusion of unverifiable credentials could create a two-tier system where those with verifiable credentials are seen as more credible than those with unverifiable credentials.

However, there are several ways to mitigate these risks. For example:

- The National Skills Passport could require users to provide evidence to support their self-attested credentials. This evidence could include things like course completion certificates, references, or portfolio samples.
- The National Skills Passport could partner with trusted third-party organisations to verify self-attested credentials. These organisations could include professional bodies, industry associations, or educational institutions.
- The National Skills Passport could clearly inform users and employers that self-attested credentials are less reliable than verified credentials.

Ultimately, the decision of whether to include unverifiable credentials in the National Skills Passport is a complex one. There are both risks and benefits to consider, and the best approach will likely involve a combination of the strategies outlined above.

### **Conclusion**

The National Skills Passport represents a paradigm shift in how Australians approach career development, lifelong learning, and harnessing their full potential. By strategically aligning this groundbreaking initiative with the comprehensive Australian Blueprint for Career Development, the Skills Passport transcends being a mere repository of qualifications. Instead, it evolves into a dynamic and transformative tool that empowers individuals to navigate the complexities of the modern workforce with confidence, resilience, and sustained success.

This submission outlines a clear and actionable roadmap to unlock the full transformative capabilities of the National Skills Passport. Through strategic features such as self-assessment tools, personalised learning resources tailored to identified skill gaps, and a strong emphasis on cultivating vital transition skills like adaptability and resilience, the Passport equips Australians with the knowledge, guidance, and mindset required to thrive in the ever-changing professional landscape.

Moreover, the Skills Passport fosters inclusivity by catering to the unique needs of diverse user groups, including First Nations people, students, mid-career professionals, career changers, women returning to work, and mature workers. It ensures that every individual is included in their pursuit of career fulfilment. The proposed seamless integration with existing systems such as the Unique Student Identifier, higher education databases, and professional bodies further reinforces the Passport's utility, making it an indispensable asset for anyone striving to unlock their career aspirations.

### **CICA MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS**

Australian Capital Territory Careers Association (ACTCA)  
Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE)  
AIS Athlete Wellbeing and Engagement Network (AIS)  
Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA)  
Career Advisers Association of New South Wales & ACT (CAANSW/ACT)  
Career Education Association of Western Australia (CEAWA)  
Career Educators Association of the Northern Territory (CEANT)  
National Association of Graduate Career Advisory Services (Australia) Inc (NAGCAS)  
Queensland Association of Student Advisors (QASA)  
Queensland Guidance and Counselling Association (QGCA)  
Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australasia Inc (RCAA)



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