

**MEDIA RELEASE
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**Accelerating Gender Economic Equality:
Career Development at the Core of Australia's Future Workforce**

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) is calling for career development to be recognised as a central and strategic lever in accelerating gender economic equality and strengthening the nation's workforce.

Recent national analysis confirms that gendered learning and work pathways continue to limit women's full participation in secure and well-paid careers, while contributing to persistent skills shortages in priority growth sectors.

The Jobs and Skills Australia Gender Economic Equality Study provides clear evidence that career development is critical to shifting these patterns. Gendered study and training pathways remain deeply entrenched, with only one in five fields of education currently gender balanced.

This restricts women's access to high demand roles, particularly in industries central to Australia's economic transition, such as clean energy, digital technology and advanced manufacturing.

Women are also more likely than men to be employed below their qualification and skill level. This represents a significant loss to individual earning potential, to national productivity, and to the return on investment in education and training.

The study reinforces the importance of supporting adults through career transitions, especially those impacted by career breaks related to caring responsibilities.

The analysis shows that career-limiting stereotypes and expectations begin early. Children and young people are influenced by gendered norms at school, at home and in their communities, shaping their perceptions of future career possibilities long before important decisions are made.

For First Nations women, culturally and linguistically diverse women and women with disability, the impacts of these barriers intensify as they progress through education and into the labour market.

To address these challenges, CICA is calling for career development to be embedded into education and workforce policy and delivery from early schooling through to adulthood. This includes ensuring specialist career development is available in every school, introducing mandatory curriculum for career learning, and guaranteeing lifelong access to qualified career support during key points of change and re-entry to work.

CICA also welcomes the Study's recognition of the critical roles of Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in shifting entrenched gendered norms and training pathways. This includes JSC-led industry action targeting gender segregation across priority and emerging sectors, as well as ACARA's development of strengthened career learning in the Australian Curriculum, to ensure that all young people explore a wider range of study and work futures from primary school onwards.

CICA Executive Director David Carney said a coordinated government focus on career development is essential:

"Government investment in career development is a direct investment in economic growth. By enabling women to access the full breadth of future opportunities, participate in secure work and progress into leadership, we unlock both individual potential and the nation's productivity. Policy action in this area will pay dividends across every priority growth sector."

The study's 10 recommendations form a clear national roadmap for accelerating gender economic equality, directing responsibility to key system leaders, including the Office for Women, DEWR, Jobs and Skills Australia, Jobs and Skills Councils, ACARA, state and territory governments, employers, industry, and education providers. These reforms collectively span education, training, career support, workplace conditions and intersectional economic policy — with career development capability uplift embedded throughout.

Career development is a recognised enabler of key national reform agendas, including addressing ongoing occupational shortages, strengthening participation and career sustainability, enhancing labour mobility, advancing Closing the Gap outcomes, and achieving the ambitions set out in the Working for Women Strategy and the National Skills Agreement.

CICA stands ready to work in partnership with the government, Jobs and Skills Australia, Jobs and Skills Councils, and ACARA to ensure that every Australian can access the career support needed to enter, remain and advance in meaningful and economically secure work.

For more information

Visit the Jobs and Skills Australia research portal at:
<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/research/studies/gender-economic-equality-study>

About CICA

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) is the national peak body representing career development in Australia. CICA works collaboratively with governments, education, industry, and community to advance the professional standards, quality, and impact of career development services for all Australians.

Media Contact:



David Carney
Executive Director
Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA)
 info@cica.org.au |  www.cica.org.au