

**MEDIA RELEASE  
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**Australia's Youth Deserve Better Than a 'Curriculum Connection'**

**ACARA's Decision Leaves Work Studies Frozen at Version 8.4 and Reduces Career Education to Optional Resources**

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) today expressed deep concern over the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) decision not to update the Years 9 and 10 Work Studies curriculum (Version 8.4) and instead to develop a separate, optional "Curriculum Connection."

In the V9 Australian Curriculum, curriculum connections, while encouraged and beneficial for enriching learning experiences, are not mandatory, meaning there is no guarantee that students will benefit from them.

Work Studies does not appear on the Australian Curriculum webpage, cannot be found through the search function, and is buried in the FAQ section where it is noted as an optional curriculum. This lack of visibility and authority signals to schools that it is not a priority subject, further diminishing its role in supporting students' career development.

At a time when young Australians face a rapidly changing world of work, increasing uncertainty, and mounting pressure to make well-informed post-school choices, this move halts one of the few structured career education pathways in secondary schools. It represents a significant step backwards, inconsistent with both the evidence and the urgency.

**The Evidence Is Clear**

A recent OECD report, *The State of Global Teenage Career Preparation*, reveals troubling gaps in Australian career education:

- 36% of Australian teens are "career uncertain," lacking a clear picture of their future work
- 66% expect to enter high-status professions like medicine and law, far exceeding actual labour market demand
- Only 34% have accessed work placements, despite such experiences being linked to better employment outcomes

*"This is not just a policy failure; it's a failure to listen to the data, the experts, and most importantly, the students themselves," said David Carney, Executive Director of CICA. "At a time when we should be expanding access to high-quality career education, this decision leaves students with outdated curriculum content and reduced opportunities."*

**ACARA's Own Review Findings Support a Different Course**

ACARA's 2024 review of the Work Studies curriculum revealed four key findings that make the Board's decision even more difficult to understand:

1. **Terminology matters.** Career should be understood not just as paid work, but as a holistic life journey including learning, contribution to society, and personal development.
2. **Career education must begin early.** It should continue progressively with age-appropriate content across schooling and targeted support at transition points.
3. **Successful models are systemic.** They rely on whole-of-government strategies, trained professionals, and multi-agency support embedded in school and curriculum structures.
4. **All students aspire.** Academic research confirms that all young people have aspirations, regardless of the paths they pursue. These must be nurtured with equity and purpose.

Despite this clear guidance, the Board has opted for a Curriculum Connection, a secondary resource lacking the authority, structure, or impact of an endorsed curriculum subject, while leaving Version 8.4 of Work Studies untouched and increasingly outdated.

### **A National Issue Demanding Ministerial Leadership**

This is not just a curriculum issue; it is a national issue that demands immediate attention from Australia's Education Ministers. Career education is not a luxury but essential to workforce readiness, lifelong learning, and economic resilience.

CICA is not calling for more work to be added to teachers' already full plates. The *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (2022)* rightly cautions against overloading teachers and highlights the importance of reviewing existing curriculum content for relevance and clarity.

Embedding career education is about making better use of what's already there, connecting learning to life beyond school and supporting informed, confident choices about the future.

### **A Call for Immediate Review and Reform**

CICA calls on ACARA and Education Ministers to urgently review this decision and commit to a national strategy that positions career education as a foundation across the schooling system. This must include:

- A clear curriculum framework that supports progressive, age-appropriate career education from the early years onward.
- Targeted support at key transition points such as Year 6 to 7, Year 10 subject selection, and post-school planning.

"The message is simple," said Mr Carney. "We cannot leave young people to dream about jobs that don't exist. If we want to build a prosperous future, we must invest in career education now."

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