



COVID-19: Reshaping Working Australia

A Position Statement by the
Career Development Association of Australia

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Who we are and what we do

About the Association

The Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA) is Australia's cross-sectoral community of career development practitioners, with members in every state and territory and across all sectors of the profession.

The CDAA is a member of the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA), the National Peak Body for the Career Industry in Australia.

The CDAA is committed to the Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners and all CDAA members are bound by the CDAA Code of Practice.

About career development

Work-related needs and preferences evolve and change throughout life, while the world of work is continuously evolving and adapting to economic, political and social changes.

Career development focuses on enabling people to understand and develop their skills and preferences to manage these challenges, make good decisions about their working lives, and maximise their contribution to the communities in which they live and work.

About Career Development Practitioners

CDAA members are recognised career development practitioners who conform to a Professional Standards Framework and a Code of Practice. Members are governed by ethical standards, require substantiated, industry-related qualifications, and are obliged to complete a minimum number of professional development hours every year.

Career practitioners work in a range of settings including schools, TAFEs, universities, corporate organisations, government agencies and private practice. Job titles used by practitioners include - career educator, career counsellor, performance management consultant, rehabilitation consultant, researcher, human resources officer, work experience coordinator, employment services advisor, career coach and youth worker.

Career development practitioners may:

- contribute to building a career resilient workforce
- empower people to self-manage their careers
- pilot students through the maze of occupation-related data and resources
- support organisations to address labour and skill shortages
- facilitate understanding of how life's jigsaw pieces fit together to reveal a fresh direction and purpose and
- generally help people to explore, dream and discover opportunities.

Additional information about the work of career development practitioners is available in Appendix A.

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Executive Summary and Recommendations

Everyone living and working in Australia, regardless of citizenship, residency and visitor status, has been affected by the COVID-19 health crisis. The social and economic impact has been sudden and dramatic. No longer is life 'normal'.

This Position Statement raises eight critical issues that impact people's careers. The recommendations relate primarily to the work of the Australian Government, working with the National Cabinet.

KEY POINTS

- What makes high quality career services is well understood. They are delivered by qualified, impartial, highly skilled and knowledgeable professionals called career development practitioners.
- As Australia awakens from hibernation further ongoing government activity will be needed to reinvigorate the economy.
- The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting the need for Australia to establish a highly visible, lifelong career guidance system that ensures that all people have access to career support across their lifespan, when they need it, and in a form that suits them.
- Eight critical issues that currently impact people's careers highlight the need to:
 - improve the visibility and number of, and access to, career services; and
 - support and improve the quality of existing career services.
- One skill will be critical as we move into a future Australia—the ability to adapt. The work of career development professionals is, in part, directed to building people's adaptability. Helping people to get their careers back on track will act like an insurance policy, giving people the ongoing career management skills to continue to make informed choices and decisions throughout their lives.
- We now have the opportunity to think about what sort of Australia we want, one that provides meaningful work for all who seek it, where opportunity is fairly distributed, and where the planet's resources are protected for future generations.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Australia needs a life-long career guidance system

1.1 Whenever government job, education, employment, and skills policies and programs are being considered, stakeholder consultations include representatives from career development professional associations that are members of CICA.

1.2 Governments across jurisdictions provide stimulus funding to career development professional associations that are members of CICA, to provide career development training programs to jobactive providers; to develop online career services grounded in evidence and professional standards; and to provide career services to employers who wish to provide transition programs for staff, including tailored career support, transferable skills recognition, and job search assistance.

1.3 The Australian Government changes taxation law to remove the link between career advice and earning income, in order to allow individual career support services, including career counselling, career coaching and career guidance, to be tax deductible.

1.4 The Australian Government, as a matter of urgency, develops and implements an education campaign, using the National Careers Ambassador Scott Cam, to encourage people interested in Vocational Education and Training (VET) to seek help with their careers from qualified career development professionals.

1.5 The Australian Government complements Mr Cam's campaign with an education campaign that encourages people of all ages to seek help with their careers from qualified career development professionals.

2. Increasing digital Inclusion

2.1 That the Australian Digital Council and the relevant COAG Councils consider the recommendations concerning digital exclusion set out in the *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide* report, particularly as they relate to Disability, Skills, Education, Indigenous Affairs, and Closing the Gap.

3. Producing up-to-date career information

3.1 The Australian Government ensures continuing rapid collection and dissemination of Labour Market Information (LMI) on industries and sectors, and on occupations with growing opportunities forecasted, and highlighting the range of jobs available across Australia's regions and cities.

3.2 The Australian Government continues to support the ABS's production of new weekly statistics providing up-to-date information on the impact of COVID-19 on jobs and wages, labour market information and other statistical data.

3.3 The Australian Government, as a matter of urgency, directs the National Careers Institute to complete the design and development of a national careers-focused digital platform to streamline and strengthen the way careers information is delivered in Australia.

3.4 The Australian Government continues to fund essential career websites (Job Outlook, LMI Portal, Job Jumpstart, What's Next, Study in Australia, Working in Australia, Australian Jobs) that help people make career decisions.

4. Reducing insecure work

4.1 The Australian Government, as soon as pandemic restrictions allow, completes the Senate inquiry into *Unlawful underpayment of employees' remuneration* and acts on its recommendations.

4.2 The Australian Government improves resources for education campaigns to ensure employers and employees know their rights and obligations.

5. Supporting unemployed workers

5.1 As a matter of urgency, the Treasurer uses his broad powers to extend JobKeeper payments to unemployed workers who do not currently qualify because they have not been employed by one entity on a regular basis during the last 12 months.

5.2 The Australian Government extends access to the JobSeeker COVID-19 supplement and the JobKeeper payments beyond the end of September for another six months to continue supporting unemployed people through the pandemic.

5.3 The Australian Government, when considering ceasing the JobSeeker COVID-19 supplement payments, adjusts the JobSeeker base rate to a payment that is equivalent to, as a minimum, a widely recognised standard such as the Minimum Income for Healthy Living, to ensure that all eligible recipients do not live in poverty.

5.4 The Australian Government introduces a requirement that jobactive providers employ qualified career development practitioners to provide tailored services that support unemployed people's career goals.

5.5 The Australian Government assists job seekers by funding jobactive providers to supplement the digital-first model of self-directed online services with one-on-one services that meet the specific needs of the job seeker as determined by the job seeker.

5.6 The Australian Government reinstates Australian programming obligations (Australian drama, Australian documentary and Children's and Preschool programs) for commercial television broadcasting licensees by the end of 2020.

5.7 The Australian Government reinstates the licence condition requiring minimum levels of expenditure by subscription television broadcasting licensees on new eligible drama programs by the end of 2020.

6. Supporting mental health

6.1 When the Productivity Commission completes its report on mental health, the Australian Government considers its recommendations, particularly those related to employment and vocational services.

7. Supporting people studying

7.1 The Australian Government continues to implement, as a matter of urgency, the *Future Ready: National Career Education Strategy*.

7.2 The Australian Government, through the COAG Education Council, supports State and Territory Governments to:

- provide funding and professional development time for public school teachers across the education system to enable them to redesign curriculum for an online environment, accommodate additional time for planning and implementation, and obtain technical support.
- implement a targeted and coherent plan to support vulnerable students to physically attend school.
- ensure that educators have the resources to diagnose students' learning loss and to support their mental health once school-based learning resumes.

7.3 The Australian Government, through the National Cabinet and/or the COAG Education Council, supports State and Territory Governments to ensure that all Year 12 students have access to professional career practitioners to support them in meeting university entrance requirements.

7.4 The Australian Government, in discussions with universities, asks universities to:

- provide career advice to students applying for entry, to assist them in making informed and appropriate course choices;
- provide support and assistance to commencing students by bridging gaps in academic skills that may have occurred as a result of the disruption to schooling during 2020;
- consider, longer term, offering appropriate enabling courses, and career advice, to support those wishing to reengage with education following disruption to, or premature disengagement from, education due to COVID-19.

8. Reshaping working Australia beyond COVID-19

8.1 The Australian Government gives priority to creating jobs in sectors and industries that use resources more sustainably and in ways that do not further degrade the environment.

8.2 Post-COVID-19, the Australian Government ensures that disaster management planning factors in mental health support.

An uncertain future needs government support

Everyone living and working in Australia, regardless of citizenship, residency and visitor status, has been affected by the COVID-19 health crisis. The social and economic impact has been sudden and dramatic. No longer is life 'normal'.

Australia's National Cabinet, led by the Prime Minister, has responded effectively to this pandemic by introducing major public health measures and providing financial support. The changes resulting from these measures have been rapid with major impacts on businesses and employment.

The Reserve Bank of Australia's (RBA) May report stated that: "The Australian economy is expected to record a contraction in GDP of around 10 per cent over the first half of 2020; total hours worked are expected to decline by around 20 per cent and the unemployment rate is forecast to rise to around 10 per cent in the June quarter."ⁱ

This contraction is not affecting everyone equally. KPMG and others have pointed out that the impact of COVID-19 has exposed existing weak links across industries, government and in our economy, some of which are exacerbating the current downturn.ⁱⁱ

National Cabinet's three-step plan to end restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of coronavirus will start to slowly reopen the economy and society. As Australia awakens from hibernation further ongoing government activity will be needed to reinvigorate the economy. Dr Lowe, RBA Governor, commented that we will not return quickly to business as usual, that some precautionary behaviour will persist, and it is probable that there will be structural changes in the economy.

"As we look forward to the recovery, there is an opportunity to build on the cooperative spirit that is now serving us so well to push forward with reforms that would move us out of the shadows cast by the crisis. A strong focus on making Australia a great place for businesses to expand, invest, innovate and hire people is the best way of extending the recovery into a new period of strong and sustainable growth and rising living standards for all Australians."ⁱⁱⁱ

Government spending to reinvigorate the economy will not create a major debt problem. Rather, as economist Dr Triggs has argued: "Failing to expand government significantly would have catastrophic long-term consequences."^{iv} These consequences include increased unemployment, business closures, a disproportionate impact on young people, increased suicides, mortality, and domestic violence.

Reshaping Australia needs a holistic approach that continues to bring all jurisdictions together and gives incentives for states and territories to work on a national approach with local flavour. Reshaping includes reforms to safety net provisions, industry transitions and sector adjustments.

Reshaping Australia also means supporting people in their search for training and work. As Tristram Hooley, Professor of Career Education at the University of Derby writes, career is a

thread that runs through a person's life joining paid work, with unpaid work, education, family time, leisure, citizenship and everything else.^v Supporting people with making career-related decisions (education, training, and job choices) is going to be vital during the next 12 – 24 months as people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic face an uncertain future.

We now have the opportunity to think about what sort of Australia we want, one that provides meaningful work for all who seek it, where opportunity is fairly distributed, and where the planet's resources are protected for future generations.

We also have the opportunity to, in part, reshape Australia's economy so that we not only keep people safe and healthy, and provide essential financial, social, and emotional support to people across the Australian continent, but are also in a better position to avert, or at least diminish, the impact of future crises and disasters.

Career services essential for reshaping working Australia

The economy that comes out of hibernation is unlikely to look exactly like the one that was put to sleep. To reshape working Australia we need policies and programs that address identified, interrelated impacts of health measures on people's careers.

1. AUSTRALIA NEEDS A LIFE-LONG CAREER GUIDANCE SYSTEM

The work of career development professionals is far more complex than some people imagine.

Most of the time people do not give much thought to the health system—paramedics, hospitals, nurses, Medicare, insurance, rehabilitation—until they are sick or injured. When needing help, people may opt to tap the wealth of health information online. But, much of it is generic, and as we have seen during the pandemic, some of it is misleading or just plain wrong.

Similarly, people do not give much thought to the careers 'system'—vocational courses, job searching, pay entitlements, resumes and job applications, upskilling, unemployment benefits, work changes—until they wish to enter, re-enter or move within the workforce. And as with health, people may explore the mountain of career information and advice online. Again, much of it is generic, and some of it is inaccurate, out-of-date, and unsuited to people's circumstances.

When people need personal, professional help with health issues, they seek someone with relevant skills, training, knowledge and experience. So too, when people need career help, they need to source career development professionals. These professionals know how the careers 'system' works, where to find credible information, and most importantly, have the specialised skills to adapt information to a person's interests, skills, ambitions, age and circumstances.

The COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting the need for Australia to establish a highly visible, lifelong career guidance system that ensures that all people have access to career support across their lifespan, when they need it, and in a form that suits them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Whenever government job, education, employment, and skills policies and programs are being considered, stakeholder consultations include representatives from career development professional associations that are members of CICA.^{vi}

1.2 Governments across jurisdictions provide stimulus funding to career development professional associations that are members of CICA, to provide career development training programs to jobactive providers; to develop online career services grounded in evidence and professional standards; and to provide career services to employers who wish to provide transition programs for staff, including tailored career support, transferable skills recognition, and job search assistance.

1.3 The Australian Government changes taxation law to remove the link between career advice and earning income, in order to allow individual career support services, including career counselling, career coaching and career guidance, to be tax deductible.

1.4 The Australian Government, as a matter of urgency, develops and implements an education campaign, using the National Careers Ambassador Scott Cam, to encourage people interested in Vocational Education and Training (VET) to seek help with their careers from qualified career development professionals.^{vii}

1.5 The Australian Government complements Mr Cam's campaign with an education campaign that encourages people of all ages to seek help with their careers from qualified career development professionals.

2. INCREASING DIGITAL INCLUSION

Researchers have identified how digitisation, artificial intelligence and automation are affecting skills and jobs. They have also explored the range of digital skills needed by workers. These skills include the ability to operate devices, software and systems, as well as knowing how to work with data, attend to security issues and resolve problems.^{viii}

Digital skills are essential for daily living. They are needed for social interaction (e.g. smartphone usage), for interaction with systems and services (e.g. e-commerce and e-government services) and for accessing services and important information (e.g. education, e-health).

Digital skills are also needed to effectively manage careers. For example, they are needed for: online courses, job search strategies and using online resources; keeping up-to-date with emerging jobs and innovations; and effectively self-promoting using social media.

But not everyone has the necessary digital skills or access to online participation. The report *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide* states:

“The benefits of the digital economy cannot be shared when some members of the community are still facing real barriers to online participation. Digital inclusion is based on the premise that everyone should be able to make full use of digital technologies – to manage their health and wellbeing, access education and services, organise their finances, and connect with friends, family, and the world beyond.”^{ix}

The report identifies that gaps between digitally included and excluded Australians are substantial and widening for some groups, particularly people in low-income households, mobile-only users, people aged 65+, and people who did not complete secondary school.

Digital exclusion will impact people's ability to complete online educational requirements, use online career tools and resources, and search for, find and perform work. *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide* recommends that all levels of government collaborate so that the benefits of digital technology are shared by all Australians and the digital skills of excluded

communities and people 50+ in the workforce are improved. The report also recommends that: “Consideration should also be given to digital inclusion as a key commitment in the Closing the Gap agenda 3, with a program of research to measure and monitor digital inclusion in remote Indigenous communities.”^x

KPMG has predicted that in a post-COVID-19 world there will be large-scale acceleration of digital transformation across industries. They suggest that: “Our new digital and increasingly mobile-first behaviour will be sustained. This accelerated growth in digital interactions will play out at scale across all industries – impacting both large and small enterprises.”^{xi} Should this be the case, building the digital skills of existing and future workers should be a priority.

RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Australian Digital Council and the relevant COAG Councils consider the recommendations concerning digital exclusion set out in the *Measuring Australia’s Digital Divide* report, particularly as they relate to Disability, Skills, Education, Indigenous Affairs, and Closing the Gap.

3. PRODUCING UP-TO-DATE CAREER INFORMATION

Part of managing a career is to know where to look for career information and how to interpret it. Career development practitioners know where to find reliable and current information, and how to interpret information as it relates to a person’s circumstances.

During the National Careers Institute co-design consultations one of the most consistent themes about what stakeholders thought a national body could do within the careers sector is to:

“Improve the quality of and access to career information, advice and guidance by providing impartial, comprehensive labour market and pathway data to help individuals develop and manage their own careers at all ages and stages.”^{xii}

Governments play a central role in funding the collection, organisation, linking, and distribution of career information. It is essential that the Australian Government continue to support career-related websites and the production and distribution of up-to-date career-related information, including Labour Market Information (LMI). During the next 12 to 24 months in particular, people will need reliable, accurate and current career information at all ages, and across all stages of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Australian Government ensures continuing rapid collection and dissemination of LMI on industries and sectors, and on occupations with growing opportunities forecasted, and highlighting the range of jobs available across Australia’s regions and cities.

3.2 The Australian Government continues to support the ABS's production of new weekly statistics providing up-to-date information on the impact of COVID-19 on jobs and wages, labour market information and other statistical data.^{xiii}

3.3 The Australian Government, as a matter of urgency, directs the National Careers Institute to complete the design and development of a national careers-focused digital platform to streamline and strengthen the way careers information is delivered in Australia.^{xiv}

3.4 The Australian Government continues to fund essential career websites (Job Outlook, LMI Portal, Job Jumpstart, What's Next, Study in Australia, Working in Australia, Australian Jobs) that help people make career decisions.

4. REDUCING INSECURE WORK

While life is more than work, the importance of meaningful work cannot be overstated. Professor David Blustein^{xv} argues that work serves three main functions for people. Work allows people to survive and to gain money, power and status. It offers people a way of connecting to others and to their broader social context. And it offers people an opportunity for self-determination through being involved in activity that is motivating, interesting and rewarding.

Recent research commissioned by CDAA confirms that meaningful work is associated with crucial outcomes. Regardless of the work people do, meaningfulness in work is a driver of workers' aspirations and satisfaction. People who have meaningful work are more committed to their work, more engaged, and have greater job satisfaction and life meaning. Also, those with higher levels of meaningful work were associated with lower levels of intentions to leave the job.^{xvi}

One measure of a healthy economy is the number of people who can find meaningful work. Reports have described the increase in the gig economy and its impact. While casual, gig work suits some people, it does not suit everyone, particularly when insecure work has negative financial impacts.^{xvii}

The McKell Institute points out that while casuals receive benefits to make up for insecurity, they are not guaranteed hours and if they do work, these hours can be irregular, employment can be terminated without notice, and they do not receive paid sick or annual leave."^{xviii}

The Centre for Future Work points out: "Temporary, part-time, casual, irregular, and nominally independent or self-employed positions have become the norm for a majority of workers (and the overwhelming reality for most young workers)."^{xix} They also point out the vulnerability of many people in casual, insecure jobs: migrant workers, international students, and low wage and low skill workers.

Australian governments can reduce the impact of job insecurity in Australia. One action is to help people, including vulnerable groups, to understand their employment rights to ensure that they are paid correctly. During the pandemic, understanding this information is increasingly difficult with the many changes being made to rights, entitlements, and benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The Australian Government, as soon as pandemic restrictions allow, completes the Senate inquiry into *Unlawful underpayment of employees' remuneration* and acts on its recommendations.^{xx}

4.2 The Australian Government improves resources for education campaigns to ensure employers and employees know their rights and obligations.

5. SUPPORTING UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

The Australian Government's economic response to COVID-19 included measures to assist employers and newly unemployed people. These measures, due to cease at the end of September 2020, exclude many unemployed people who don't meet the eligibility requirements—casual employees who haven't been employed by one entity on a regular basis during the last 12 months—including teachers, researchers, academics, builders, people working in tourism, fishing and agriculture, and many working in the arts and culture sector.

Two sectors impacted by these measures are worth noting. The arts and culture sector, which is much more than 'just entertainment', has been hit hard by the pandemic. Important economically (contributing \$14.7 billion to the economy in 2017-18), half of businesses in the Arts and Recreation industry are not operating, which is worse than any other industry. 470,000 workers in the live performance sector have lost \$330 million worth of work. Current support packages exclude most workers.^{xxi}

This sector also plays a critical social and cultural role in our national identity and social wellbeing. Once restrictions are reduced, people will look forward to returning to cinemas, theatre, galleries and festivals. But in the short-term, new productions will be unavailable. Australians enjoy seeing stories that reflect who they are and want governments to support the sector and those who work in it.

The second sector is universities. A Rapid Research Information Forum paper on the impact the pandemic is likely to have on Australia's research workforce points to major changes, including: universities reducing the number of casual teachers and increasing the teaching loads of permanent staff; and projected job losses of up to 21,000 full time jobs over the next six months of which an estimated 7,000 could be research-related academic staff. Of concern is that women, early-career researchers and recent graduates will disproportionately experience negative impacts.^{xxii}

The RBA recently noted: “The longer someone is unemployed, the more difficult it is for them to find employment because of a loss (or a perceived loss) in skills or because they become discouraged and exit the labour force. Past experience also suggests that workers who first enter the labour market during a downturn are especially affected and can suffer long-term income and employment consequences.”^{xxiii}

Career development professionals have direct experience of how unemployment negatively impacts people’s careers. They know that there is a lack of entry level jobs for the unemployed, that low rates of income support have negative impacts on people’s physical and mental health, and that the costs of seeking employment, such as clothing, hygiene, transport costs and digital access, stop many people from seeking work.

The Senate inquiry *Adequacy of Newstart and Related Payments*, established that poverty is “a deep problem in Australia” with 1 in 8 people and 1 in 6 children living below the poverty line. The committee consistently heard that the current rates of income support payments for working-age jobseekers are too low, and have not increased in real terms since 1994, resulting in people living in poverty and very precarious conditions.^{xxiv}

Increasing the former Newstart payments would not only help people living in poverty but would stimulate the economy because households would spend most of this money. In setting any new payment, budget standards research (including the Minimum Income for Healthy Living),^{xxv} needs to be considered so that social safety net payments meet basic consumption needs, and provide for healthy living and an adequate level of social participation and inclusion.

Research has identified problems with the help unemployed people receive from jobactive providers, including a lack of qualifications and specialised skills.^{xxvi} Per Capita’s Discussion Paper, *Redesigning Employment Services After COVID-19*, argues there is a need to redesign employment services to better meet the needs of people experiencing unemployment after the COVID-19 economic shock.

With evidence that providers already have excessive workloads, they are unlikely to handle the demands of up to one million or more unemployed people. As Per Capita’s Discussion Paper concludes: “There is a need to ensure that post-COVID employment services are fit for newly unemployed workers and that they can adapt to the long-term challenges of the economic recovery over the years ahead.”^{xxvii}

Adapting career support to the needs of people, including the unemployed, is essential. The unemployed is a diverse group including sub-groups with particular needs, such as previous business owners, women aged 55+, migrants whose first language is not English, those with mental health problems, and many others. Providing digital and generic career services is unlikely to be effective in helping people find work.

CDAA’s research confirms that one-on-one support is particularly effective. Clients are 2.67 times more likely to secure a job with the support of a qualified career development practitioner. A crucial finding in the evidence on the effectiveness of career practitioners’

work is that computer-based interventions alone have the least effect, but their effect is enhanced by the presence of a practitioner.

“These findings have implications for striking the balance between resource-intensive but most effective (e.g., one-on-one service) and resource-low but least effective (e.g., self-directed online) services.”^{xxviii}

When people lack the necessary digital skills or access, and have specific needs, in-person, tailored career services are essential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As a matter of urgency, the Treasurer uses his broad powers to extend JobKeeper payments to unemployed workers who do not currently qualify because they have not been employed by one entity on a regular basis during the last 12 months.

5.2 The Australian Government extends access to the JobSeeker COVID-19 supplement and the JobKeeper payments beyond the end of September for another six months to continue supporting unemployed people through the pandemic.

5.3 The Australian Government, when considering ceasing the JobSeeker COVID-19 supplement payments, adjusts the JobSeeker base rate to a payment that is equivalent to, as a minimum, a widely recognised standard such as the Minimum Income for Healthy Living, to ensure that all eligible recipients do not live in poverty.

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5.5 The Australian Government assists job seekers by funding jobactive providers to supplement the digital-first model of self-directed online services with one-on-one services that meet the specific needs of the job seeker as determined by the job seeker.

5.6 The Australian Government reinstates Australian programming obligations (Australian drama, Australian documentary and Children’s and Preschool programs) for commercial television broadcasting licensees by the end of 2020.^{xxix}

5.7 The Australian Government reinstates the licence condition requiring minimum levels of expenditure by subscription television broadcasting licensees on new eligible drama programs by the end of 2020.^{xxx}

6. SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

Career development professionals not only support the effective functioning of the labour market, and the education system, they also contribute to a range of social goals. There is clear evidence of links among quality employment and mental health, unemployment and mental illness. CDAA's research provides evidence that:

- when workers feel under threat, depression and anxiety increase and psychological health decreases.
- organisations are negatively impacted when workers feel under threat, with a decrease in job satisfaction and an increase in intention to resign.^{xxxix}

Much media attention has been given to emotional responses during the pandemic, including stress, grief, uncertainty, social isolation, and fear. CERIC, a Canadian career organisation, points out in their publication *Strengthening Mental Health Through Effective Career Development*, that there is evidence that career development activities contribute to positive mental health.^{xxxix}

As people struggle to adapt to social isolation and the multitude of issues associated with coronavirus, mental health support groups have received record numbers of calls. Research shows the anxiety and stress associated with COVID-19, social isolation and negative economic impacts all may have an effect on subjective wellbeing and mental health. Life satisfaction has declined sharply since January 2020. Concerns about job security are not distributed evenly across the population, with concerns greater for particular industries and particular demographic groups. The greatest concern about job insecurity is amongst migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds.^{xxxix}

Mental health is a serious concern for young people. Mission Australia's 2019 *Youth Survey Report* found mental health, the environment and equity and discrimination are the three most important issues, with mental health identified as the top national issue for the third year running.^{xxxix}

The Australian Government has provided additional funding for mental health and family violence services to deal with increased demand due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The National Health Plan includes support for headspace to expand its digital work and study service, to help younger Australians stay on track in their education and training and prepare them for the workforce.^{xxxix}

The Productivity Commission has conducted an inquiry into mental health. The final report is to be handed to the Australian Government in June 2020. The draft report sets out some of the problems with employment support for people with mental illness.^{xxxix} The report recognises the importance of face-to-face services and recommends a staged rollout of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model.

The IPS model, trialled by headspace,^{xxxvii} is an evidence-based approach that integrates employment and vocational services with clinical mental health and non-vocational support, and focuses on the individual needs of people with mental illness who are seeking to enter, or remain in, education and/or employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 When the Productivity Commission completes its report on mental health, the Australian Government considers its recommendations, particularly those related to employment and vocational services.

7. SUPPORTING PEOPLE STUDYING

People across all ages who are studying have had their education disrupted to varying degrees. This disruption applies to students across the education system, which covers:

- school education: primary, secondary and senior secondary in public, private and independent schools; and
- tertiary education in universities and Vocational Education and Training (VET) provided by Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and private institutions.

There are many issues impacting people studying, including some identified elsewhere in this Position Statement—digital inclusion, insecure work, and mental health.

Of particular concern is the uneven availability of career services to students across the education system. While excellent career services are provided by many organisations, elsewhere services can range from being non-existent, to being provided by unqualified staff, through to being erratic, and poorly understood, supported and funded.

In 2019 the Australian Government established a strategy, endorsed by the COAG Education Council, titled *Future Ready: National Career Education Strategy*. This strategy was designed to improve career education in schools. The vision of *Future Ready* is that every student in every school has access to high-quality career education to help them make a successful transition from school to further education, training, work or a combination of these.^{xxxviii}

Recent disruptions mean accessing high-quality career services by all school students in public, private and independent schools, is now critical to their future, particularly students with additional or complex needs. These include poverty, unemployment, ill health, substance abuse, experiences of trauma, poor educational outcomes, and disability.

Students experiencing difficulties with educational transitions, whether they are moving between classes or schools or different settings (possibly exacerbated by COVID-19 disruptions), may need additional support, as successful transitions can have a significant positive effect on the current and future educational experiences of students.

TAFE colleges and private VET providers need funding and support to deliver high-quality, accessible career services to all those who need them, including apprentices, mature age students, and students with additional or complex needs.

Several reports have outlined the impact of school closures during the pandemic, and the educational outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged children. Professor Stephen Lamb's report sets out five challenges with home learning, including gaps in digital skills and resources and students not being personally suited to home learning.^{xxxix}

Brown and colleagues have identified that the home-based, online model is harming learning and wellbeing.^{xl} These researchers point out that: "The impacts are particularly evident in:

- the early years, which are critical years for learning, with an established body of research demonstrating the return on investments made in these years;
- vulnerable students for whom learning loss is difficult to recover;
- students who are at risk of disengaging or who have disengaged, noting that the longer they are away from school the higher the likelihood that they will never adjust or re-engage;
- students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds; and
- students undertaking VET subjects who are unable to do their practical or workplace-based components."^{xli}

This research suggests additional support may be needed throughout the education system to support the development and delivery of best practice online home-based learning.

During the shutdown there have been discussions about university entrance requirements and possible changes to admission schemes. Some universities, like ANU^{xlii}, take a more holistic approach to entry requirements. Negotiating these requirements demands career guidance expertise, which will be even more critical in 2020 with the added stress of completing Year 12 curriculum requirements.

Universities have a role to play in ensuring students have a reasonable chance of successfully engaging with tertiary study. The normal flow of information from universities to career practitioners, such as at careers fairs and open days, has been disrupted. As the education system reopens students, including mature age students, are going to need access to information and advice over the summer (November to February) to help them make informed choices about university applications, if this is what they want to do.

Students in schools and tertiary education need investment in existing career development services, and additional investment where organisations lack such services, so that they develop the career management skills they need to plan their future, make informed choices, understand the post-pandemic labour market, and build self-marketing skills. This support will help allay fears and anxieties as well as position students for future success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Australian Government continues to implement, as a matter of urgency, the *Future Ready: National Career Education Strategy*.

7.2 The Australian Government, through the COAG Education Council, supports State and Territory Governments to:

- provide funding and professional development time for public school teachers across the education system to enable them to redesign curriculum for an online environment, accommodate additional time for planning and implementation, and obtain technical support.
- implement a targeted and coherent plan to support vulnerable students to physically attend school.
- ensure that educators have the resources to diagnose students' learning loss and to support their mental health once school-based learning resumes.

7.3 The Australian Government, through the National Cabinet and/or the COAG Education Council, supports State and Territory Governments to ensure that all Year 12 students have access to professional career practitioners to support them in meeting university entrance requirements.

7.4 The Australian Government, in discussions with universities, asks universities to:

- provide career advice to students applying for entry, to assist them in making informed and appropriate course choices;
- provide support and assistance to commencing students by bridging gaps in academic skills that may have occurred as a result of the disruption to schooling during 2020;
- consider, longer term, offering appropriate enabling courses, and career advice, to support those wishing to reengage with education following disruption to, or premature disengagement from, education due to COVID-19.

8. RESHAPING WORKING AUSTRALIA BEYOND COVID-19

In its May Statement, the RBA pointed out that while all industries are being affected by the pandemic containment measures, the extent of the impact varies widely.^{xliii}

As Australia emerges from hibernation, some people may need to upskill or reskill to retain their jobs, some people will need help with identifying their transferable skills so they can find work in different sectors or industries, and some people will look for opportunities in new roles and industries.

In reshaping working Australia, governments will likely be asked to assess many ideas and projects that could create jobs and build economic activity. In assessing them, consideration needs to be given to broad principles, such as those recommended by The Australia

Institute, including whether projects use the skills of existing unemployed people, build opportunities for the future, and deliver lasting benefits.^{xliv}

While attention is focused on this current pandemic, issues impacting the economy before COVID-19 will still need attention post-pandemic. Climate change continues to pose major economic risks.^{xlv} KPMG predicts that in the medium-to-long term, climate change and sustainability will return to front of mind.^{xlvi}

Some sectors, like tourism^{xlvii} and coal-fired electricity, are particularly exposed to these economic risks. The ACTU has written a discussion paper on a transition process for the coal-fired electricity sector, identifying three key elements of a fair and just transition framework. Their plan is designed to ensure people retain meaningful work and have the opportunity to find satisfying jobs. “If managed well,” they say, “Australia’s transition to a clean energy economy offers enormous opportunities for new sustainable and decent employment not only in the energy sector, but in transport, construction, agriculture and the services industry. With forward planning and investment in our regions, low carbon industries and workforce, we can create a more prosperous and diversified economy.”^{xlviii}

We already know a lot about structural adjustment from the work of the Productivity Commission. Multiple Senate inquiries, such as those into the closure of coal-fired power stations^{xlix} (which are to close in the next two or three decades), and jobs for the future in regional areas^l, provide a wealth of useful information.

A government report on the transition of the car manufacturing sector confirmed people need to be skilled in managing their careers. Best practice support includes:

- “Early notification to workers allowing support to be communicated early and often.
- Tailored career advice and local labour market information via case managers.
- Transferable skills recognition and training support including funding.
- Resume, interview and digital job search assistance.
- Health and wellbeing support, financial counselling.
- Dedicated transition hubs or information centres.”^{li}

These services are largely the domain of qualified career development practitioners. As the closure of car manufacturers showed, workers may have difficulty identifying and naming the skills they have, and struggle to see how those skills could be applied in other jobs. The training and education sectors are complex, and people may need help with navigating the available options in order to find suitable upskilling or reskilling courses. Career development practitioners have the expertise to support people through these transition processes.

What is notable in Mission Australia’s *Youth Survey Report* is that the environment soared from eighth place in 2018 to second place in 2019 of topics young people say are important issues in Australia. This concern has longer-term mental health implications. We know that natural disasters have wide-ranging intangible costs on health and wellbeing, education and employment.^{lii}

In January 2020 Dr Newnham, a research fellow at Curtin University who specialises in disaster-related trauma, spoke about Australia's need for disaster management to factor in mental health support.^{liii} At the time, the Australian Government provided \$76 million to provide distress counselling and mental health support for individuals, families and communities affected by bushfires. Post-pandemic, Australia will continue to need a sustainable, long-term mental health system that supports people through the impact of future disasters.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Australian Government gives priority to creating jobs in sectors and industries that use resources more sustainably and in ways that do not further degrade the environment.^{liv}

8.2 Post-COVID-19, the Australian Government ensures that disaster management planning factors in mental health support.

A CRUCIAL SKILL: ADAPTABILITY

Australians have clearly demonstrated that they can and will join together to protect people's health and support each other during a crisis, backing the decisions made by the National Cabinet. Both during this pandemic, and as we move past it, we must continue to support each other, particularly in relation to education and work.

Public expectations need to be managed so that no one thinks we are quickly going 'back' to what was 'normal'. Some fortunate people may well pick up largely where they left off. But for many, their lives will be irreparably changed.

One skill will be critical as we move into a future Australia. That skill is the ability to adapt. In relation to careers, people are more likely to succeed if they show concern about their working future, believe they have some control over it, set about dealing with tasks like job searching and managing transitions, are curious about themselves and work possibilities, and feel confident about their ability to work towards their goals. In short, their readiness and resources for dealing with their situation. Researchers have found that this ability to adapt is linked to increased work fulfilment for those employed, and to increased belief in one's ability to achieve goals for those searching for work.^{lv}

The work of career development professionals is, in part, directed to building people's ability to adapt. Yet, as the research evidence outlined in this Position Statement shows, many people, but particularly young people, affected by COVID-19 will not be in a position to easily adapt, due to their social, educational and financial circumstances, and mental and/or physical health.

Inaction will exacerbate these circumstances. Helping people to get their careers back on track will act like an insurance policy, giving people the ongoing career management skills to continue to make informed choices and decisions throughout their lives.

Appendix A: Career Development Association of Australia

More about Career Development Practitioners

Career development practitioners provide services that help people make occupational and study decisions, find career information, plan and manage their careers and plan career transition. They assist individuals and organisations to prepare for their futures by making informed decisions about career and workforce development.

Career development practitioners can help with a wide range of career development activities including:

- career planning and decision-making.
- analysing your work-related skills and abilities.
- identifying your work-related values and priorities.
- adjusting your work-life balance.
- researching and selecting learning and training options.
- investigating the labour market.
- job seeking.
- improving your network of contacts.
- identifying or creating opportunities to progress your career.
- marketing yourself for opportunities.

Within organisations, career development practitioners use career development methodologies to integrate a range of human resource management practices including:

- employee attraction, engagement and retention.
- recruitment and selection.
- role profiling.
- learning and development.
- performance review and planning.
- succession planning.
- workforce planning.
- leadership development.

Helping Australians discover fulfilling work

Everyone deserves to find fulfilling, satisfying work. Comprehending and navigating an unpredictable, changing labour market requires relevant and expert career guidance. Having a sound understanding of the local and wider employment markets, regularly thinking about skills and achievements, and being prepared for the right opportunity when it arises are all vital aspects of sound career management.

CDAA member practitioners provide advice and assistance across all aspects of career development, and can help people to:

- Gain a greater understanding of marketable and transferable strengths, experience and attributes.
- Prepare and review job-related documents such as résumés, social media profiles and selection criteria responses.
- Identify career interests, values and drivers, as well as associated learning and employment options/pathways.
- Enhance knowledge of the worlds of education and work – and the linkages between them.
- Build and practice interview, presentation and interpersonal communication skills.
- Recognise the importance of lifelong learning.
- Conduct a career health check or stocktake.
- Develop greater career resilience and agility during a period when this will be a prerequisite for success.

Career support is a direct investment in people's future – one that can pay real dividends throughout life.

Further information is available at www.cdaa.org.au

Appendix B: Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ANU	Australian National University
CDAA	Career Development Association of Australia
CERIC	Counselling Foundation of Canada
CICA	Career Industry Council of Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
IPS	Individual Placement and Support
LMI	Labour Market Information
MIHL	Minimum Income for Healthy Living
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

ⁱ Reserve Bank of Australia, *Statement on Monetary Policy*, MAY 2020, p. 85
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