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Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above inquiry.

Recommendations:

- 1. In partnership with State and Territory governments strengthen school accountability requirements for provision of high quality and accessible career services by appropriately trained professional career development practitioners**
- 2. Fully implement the Australian Blueprint for Career Development**
- 3. Improve teacher engagement activities**
- 4. Strengthen programs that encourage parental engagement**
- 5. Enhance Career Information Centre and myfuture by piloting a national careers helpline targeting young Australians and parents**
- 6. Improve access to the evidence base and to examples of best practice by expanding research and establishing a clearing house**

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) represents the interests of all major career associations and their members at the national level. CICA's vision is to enhance participation and productivity by advocating the individual, social and economic benefits of quality career development for all Australians.

In responding to this inquiry CICA recognises and supports the principle and benefit of undertaking part-time and casual employment by young people while at school. It takes the view that through part-time and casual employment, students gain a sense of independence and an awareness of the culture of work. Students learn how to use the skills they have previously acquired and practice them within an environment of paid employment. Further, part-time and casual employment assists young people to develop employability skills that will assist them in later transitions to work.

However, to maximise the benefit of paid and other work experience we call for improved level of career development services to assist students to learn a further set of skills to support and manage their learning and work and to assist them with career decision making and transitions. Specifically, skills related to self-assessment, decision-making, job seeking, transition, and access to and discerning use of career information provide a foundation for repeated career decision making and transitions across the lifespan.

While most young Australians have access to some level of career services (albeit they are mostly information based) the services available to many are inadequate in both quality and the capacity to assist them to develop the skills to manage their future learning and work choices and reach their potential. In many cases career services within schools are not sufficiently developed to provide comprehensive career development programs to support the strengthening of career management skills and to reflect on the skills acquired.

In many cases career services fail to address the most basic of student needs. For example, a Smith Family report found that a significant number of students surveyed expressed incompatible education and career intentions. Around half of the students surveyed planned a different level of education than was required for their career interests.

This report found that a large proportion of young people surveyed did not know how to get the job they would most like. Importantly, it also noted that those students who perceived themselves low in ability found that access to high quality career advice was particularly beneficial.

CICA defines career development as the lifelong process of managing progression in learning and work. The quality of this process significantly determines the nature and quality of individuals' lives: the kind of people they become, the sense of purpose they have, the income at their disposal. It also determines the social and economic contribution they make to the communities and societies of which they are part.

Central to effective career services is support for the strengthening of the skills required for students to manage their career and make informed choices about their learning and work¹. In doing so schools need to ensure that a wide variety of career activities are available within a strong supportive school culture where a commitment to improvement is in place; where school-wide strategies addressing quality of provision of career services are addressed, and student-focused strategies focusing on individual needs are supported².

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (ABCD) provides a basis on which to develop programs that build career management skills and is one of only a few frameworks that have been accepted by all governments. The ABCD has been taken up very widely across the educational sector and in Western Australia guidelines have been developed for career development and transition support services by a partnership of government, catholic and independent schools. This model is successful and could be taken up as part of national curriculum for career development targeted at Primary School to Senior High School. The ABCD also offers the opportunity to develop and map best practice in relation to enterprise, employability resilience and other important skills.

Studies show³ that young people leaving school early, without career paths, are likely to face long-term disadvantage by having higher levels of unemployment and part-time and casual work, shorter working lives, lowered incomes and the increased probability of finding themselves in jobs with poorer working conditions and fewer opportunities for advancement. They also more often experience poorer physical and mental health, higher rates of crime and less often engage in citizenship activity⁴.

It is estimated that more than 15% of young people aged 15–19 fail to make a successful transition in Australia⁵ and unfortunately this situation is not improving quickly⁶. Lamb and Rice found that disengagement occurs amongst specific disadvantaged groups of young people⁷.

There is an economic benefit to improving career services for young Australians. The Productivity Commission estimated that an additional year of schooling increases the workforce participation rate by around 0.5% for males and 4% for females and that for every additional year of education, the earnings of an Australian worker increase by between 5.5% and 11.0%⁸. It is estimated that improvements in transitions from school are likely to improve participation rates in the labour market by 0.37% and productivity increases of around 0.45%⁹. This effect of improved transitions equates nationally to increase in productivity of around 1 billion dollars.

Similarly, Careers Scotland found clear and systematic evidence that school pupils with career goals have higher attainment levels than those without¹⁰. Another study found that a positive gain in academic achievement was produced when students were provided with career education interventions as compared to situations in which students were not provided with career education. It also found that results increase in the second year of operation with the same students¹¹. Lamb and Rice found that Pathways Planning and quality career guidance and counselling are key initiatives in schools that are successful in promoting engagement.

CICA also notes that many young people are unaware of their rights as workers and work far beyond a reasonable number of hours for their age group. When combined with the demands of study other activities including sport and community service can suffer. There is some evidence (although it may vary from individual to individual) to indicate that beyond 12 hours per week the benefit to the student declines.

Accordingly, CICA supports greater co-operation from employers to ensure that young people are not impacted on by being offered or coerced into undertaking hours of employment that will impact on their capacity for study and to develop skills through their various life roles.

CICA make the following recommendations to promote and support successful youth transitions by developing a career development and support infrastructure to assist youth to develop career management skills.

1. In partnership with State and Territory governments strengthen school accountability requirements for provision of high quality and accessible career services by appropriately trained professional career development practitioners

Schools should be encouraged to report on career services and provided details of expenditure on delivery¹².

Outcome:

- Establish baseline data collection on outcomes of career interventions
- Higher levels of accountability for the provision of services.

2. Fully implement the Australian Blueprint for Career Development

The Australian Blueprint for Career Development is one of only a few frameworks that have been accepted by all governments. The ABCD has been taken up very widely across the educational sector and in Western Australia guidelines have been developed for career development and transition support services by a partnership of government, catholic and independent schools. This model is successful and could be taken up as part of national curriculum for career development targeted at Primary School to Senior High School. The ABCD also offers the opportunity to develop and map best practice in relation to enterprise, employability resilience and other important skills.

Outcomes:

- Consistent national framework
- Improved evaluation and performance options linked to the 11 Blueprint competencies
- Improved capacity to evaluate and share practice
- Operationalise the investment previously made by the Australian government.

3. Improve teacher engagement activities

Evidence indicates that many teachers perceive themselves as lacking the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in career education and advice¹³. At present, all states and territories have mandated Professional Development (eg 25 hours per year in Victoria) to maintain teacher registration. Implementation of additional professional development and requiring teachers to have a career development plan has been shown to be an effective strategy in Iowa¹⁴. In addition, the career education elective for pre service teachers could be adapted as in service professional development and available on line possibly through *myfuture*. The combination of qualified career practitioners and more informed teachers provides an excellent structure to support decision making in relation to learning and work.

Outcomes:

- Strengthening of teacher student engagement
- Increased options and opportunities for career discussions.

4. Strengthen programs that encourage parental engagement

Parents are an important influence on young people's career decision making and need additional support to help their children to navigate the complex pathways available. These can range from improving online resources for parents, specific workshops and piloting special initiatives such as a parent helpline¹⁵.

Outcomes:

- Quality improvement in parental advice
- Increased support for career exploration
- Enhanced career management skills in the community generally, as parents may apply their learning to their own career decision-making.

5. Enhance Career Information Centre and *myfuture* by piloting a national careers helpline targeting young Australians and parents

There is clear evidence both from the UK and from New Zealand of the value of web based services supported by a national careers helpline. Watts and Dent found that the telephone is now being used for more complex career related enquiries and that career guidance delivered by telephone is of good quality measured against standards used in the assessment of face-to-face guidance¹⁶. They also found that both the extent and the nature of enquiries to career guidance and information services can be heavily influenced by social marketing campaigns. Career information centres with a national careers helpline responsibility and linked to *myfuture* and using appropriately trained staff would provide nationwide access to a consistent quality of career support.

Outcomes:

- Quality improvement in career services for regional and remote communities
- Nationwide access.

6. Improve access to the evidence base and to examples of best practice by expanding research and establishing a clearing house

A clearing house offers a national approach to sharing best practice. CICA suggests that this initiative could be undertaken as a partnership with existing research centres and also include investigation of successful international strategies (e.g. career academies, service based learning activities¹⁷) to report on suitability for the Australian environment. Currently, there is no centralised repository of research and best practice for government to access.

Outcomes:

- Sharing of best practice
- Build research capacity by developing a network of researchers
- Increased evidence base
- A centralised resource for policy makers.

¹ These skills are often described as career management skills (OECD, 2004) personal management skills (Miles Morgan, Australia, 2004) or career planning skills. Whatever the nomenclature, the clear aim according to the OECD report (2004) is that services focus on developing these skills.

² Lamb S., Rice, S. (2008), Effective Strategies to Increase School Completion Report

³ See for example, Transition Worker Review, 2002; Allen Consulting Group, 2003; Alfred et al., 1998; Sears, 1995; Spierings, 2005

⁴ Lamb S., Rice, S. (2008), Effective Strategies to Increase School Completion Report

⁵ Sweet 1998, Youth: The rhetoric and the reality of the 1990s

⁶ OECD 2005, Education at a Glance

⁷ These include students from indigenous backgrounds, low achievers, those from low socio-economic status backgrounds, children and families in distress, and young people living in neighbourhoods of high poverty or in remote locations. However, some level of disengagement occurs across all groups of young people. It also found that Intensive career planning and support can raise completion rates for at risk young people by 10-20%⁷.

⁸ Productivity Commission (2006), Potential benefits of the national reform agenda.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Careers Scotland (2002), Career Goals and Educational Attainment: What Is the Link?

¹¹ Evans and Burck, (1992), The Effects of Career Education Interventions on Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis.

¹² For example, Careers Scotland uses a mix of evaluation tools including interviews and surveys with individuals, parents and employers. More recently, it has implemented evaluation of impact measures including learning outcomes from career planning and related services (e.g. learning about the demands of jobs or about self-awareness); the changes or decisions which individuals may make following their learning experience (e.g. application to a course at college); and the sustainability and robustness of that decision over time (e.g. that they complete the course)

¹³ Myrick & Carrow (1987) Teacher Involvement in Career Education and Advisement: Ready or Not?"

¹⁴ Iowa Department of Education (2004) Iowa District Career Development Plan

¹⁵ Note that family structures are changing and becoming more diverse, further impacting on the perspectives through which information and advice is understood. From 1996 to 2006, couple families with children decreased from 50% to 45% of all families and one-parent families increased from 14.5% to 15.8% of families (Census 2006, cited in Pro Bono Australia 2006).

¹⁶ Watts, T Dent, G.(2008) The Evolution of a National Distance Guidance Service: Trends and Challenges

¹⁷ Career academies have achieved significant success in achieving positive outcomes in relation to attainment.