ANNOUNCEMENT

Australian Country Team

10th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy

Navigating New Horizons | Auckland, New Zealand | 22 to 24 November 2026

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) is pleased to announce the Australian Country Team for the 10th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, to be held in Auckland, New Zealand, from 22 to 24 November 2026.

Convened by the International Centre for Career Development and Public Policy (ICCDPP), the symposium is co-hosted with CATE, the Tertiary Education Commission and the European Training Foundation, and supported by the member organisations of the Interagency Working Group on Career Guidance (ILO, OECD, UNESCO, EC, ETF, CEDEFOP, WB), and by the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES). It is an invitational working event in which small country teams of guidance policy, practice and research leaders work alongside representatives of international organisations. The 2026 symposium, *Navigating New Horizons*, will address three policy themes:

- high productivity and an inclusive economy
- enhancing skills and developing technical and vocational education
- ensuring disadvantaged groups can thrive.

Coordinated by CICA and led by Dr Mary McMahon, the Australian team brings together expertise from research, school education systems, and the national skills system. The team will draw on Australia's country response, prepared by CICA, to contribute an Australian perspective to the symposium's working sessions.

COUNTRY TEAM LEADER



Dr Mary McMahon

Vice-President, Career Industry Council of Australia
Honorary Associate Professor, School of Education, The University of Queensland

An internationally recognised career development scholar, Mary is a developer and co-author of the Systems Theory Framework. Her work spans lifelong career development, narrative and systems approaches to career counselling, and qualitative assessment. She has been actively involved in professionalising career development globally for more than 20 years. As team leader, she will connect contributions across the symposium's three themes and bring a systems perspective to the relationships between skills, productivity and inclusion.

Link to symposium themes As Team Leader, Mary will draw the team's contributions together across all three themes. Her systems approach to career development across the lifespan offers a frame that connects productivity, skills and inclusion.

Team members



Emma King OAM

Chief Executive Officer, HumanAbility

Emma leads HumanAbility, drawing on extensive leadership experience across workforce, education and social policy. Previously CEO of the Victorian Council of Social Service and Early Learning Association Australia, she has championed equity, access and high-quality education. She began her career as a teacher. Emma also serves on several boards including the Victorian Skills Authority and as Chair of Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Awarded an OAM in 2023, Emma brings a workforce and skills-system perspective grounded in inclusion.

Link to symposium themes Through HumanAbility and the Victorian Skills Authority, Emma brings a skills system and workforce perspective to the enhancing skills theme, informed by long experience advocating for social justice and equality at VCOSS.



Clare Feszczak

Executive Director, Student Pathways and Careers, Department for Education, South Australia

Clare is leading system-wide reform to strengthen career education and industry-connected learning in South Australian schools. She is committed to every student having access to high-quality career education from an early age, so young people can explore aspirations, make informed decisions and pursue meaningful post-school pathways. Clare will contribute a school-system perspective on equity, career learning and links to skills and vocational education.

Link to symposium themes Clare's system-wide reform of career education and industry-connected learning links school pathways to skills and technical and vocational education, with a commitment to access for every student.



Dr Peyman Abkhezr

Senior Lecturer, Griffith University

Peyman brings expertise in career development and counselling research, teaching and practice. His work explores narrative and systemic approaches to career development, with particular interests in migration, cultural diversity and social justice. Active in international research collaborations and editorial work, he will contribute perspectives on the role of culturally responsive career guidance in supporting people who face barriers to opportunity.

Link to symposium themes Peyman's research on migration, cultural diversity and social justice speaks directly to ensuring disadvantaged groups can thrive, and to the inclusion dimension of an inclusive economy.



Dr Lizzie Knight

Director, Education and Skills Program, Grattan Institute

Lizzie leads research on education-to-employment pathways, skills policy, workforce development and equity in post-school education. A qualified career development practitioner, she previously worked at myfuture and contributed to the Australian Blueprint for Career Development. With more than 70 publications and policy reports, her research uses evidence on transitions from education to work to inform more equitable skills and workforce policy.

Link to symposium themes Lizzie's research on education-to-employment pathways, workforce development and workforce participation connects career development to productivity and an inclusive economy, while her work on vocational education and on groups underrepresented in education and employment links to the other two themes.

CICA thanks each team member and their organisation for their commitment, and looks forward to sharing insights from the symposium with the Australian career development community.