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Jobs and Skills Australia Report on Gender Economic Equality Underscores Role of Career Education

A new report from Jobs and Skills Australia has reinforced the urgent need for stronger career education and development to address entrenched gender divides in education, training and the workforce.

The *Education and Training Divides: Gender Economic Equality Study Paper 2* highlights that despite women now being more qualified than men, they continue to face lower wages, underutilisation of skills, and underrepresentation in high-demand sectors such as STEM, trades and digital (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2025).

The report emphasises:

“The potential role for system wide occupational awareness or career education to influence early gendered study choices, which contribute to persistent gendered occupational segregation” (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2025).

Early Intervention through Career Education

Career education is vital in shifting entrenched cultural norms that shape study choices from early childhood. One initiative already making an impact is *Little Ripples*, developed by the National Careers Institute.

Little Ripples is designed for **primary school-aged children, their parents, and primary educators**. Through eBooks, games, activities and teaching resources, the program creates opportunities for children to explore a wide range of career possibilities. It also equips parents and educators with practical tools to discuss jobs, challenge stereotypes, and foster curiosity about the future (Your Career, 2025).

By engaging both families and schools, *Little Ripples* ensures that children receive consistent, positive messages about career diversity at home and in the classroom, a key factor in influencing study and career choices (OECD, 2023; ILO, 2023).

Building on Early Success

While *Little Ripples* has demonstrated strong potential, there is a pressing need to develop the brand and its resources further to reach more children, parents and schools nationwide.

Expanding the initiative would:

- Strengthen the library of resources, including materials on emerging industries such as green energy, digital technology and advanced manufacturing.
- Provide culturally relevant and inclusive content for First Nations communities, migrants and families from diverse backgrounds.
- Increase professional development tools for teachers and parent engagement strategies, ensuring adults are confident in guiding children’s career learning.
- Position *Little Ripples* as a cornerstone of Australia’s national career education strategy for the early years (Jobs and Skills Australia, 2025).

A Call to Action

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) is calling on government and policymakers to recognise the critical role career development plays in addressing systemic gender inequality. Policy responses must extend beyond education reform to embed career education throughout life, starting in the early years.

David Carney, CICA Executive Director, said:

“The Jobs and Skills Australia report makes it clear: without strong career education, gender segregation and pay gaps will persist. Programs like Little Ripples show what’s possible when we engage children, parents and educators early, but to make a real difference, we need national policy and investment that embeds career development at every stage of learning and work.”

References

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