



'This is what we heard'

National Careers Institute co-design consultations

The Australian Government announced the establishment of the National Careers Institute (the Institute) as part of the \$585 million [Skills Package – Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow](#). The Skills Package lays the building blocks for improvements identified in [Strengthening Skills: Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System](#) (the Review). The Skills Package will strengthen Australia's vocational education and training (VET) system and careers sector to ensure they are responsive, respected and flexible, providing Australians with the skills they need to succeed in the modern workplace and businesses with the workers they need to grow a strong economy. The Australian Government established the Institute on 1 July 2019. The Review recommended establishing the Institute to be, *"the single, authoritative source of information spanning careers education on post-school pathways through VET, higher education and other training, labour market data and training pathways and their employment outcomes"*.

The Review identified a need for Australia to:

- improve the quality of career education being provided to school students and leavers, their influencers, and job seekers of all ages
- resolve the fragmentation and complexity of the careers sector.

The co-design approach was wide-reaching

The Institute implemented a broad-reaching process of consultation and co-design with careers sector stakeholders across Australia to inform the ongoing role and functions of the Institute.

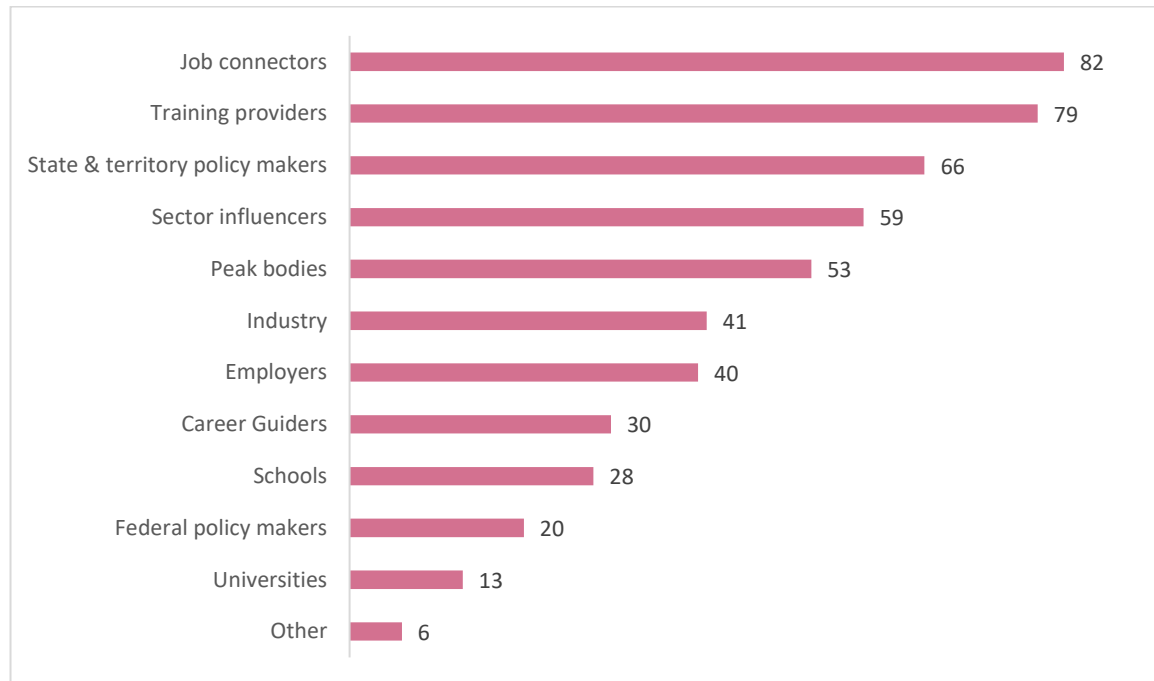
A Background Paper was published on 4 October 2019 to inform the consultation process. Eight formal submissions were made in response to the Background Paper.

The objectives of the consultation and co-design were to explore:

- Roles and responsibilities of the Institute
- Stakeholder focus and immediate actions
- Ongoing establishment of the Institute.

A total of 517 people from 350 organisations attended 13 Institute workshops in all capital cities and an additional five regional locations (Bendigo, Cairns, Orange, Karratha, and Mount Isa) between 3 October 2019 and 26 November 2019. In addition to these workshops, bilateral meetings were held with 8 key stakeholders, and 32 one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted to consult on the ongoing role of the Institute. A further 110 individuals, business representatives, educators and trainers took part in a policy hack answering the question, ‘What does effective career advice look like?’

As at 30 January 2020, the Institute has connected with over 10,000 people across Australia, through face-to-face workshops, user research, e-Hub engagement and various other means.



Stakeholder representation at the workshops and round tables

Roles and responsibilities of the Institute

A nationally consistent and better connected sector

The careers sector is complex and multi-faceted comprising the many stakeholders, needs, transition points and perspectives involved in lifelong learning. Through the consultation process, it became clear that career development is not part of a formal ‘system’, but rather operates within a diverse careers sector.

There was clear consensus from stakeholders that the careers sector would benefit from more cohesion and connectedness in order to operate more effectively and efficiently. While articulated to varying degrees, participants said many of the challenges faced by individuals within the careers sector, as well as the stakeholders (such as employers and industry) functioning within it, could benefit from formal sector goals and strengthened relationships between stakeholders. The following themes emerged through participant discussions on the challenges the careers sector currently faces:

- There is a lack of understanding about the benefits of career development for individuals, employers and the broader economy.
- Individuals are uncertain of what information can be trusted, as there is a significant amount of conflicting, out-of-date or inaccurate advice within the sector.
- The multiple entry points to accessing information make it difficult for individuals to assess the authority and quality of information.

- Stakeholders within the sector do not view themselves as belonging to a ‘system’.
- There is little shared sense of purpose or defined goals due to the fragmented nature of the sector.
- Similarly, there is little shared understanding of what best practice in career development looks like.
- Stakeholders tend to define key terms and concepts within their own contexts, leading to a lack of a common language.
- There is no oversight or guidance of the sector, leading to limited connections between stakeholders.
- Service delivery and information is skewed towards younger cohorts rather than supporting lifelong learning, particularly focusing on the transition from school to post-school education, training or work, at the expense of other potential beneficiaries from the sector.

Stakeholders articulated the need for the Institute to support a nationally consistent and contemporary careers sector, delivering information that empowers people to make decisions about their career journey.

Simply and strengthen career information

Stakeholders agreed that there are opportunities for Institute to strengthen the delivery of career information by:

- supporting a nationally consistent and contemporary careers sector
- delivering activities that empower people making decisions about their career journey
- ensuring the sector is responsive to evolving individuals and labour market needs.

Many stakeholders agreed that while digital access to career information is important, which is consistent with the Review’s recommendations, face-to-face services in supplying career guidance continue to have value.

Stakeholder focus and immediate actions

Stakeholder focus

To create a shared understanding of the types of individuals who can interact with the careers sector, the Institute conceptualised three types of individual users (‘careerees’) who navigate their way through work, education and training:

- pre-careerees- contemplating joining the world of work in the future
- early careerees- transitioning into the world of work from education and training for the first time or relatively new to their career
- transition careerees- Already have significant career or work experience; may be initiating a career change themselves or may have been impacted by a change outside of their control.

Responses to the term ‘careeree’ were mostly positive or neutral, however, workshop participants generally agreed that it was a useful term to use for the consultation process.

Stakeholders largely supported the idea that the careers sector should operate for the benefit of the individual, no matter what stage or circumstance they are in their life. Individuals and career guiders were identified by stakeholders as the two key user groups of the Institute. Stakeholders recommended the Institute should:

- **directly** work with career guiders, education and training providers, governments, employers, industry and job connectors to improve the efficacy of the sector

- **indirectly** work to benefit individuals through its direct work with the above stakeholders.

Immediate actions

Stakeholders were presented with and broadly supported the immediate actions Government announced when establishing the Institute including:

- delivering a new grants program to support innovation and build partnerships
- supporting the National Careers Ambassador
- delivering activities and projects as part of the VET Information Strategy
- delivering an online platform to consolidate and update existing careers information
- undertaking a program of stakeholder consultation research.

Ongoing establishment of the Institute

Stakeholders were supportive of a national careers body, which:

- is durable, independent and adaptable
- undertakes functions that support the delivery of nationally consistent, high quality and contemporary career development for Australians.

A national body that is durable, independent and adaptable

Durability and longevity have been historically cited as key contributors towards the impact of a federal policy initiative addressing the careers agenda¹. Stakeholders indicated that it would be essential for a national body to be sustainable, independent and with a long-term outlook to meaningfully contribute to lifelong career development.

e-Hub survey respondents generally agreed that the Institute's most important priority should be to make sure all careers sector users have access to the support and information they need, regardless of their life stage, age, or circumstances.

Reflecting participant discussions, the Institute's model and delivery approach should mature over time in response to the needs of the sector, individuals and the changing labour market. A number of different governance options are being considered in parallel with other bodies and initiatives currently being developed.

Future functions

During the consultation process, the most consistent themes about what stakeholders thought a national body could do within the sector were to:

- **Drive the coordination of the sector** by defining concepts central to its functions and build better connections between key stakeholders such as schools, education and training providers, employers, and careers practitioners:
 - There is an opportunity to build capacity and linkages between stakeholders to support individuals across their lifelong learning and career stages
 - A more coordinated sector will reduce duplication, as well as having the ability to establish a shared vision and goals.
- **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:

¹ Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA), 2019, *Preliminary Analysis of Australia's Career Development System (unpublished)*

- This would be achieved by not duplicating existing services, but rather by gap filling and helping people to understand what is already available and how to access it.
- **Promote career development** by raising the profile of career development services and promoting the importance of career development and management for individuals and businesses alike
- **Build the evidence base** by bringing together academic, industry and government research on career development, and commissioning new Australian research on what works.

When asked how the Institute should contribute to the careers sector, respondents on e-Hub gravitated towards national leadership functions. Addressing and highlighting service gaps, creating an evidence base and coordinating data were the three most popular responses, with approximately 80% of respondents agreeing that the Institute should contribute through each of these functions.

Where to now?

The consultation and co-design process has provided valuable feedback on how the Institute could most effectively operate and contribute to the careers sector. The support for the Institute's establishment is clear, and the various contributions that have been made will be drawn on throughout the next formative phase.

Further consultation and co-design work is planned for 2020 to shape delivery of key activities including:

- Research with individuals, influencers, advisors and employers is underway to inform the digital platform
- A comprehensive synthesis and analysis of stakeholder feedback, domestic mapping and international benchmarking projects will be delivered
- The Institute's grant funding delivery and promoting pathways will commence early next year through the e-Hub.

To stay up to date on the Institute's consultation process, register for updates on [the Institute's e-Hub](#).