

MEDIA RELEASE

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Removing the National Careers Institute Risks Setting Back Workforce Reform

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) expresses deep disappointment at the Federal Government’s decision to discontinue funding for the National Careers Institute (NCI) — a vital national body established to ensure that all Australians have access to high-quality, accessible, and evidence-informed career information and support.

Since its inception, the NCI has played a pivotal role in elevating the importance of career development across education, skills, employment, and economic policy. At a time when Australia faces increasing skills shortages, rapid workforce transitions, and significant economic transformation, the discontinuation of the NCI undermines national progress and removes a critical platform informing both government policy and industry practice.

The NCI conducted specialised behavioural and citizen-centred research across a diverse range of groups, providing valuable insights into how, when, and why Australians make career-related decisions across the lifespan. This deep understanding enabled the effective tailoring of career information, services, and policies to better meet the needs of all Australians.

By helping individuals navigate complex learning and work decisions and supplying essential data and tools to support government programs and industry innovation, the NCI’s evidence-based approach has been instrumental in guiding strategic responses to skills gaps and emerging industries. This has been key to ensuring Australia remains competitive in a global marketplace.

Key Contributions of the National Careers Institute

- **National Careers Information Survey (NCIS):** This landmark survey explored how Australians source and trust career information, highlighting access gaps among women, older workers, and those in insecure employment. The findings have shaped more inclusive policies and services to ensure trusted, timely, and personalised support for all.
- **Australian Blueprint for Career Development Refresh:** Through a national review, the NCI modernised Australia’s career development framework into 12 simplified competencies. This refreshed Blueprint is now used across education, training, and employment sectors, creating a shared language that supports lifelong learning and workforce planning.
- **Career Education for Young Australians:** From primary school initiatives like Little Ripples to research on “moments of choice” in secondary school, the NCI has empowered educators, parents, and students to broaden aspirations and make informed career decisions early in life.
- **Support for School Leavers:** The School Leavers Information Kit (SLIK) has supported young Australians with tailored guidance on education, training, and employment pathways. Specialised resources have addressed the needs of young people with disability, those in rural and remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. A dedicated Parents and Guardians Guide also enables families to engage in meaningful career conversations.

- **Enhanced Support for School Leavers Initiative:** Building on SLIK, this initiative added a dedicated information kit and careers hotline, giving school leavers real-time access to expert, professionally qualified career practitioners' advice during the critical post-school transition period.
- **Mid- and Late-Career Research:** Groundbreaking studies identified support needs for Australians in mid and later stages of life, revealing barriers like ageism, financial insecurity, and limited retraining options. The insights informed practical recommendations to government and industry for engaging experienced workers.
- **Women Returners Research:** Partnering with the Behavioural Insights Team, the NCI explored the challenges faced by women re-entering the workforce. The research showed that inclusive job ad language highlighting flexibility and caregiver support significantly boosted recruitment outcomes—a finding that is now shaping hiring practices.
- **Insecurely Employed Workers Research:** Addressing the needs of casual, gig, and contract workers, the NCI introduced the “Hybrid CV” format—prioritising transferable skills over job history. This innovation helped reduce hiring bias and improve job outcomes for vulnerable workers.

“The NCI brought focus, data, and innovation to career development. Its closure comes at a time when skills shortages, workforce inclusion, and economic transition require more leadership, not less.”
— David Carney, CICA Executive Director

CICA strongly urges the Australian Government to reconsider this decision and reinvest in a robust, future-focused national career development system.

A growing body of international and Australian evidence shows that career development improves workforce participation, enhances education outcomes, increases productivity, and promotes social equity. High-quality career support empowers individuals to adapt to change, find meaningful employment, and contribute to their communities and the broader economy.

It is time for Australia to adopt a long-term, bipartisan approach to funding career development—one that recognises its essential role in national prosperity. Sustained investment in a national coordinating body like the NCI is not just beneficial—it is essential for building a resilient, inclusive, and future-ready Australia.

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