

## **Pathways to Post-School Success Review**

### **Response to the Expert Panel Report: Consultation Draft**

#### **Introduction**

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) commends the Committee on the thoroughness and depth of the Consultation Draft. We support the six key imperatives outlined in the report, which collectively aim to provide an education system that is meaningful and accessible for all students and best equips them to transition successfully into their chosen career pathway.

This response will specifically focus on Recommendation 9 and the principles outlined in Section 4.3.2 "Supporting Enhanced Career Education and Pathway Planning," emphasising the importance of:

- Starting career education younger
- Treating career education separately from subject selection counselling
- Ensuring the presence of professionally qualified career practitioners in all schools
- Providing support for parents and carers
- Increasing exposure opportunities for students in regional, remote, and lower socioeconomic areas.

#### **Recommendation 9 / Section 4.3.2 Supporting Enhanced Career Education and Pathway Planning**

We appreciate the focus on creating a robust framework that supports students in navigating their future educational and career pathways. We strongly support Recommendation 9 and the principles outlined in section 4.3.2 and would like to emphasise several key points:

##### **Starting Career Education Younger**

Beginning career education earlier in a student's educational journey is essential. Research consistently shows that early career education helps students better understand their interests, strengths, and potential career paths. Early exposure to career education can foster greater engagement and motivation in students by providing a tangible connection between their education and future aspirations.

The findings from the research study conducted from 2014 to 2016 on young children's career development, as presented in "The Early Years: Career Development for Young Children," indicate that the seeds of career development begin very early in life. Children as young as three to eight years old show an interest in various activities and the work of adults, demonstrating a capability to share their hopes and dreams for the future (Kashefpakdel, Rehill & Hughes, 2018). Similarly, the article "Critical Perspectives on Childhood Career Development Learning" stresses the need for intentional career development learning from a young age to support later life career development (Davis, 2017). Starting career education younger can also help address issues related to equity by ensuring all students, regardless of background, have access to information and resources that can shape their future career paths.

##### **Separating Career Education and Pathway Planning from Subject Selection Counselling**

Treating career education and pathway planning as distinct from subject selection counselling is crucial for providing students with comprehensive support. Subject selection counselling often focuses on immediate academic choices, while career education should offer a broader perspective on future possibilities and pathways. By separating these functions, schools can ensure that students receive tailored advice that considers both their academic progress and long-term career goals.

Career education should include career exploration, skills development, and real-world experiences like work experience and industry immersion visits. These activities help students make informed decisions about their future beyond simply choosing subjects that align with immediate academic requirements. According to the Australian Blueprint for Career Development, effective career education should help students develop the competencies needed to manage their careers, such as self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision-making, and transition skills. The Australian Blueprint for Career Development should be an essential resource in designing these curricula, ensuring they are comprehensive and align with national standards (National Careers Institute, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2022).

Additionally, the report "Career Education: Every Teacher Has a Role" emphasises that career education should be integrated into all aspects of the school curriculum, making it a whole-school responsibility. Teachers can support career education by being role models, engaging in career-related discussions, linking their subjects to real-world applications, and contributing to the career education program (Hooley, 2023).

Furthermore, integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) with career education, as suggested in the "Time for a Holistic Perspective of Career Development" report, can enhance students' ability to navigate their career pathways. The SELCE model combines the principles of SEL and career education to help students develop a comprehensive set of personal and interpersonal skills necessary for their future careers (Howard & Ferrari, 2023).

### **Building on Existing Investments to Ensure School-Based Career Practitioners**

Ensuring every school has a school-based career practitioner with professional career development qualifications is vital. The current investment in career education, including the \$31.7 million initiative for the Year 9 Career Taster Program and the training of 70 career practitioners, is commendable. It is crucial to build on this foundation by expanding the number of qualified career practitioners in schools.

Career practitioners are pivotal in guiding students through their career development journeys. They provide personalised support, facilitate access to labour market information, and help students navigate the complex landscape of post-school options. The Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners highlight the need for career practitioners to have expertise in career development theory, labour market information, and professional practice application. Ensuring that all schools have access to such expertise will enhance the effectiveness of career education and support the diverse needs of students.

Professionally qualified career practitioners bring several key benefits to the educational environment:

1. **Expertise in Career Development Theory:** Career practitioners with professional qualifications are well-versed in the latest career development theories. This knowledge allows them to understand students' varied career paths and guide them accordingly. They are equipped to offer evidence-based advice and interventions that can significantly influence students' career trajectories.
2. **Up-to-date labour Market Information:** Qualified career practitioners can access current labour market data, which they use to inform students about job trends, emerging industries, and the skills needed for future employment. This information is crucial for helping students make informed decisions about their education and career paths.
3. **Personalised Guidance and Support:** Professional career practitioners can offer tailored advice that meets each student's individual needs. They can assess students' interests, strengths, and aspirations, providing personalised career counselling that helps students set realistic and achievable career goals.
4. **Development of Essential Skills:** Career practitioners are essential in developing students' career management competencies as outlined in the Australian Blueprint for Career Development. These competencies include personal management, learning and work exploration, and career building. Developing these skills is crucial for students to transition successfully from school to work or further education.
5. **Support for Diverse Student Populations:** Professional career practitioners are trained to work with diverse student populations, including those from First Nations, regional, rural and remote, lower

socioeconomic backgrounds and CALD. They can provide targeted support to ensure all students have equal access to career education resources and opportunities. This can help bridge the gap between different demographic groups and promote equity in career outcomes.

6. **Collaboration with Teachers and Parents:** Career practitioners collaborate with teachers and parents to create a supportive environment for career education. They can provide teachers with resources to integrate career education into their subjects and offer parents guidance on supporting their children's career development at home. This holistic approach ensures that students receive consistent career guidance from multiple sources.
7. **Facilitating Industry Connections:** Professional career practitioners have established networks with industry professionals and organisations. They can facilitate industry visits, internships, and mentoring programs, providing students with valuable exposure to the world of work. These experiences are crucial for helping students understand different career paths and build professional connections.
8. **Enhancing Student Engagement:** Career education programs led by qualified practitioners can increase student engagement and motivation. When students see the relevance of their education to their future careers, they are more likely to stay focused and perform better academically. This can lead to higher retention rates and improved educational outcomes.
9. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Qualified career practitioners are skilled in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of career education programs. They can use data to assess the impact of their interventions and make necessary adjustments to improve program outcomes. This continuous improvement process ensures that career education programs remain practical and relevant.

By ensuring that all schools have access to professionally qualified career practitioners, we can significantly enhance the career development support available to students. This will help them make informed decisions about their future, develop essential career management skills, and successfully transition from school to further education or employment.

### **Incorporating Cultural Appropriateness in Career Advice**

Providing culturally appropriate career advice is crucial, particularly for First Nations students. Recognising and respecting the unique cultural values and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is essential. For many First Nations communities, core values such as well-being for the mob, reciprocity, respect, equity, cultural continuity, and spirit and integrity play a central role in shaping career choices and success (Ryan, 2024). Understanding these values helps career practitioners offer advice that aligns with First Nations students' aspirations and community needs, thereby supporting their holistic success.

### **Providing Support for Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers play a crucial role in their children's career development. To effectively support their children, they need access to resources and guidance to help them understand and navigate the career education process.

According to "The Early Years: Career Development for Young Children," parents and guardians significantly influence their children's career development from a very young age. Parents can support their children's development by encouraging exploration, providing opportunities for varied experiences, and discussing interests and future possibilities (Kashefpakdel, Rehill & Hughes, 2018). The "Critical Perspectives on Childhood Career Development Learning" report also highlights the importance of involving parents in career development learning to ensure a holistic approach to children's career development (Davis, 2017). Schools should offer workshops, information sessions, and resources that equip parents with the knowledge and tools to support their children's career decision-making effectively.

By providing parents with the necessary support, we can create a more holistic approach to career education that encompasses the influence of the home environment. This will help ensure that students receive consistent encouragement and guidance at school and home, ultimately leading to more informed and confident career choices.

## **Increasing Exposure Opportunities, Particularly for Students in Regional, Remote, and Lower Socioeconomic Areas**

Increasing exposure opportunities for students, especially those in regional, remote, and lower socioeconomic areas, is crucial. These students often face unique challenges and barriers to accessing career education resources and experiences that are readily available in metropolitan areas.

Providing these students with opportunities to engage in career exploration activities such as industry visits, internships, and mentoring programs can significantly enhance their understanding of potential career paths and increase their motivation to pursue further education and training. Programs that connect students with professionals from various industries through in-person visits or virtual platforms can broaden their horizons and help them envision a wider range of career possibilities.

### **The Importance of Exposure Opportunities**

**Addressing Geographic and Socioeconomic Disparities:** Students in regional and remote areas often need access to the same career education resources as their metropolitan counterparts. By increasing exposure opportunities, we can help bridge this gap, ensuring that all students, regardless of location, can access valuable career information and experiences.

**Enhancing Motivation and Engagement:** Exposure to different career paths and industries can significantly improve students' educational motivation and engagement. When students see the relevance of their studies to their future careers, they are more likely to remain committed to their academic journey and perform better academically.

**Providing Real-World Insights:** Industry visits, internships, and mentoring programs give students real-world insights into various professions. This hands-on experience helps students better understand the day-to-day realities of different careers, helping them make more informed decisions about their future paths.

**Building Professional Networks:** Opportunities to engage with professionals in various fields help students make valuable networks that can support their career development. These connections can provide mentorship, guidance, and potential job opportunities in the future.

### **Strategies for Increasing Exposure Opportunities**

**Industry Partnerships:** Schools can establish partnerships with local businesses, industries, and community organisations to create opportunities for students to visit workplaces, participate in internships, and engage with professionals. These partnerships can be particularly beneficial in giving students a first-hand look at different career options.

**Virtual Career Exploration:** Utilizing technology to provide virtual tours, webinars, and online mentoring sessions can expand access to career education for students in remote areas. Virtual platforms can connect students with professionals from across the country and worldwide, broadening their exposure to diverse career paths.

**Mentoring Programs:** Implementing mentoring programs that pair students with professionals in their fields of interest can provide ongoing support and guidance. Mentors can share their experiences, offer career advice, and help students navigate their career journeys.

**Career Fairs and Workshops:** Organizing career fairs and workshops can bring together students, educators, and industry professionals. These events can allow students to explore different careers, ask questions, and gain valuable insights into various professions.

**Community Engagement:** Engaging with the local community to identify and leverage resources can enhance career education programs. Community members, including parents and local business owners, can contribute to career education by sharing their knowledge and experiences with students.

The paper "Co-designing a Curriculum Model for Career Education: Perspectives from Regional Communities in Australia" highlights the importance of creating career education programs co-designed with the community and tailored to the needs of regional students (Mahat et al., 2023). This approach ensures that the career education provided is relevant and accessible, addressing students' specific challenges in these areas.

### **The Role of Technology in Expanding Opportunities**

Technology is critical in expanding exposure opportunities for students in regional and remote areas. Virtual career exploration tools, online learning platforms, and digital communication channels can help overcome geographic barriers and give students access to a wealth of career information and experiences.

The report "Thinking in a Joined-Up Way: The Importance of the Careers Information Ecology" emphasises the value of an integrated approach to career information. By utilising multiple sources of information, including online resources, schools can create a comprehensive career education program that supports students in making informed decisions about their future (Roberts & Lyall, 2023).

By increasing exposure opportunities for students in regional, remote, and lower socioeconomic areas, we can ensure that all students can explore diverse career options, build valuable networks, and develop the skills needed for their future success. This approach will help create a more equitable education system and better prepare students to transition from school to further education, training, and employment.

### **Conclusion**

We strongly endorse Recommendation 9 and the principles in section 4.3.2 of the Expert Panel Report. By starting career education younger, treating it separately from subject selection counselling, ensuring the presence of professionally qualified career practitioners in all schools, providing support for parents and carers, and increasing exposure opportunities for students in regional, remote, and lower socioeconomic areas, we can better prepare Western Australian students for successful transitions from school to further education, training, and employment.

Implementing these recommendations will lead to several key benefits:

- **Enhanced Student Engagement and Success:** Early and continuous career education can foster greater student engagement by connecting their academic learning with future career aspirations. When students see the relevance of their education to real-world opportunities, they are more likely to be motivated, perform better academically, and persist through challenges.
- **Equity in Career Education:** By addressing the unique needs of students in regional, remote, and lower socioeconomic areas, we can ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality career education. This equity-focused approach will help bridge the gap between different demographic groups and promote fairer student outcomes.
- **Comprehensive Support Systems:** Separating career education from subject selection counselling allows for more focused and specialised support. With professionally qualified career practitioners in every school, students will receive tailored guidance that addresses their immediate academic needs and long-term career goals.
- **Stronger Home-School Connections:** Providing resources and guidance to parents and carers will empower them to effectively support their children's career development. This holistic approach ensures that students receive consistent encouragement and advice from home and school environments, leading to more informed and confident career decisions.
- **Exposure to Diverse Career Pathways:** Increasing exposure opportunities through industry visits, internships, mentoring programs, and virtual platforms will broaden students' understanding of various career options. These experiences are crucial in helping students explore different fields, build professional networks, and develop essential skills for the workforce.

- **Integration of Social and Emotional Learning:** Incorporating social and emotional learning (SEL) with career education will equip students with the interpersonal skills needed to navigate their careers successfully. The SELCE model emphasises the interconnectedness of emotional and career development, ensuring students are well-rounded and prepared for the complexities of the modern workplace.

By adopting these recommendations, we can create an education system that prepares students academically and equips them with the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary for successful and fulfilling careers. This approach will contribute to a more dynamic and resilient workforce, benefiting the broader economy and society.

## References

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