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## Parliamentary Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools – December 2017

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Submission from Vanessa Ramsay, Career Development Coordinator, on behalf of  
Doncaster Secondary College, 123 Church Road, Doncaster, 3108 Ph: [REDACTED]

Please find information, recommendations, opinions and suggestions as follows:

### The relationship between school career advice and youth employment outcomes

- Labour Market Information (LMI)  
LMI data can at times be demoralising for our young people and their parents and sifting fact from fiction in this current diverse and changing world of work is challenging. Media can at times sensationalise the impending impact of the changing job market on future career prospects with the discussion around some of the ‘jobs of the future’ eg. Autonomous Transportation Specialist still seeming abstract and futuristic. The message of acquiring “skills” – entrepreneurial, enterprise, critical thinking, digital literacy, problem solving, etc. – and the opportunity to practice these skills will be what is needed for students to be equipped to adapt and respond to the changes that are inevitable and find successful future employment outcomes.

### How well current career advice programs meet the needs of school leavers

- Utilising the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development* and the *Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework*, Career Development has been integrated into our school curriculum from Years 7-12 and fits mostly in the one 75 minute period per week that also includes topic/study areas like, respectful relationships, driver education, student assemblies and visiting speakers, course selection, civics and citizenship, goal setting, etc. Like most subject areas, there are many great resources available to assist student’s career development from discovery and exploration through to planning and applying for post-secondary school options. One challenge is navigating through the options in order to keep those resources current and keeping the staff delivering the various classes and programs up to date. The other challenge is that each student’s personal career journey varies greatly and therefore their readiness to take on the information within career education is very much linked with “it will only seem important when it is relevant to me” – ie. preparing or updating a resume can seem a tedious task until suddenly I need to apply for a part time job. The aim therefore is to build upon a student’s knowledge year after year and equip them to become their own career managers by the time they are school leavers.
- Work Experience and Structured Workplace Learning (SWL)  
Increasingly the tertiary sector and employers are speaking about the importance of “work experience” and “work skilling” as being essential preparation for future career management. These programs need to remain pivotal parts of secondary school careers programs

### The challenges faced by school career advisors

- TIME, Time, time, ...
- Trained Careers staff to student ratio (1-1.4FTE to 1500 students Years 7-12)
- Frequent changes within school student manager roles can sometimes mean that yearly programs and processes have limited chance for review and enhancement from one year to the next.

- Crowded curriculum – there are many valuable programs and topics with which Careers Education “competes” for the limited time that sits alongside the core subject curriculum areas
- Increasing demand for individual student pathway management.  
A student’s wellbeing, mental health, school engagement, cultural diversity and learning needs can all impact on their capacity to achieve within the mainstream school setting. Where Career Education was predominately focussed with senior students, increasingly students from Years 7-9 are also requiring a more case managed approach to school engagement options and pathway planning.
- Increasing need for engagement programs at younger year levels – VET Tasters, and “Pre-VCAL” type programs
- Capacity to incorporate Vocation Education and Training in Schools programs (VETiS).  
The training costs and accessibility to preferred courses still remains a challenge despite the very good implementation of VET Cluster Groups.
- The perception of VET courses being ‘non-academic’ is difficult to change. Many trade skill requirements have changed, eg. in the Automotive area technicians are required to be highly skilled in IT diagnostics.
- VCE/VCAL  
The emphasis on ATAR as being the benchmark of a student successfully completing Year 12 is a difficult perception to change with students, parents and the community. VCAL as a valid and respected program for those students who prefer a more practical style of learning, regardless of academic ability, needs to be encouraged.
- Work Experience and Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) opportunities are difficult and competitive to source. The Child Safe Standards recommendations, whilst necessary, may have a future impact on the willingness of employers to take students on for placements and therefore the viability of administering these programs.
- Challenges to engage parents with career information despite utilising websites, newsletters, email, information evenings, etc.  
The parents who access **Career** information consistently in order to best support their children with decision making are often not **the ones who need to most**. **The exploration of information for career planning may not seem important or relevant until it becomes personal and urgent.**
- Information overload –there are many programs, initiatives and opportunities available but it takes time to decipher the value and relative cost (time, money, staff, resources, disruption to the scheduled curriculum) to make them happen for the right students across the school.
- External **structured** programs for student re-engagement **referrals** are limited.
- Some students, particularly those from more traditional cultural backgrounds, continue to face the pressure to achieve by pursuing those careers that are typically seen as the most “successful, prestigious and highly paid”, (law, medicine, dentistry and engineering). The pressure for students to achieve the high academic results required for entry rather than pursuing their own areas of skill, passion and suitability can result in stress and disillusionment. For some, the idea of “pathwaying” into a chosen career area can be misinterpreted as failure.

## Interstate and overseas best practice models that can be implemented in Victoria

- The ‘*New Work Order*’ research and findings by the Foundation for Young Australians holds some key insights into the required focus and relevance of Career Development education into the future.
- At the recent CEAV conference, Serena Hopkins from [Canadian Career Development Foundation](#) spoke about their new research into building Resilience Strategies in young people. The first point was to ‘**Foster HOPE**’. Other programs CCDF have researched and implemented in Canada include – “Future in Focus’ and ‘In Motion and Momentum’.

*“CCDF is a non-profit organization that works to advance career services and the capacity of the profession to respond with empathy and skill to their clients and stakeholders in an ever-changing work environment. CCDF is a nationally and internationally recognized leader in the field of career development. It advocates for services that strengthen:*

- *the preparation of youth for the workforce and ongoing learning;*
- *the capacity of workers to skillfully manage their careers;*
- *the capacity of employers to create quality workplaces that maximize worker satisfaction and productivity;*
- *the reintegration of adults entering or re-entering work or learning and;*
- *the transition of older workers to alternative avenues for work, learning and/or community engagement.*

*CCDF works on a range of projects and specializes in areas of:*

- **Applied Research:** *Creating an evidence base for the outcomes of career services and interventions;*
- **Policy Consultation:** *Bringing policy makers and service providers together to develop policy that is attuned to the realities of service provision in the field;*
- **Training:** *Developing and delivering training courses to a range of practitioners from in-service professional workshops for teachers to post-secondary level accredited courses aligned to the competencies set out in the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners for provincial and territorial employment counsellors;*
- **Resource Development:** *Making career products that respond to client and practitioner needs;*
- **Service Capacity Building** *Working with diverse partners to enrich and strengthen career services and to integrate career, community, economic and workforce development.”*