



13 December 2017

Mr Nazih Elasmr OAM
Chair
Parliament of Victoria
Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee
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Dear Mr Elasmr

Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools

Independent Schools Victoria welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools.

Established in 1949, Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) represents, promotes the interests of, and provides services to Independent schools in Victoria. Today, ISV assists 219 Member schools, educating more than **139,000** students. More than 99 per cent of all students enrolled in the Independent sector attend an ISV Member School.

ISV Member Schools are diverse in character, serving a range of different communities. Member Schools may provide religious or values-based education to students, or promote education philosophies or different interpretations of mainstream education.

ISV offers the following comments in relation to the issues that the Committee is investigating, based on our knowledge of practices across our diverse membership.

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

A primary aim of *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development* is to enable teachers, parents, career development practitioners, employment service providers, employers or others who are in a position to support people's careers and transitions, to work with a nationally consistent set of career management competencies that will help all Australians to better manage their lives, learning and work.

Many schools are developing or redesigning career development programs and, in many cases, are supported by the resources developed by the Career Education Association of Victoria. This organisation has mapped their resources against the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, and the *Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework*. Career practitioners ideally draw on specialist skills and knowledge to assist students with their in-school and post-school pathways using these resources. However, in some schools in the independent sector, particularly those serving lower SES communities, there is not a suitably

qualified specialist careers practitioner, which affects the advice and support available to students and their families.

Independent Schools Victoria administers the LEAD School Effectiveness Surveys: these are seven psychometrically-tested stakeholder surveys that are statistically proven by Cambridge University to measure school effectiveness. The surveys give school leaders a 360-degree view of the complex, multi-faceted elements of school effectiveness through the eyes of students, parents, staff and board members. Some questions address the quality of careers advice. Analysis of school data shows that typically, larger schools are more likely to have one or more qualified specialist careers practitioners, metropolitan schools are more likely to have a qualified specialist careers practitioner, and schools serving higher SES communities are more likely to have a qualified specialist careers.

Overall, students and their parents are generally very satisfied with the advice they receive about future career options.

The challenges faced by school career advisers

It is important that careers practitioners have the appropriate qualifications to ensure that their students receive the best possible support and advice. While a number of schools have access to suitably qualified specialist careers practitioners, many do not. In environments where resources are tight, principals and leadership teams must make choices about what is prioritised for resource allocation. Careers education is not always a priority.

Qualified specialist careers practitioners face ongoing challenges in the following areas:

- Clarity about their role and its requirements
- Access to a specialised area where resources are kept, with spaces appropriate for one-on-one interviews, meetings with parents, etc
- Appropriate time allocation to meet the needs of their students and families at various junctures such as work experience, pathway selection in the senior years of schools, subject selection into senior years of school, and post school pathways.
- Appropriate support to retain currency in a rapidly changing post-school environment.
- Appropriate time and resources to collaborate with relevant stakeholders including policy makers, industry and other schools.

Parental education must be a priority for careers education in any school setting. Parents' understanding of the contemporary workplace is limited by their own experience. The changing nature of the workplace and the requirements of students who are entering the workplace, tertiary education or an apprenticeship have changed dramatically. Schools with strong careers education priorities address parent education as a key element of their programs.

Schools speak of the lower aspirations of parents from some communities for their child's post-school pathways. This might be because earlier generations did not pursue tertiary education, or typically stayed in the area and followed their parent's work choices, or targeted 'lower entry' courses rather than higher entry courses as a safer bet.

For school communities without a qualified specialist careers practitioner, each of these challenges is considerably magnified.

Specific career advice needs of young people in regional Victoria and how to address them

Careers practitioners in regional settings speak of these particular challenges:

- Appropriate support to retain currency of knowledge in a rapidly changing post-school environment. This is particularly true of regional areas where the local employment scene is changing rapidly because of loss of traditional workplaces and jobs. An example is the Latrobe Valley where many school-leavers might have been employed in power generation.
- Appropriate support to retain currency of knowledge in a changing tertiary environment such as staying abreast of changes to university entry requirements including alternative pathways to university for school-leavers.
- The number of enrolments in a school in regional Victoria plays a critical role in determining the subject choices and ultimate pathways available to students. Careers for young people in these areas may be compromised due to limited local industry and/or a narrow range of subjects, which may limit the necessary prerequisites for tertiary education. Unemployment is an ever-present threat to families.

Summary

The National Career Development Strategy Research Project states that ...'It has long been recognised by researchers and professional career developers that career development services have a key role to play in advancing the access and equity agenda and facilitating access to learning, work and self development opportunities for a range of groups traditionally marginalised'.

ISV understands that sound career advice to students in schools prepares them for a positive transition into tertiary education or the workforce, and supports a whole of government strategy to ensure that all schools have access to and can employ suitably qualified career practitioners. The changing landscape of employment means that the notion of a job for life is long gone, as young people can expect to work in a dozen or more different jobs across a number of different career areas. Schools and students need to develop their career management skills and have greater access to timely and high quality support in this fast

moving environment. Careers advice is best delivered through a number of partners. Teachers, parents, employers and career professionals working together will all play their part in supporting student's career decisions

Best wishes



Michelle Green
Chief Executive