

Foundation for Young Australians

Inquiry into Career Advice in Victorian schools

Background

The Victorian Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee has established a parliamentary inquiry to explore ways to improve career advice for school students. The Committee will investigate how well school career advice is meeting the needs of young people, and if there are ways it can be improved.

Successful transition from school to work is becoming more important due to changes in the workplace and predictions that young people will have multiple careers over their lifetime. Many young people get information about careers at school, but it is unclear if that information covers all options to maximise students' employment opportunities.

The inquiry will examine the challenges faced by school career advisers and specifically consider career advice for young people in regional Victoria. The terms of reference include:

1. examining the relationship between career advice activities and workforce participation of young Victorians;
2. investigating the extent to which career advice activities meet the needs of school leavers;
3. examining the challenges advisers face helping young Victorians transition from education to the workforce;
4. considering strategies to improve the effectiveness of career advice activities for school leavers;
5. investigate the career advice needs of young people in regional Victoria and ways to address these needs; and
6. exploring what other jurisdictions both in Australia and overseas have in place that could be implemented in Victoria.

FYA Response

The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to this Inquiry.

At FYA we believe it is time for a radical rethink of the ways in which we prepare young people for the future of work and the management of their career. We need to move from a mindset of single career pathway to one of supporting young people to develop a portfolio of skills, knowledge and attitudes that will expand and deepen over time, making them highly portable across many jobs and sectors. This thinking needs to form the basis of the conversations we have with young people about work, the tools and resources we provide to deliver career education in schools and the curriculum in which skills are identified, developed and assessed.

We would like to provide advice on the following inquiry concerns:

1. Career advice activities and the needs of school leavers

Over the last three years FYA has produced the *New Work Order* series of reports to better understand the economic and social conditions affecting young people today and into the future and to chart a course for how we best prepare young people to drive economic and social progress in decades to come.

The way we work will be increasingly affected by three global economic forces; automation, globalisation and collaboration. If we want young people to capitalise on the opportunities and navigate the challenges brought by these changes in the future of work, they need a set of transferable skills.

Ten of the sixteen 'crucial proficiencies in the 21st century' identified by the World Economic Forum are non-technical skills or capabilities¹. Skills such as communication, collaboration, problem solving, emotional judgement, professional ethics and global citizenship identified as the skills or capabilities that will equip young people to thrive in this new work order. Transferable between industries and occupations these "soft" "enterprise" or "21st century" skills are now being prioritised by policy makers to reform curriculum and sought after by employers. There is increasing agreement that the term "soft" no longer applies as changing economic, social and environmental conditions in and across countries has necessitated rethinking their value and importance (Lambert 2017).

Current careers advice is already outdated in the new work order predicted. When we talk about the future of work, much of the focus is on which jobs will disappear and which will remain. These are important factors, however we need to shift our focus from jobs to skills to prepare young people for the future of work.

By understanding the skills and capabilities that will be most portable and in demand in the new economy, young people can work to equip themselves for the future of work more effectively. Our mindset needs to shift to reflect a more dynamic future of work where linear careers will be far less common and young people will need a portfolio of skills and capabilities, including career management skills to navigate the more complex world of work.

As technology reduces the need for workers to complete routine, manual tasks they will spend more time focusing on people, solving more strategic problems and thinking creatively. There will be a stronger focus on being more collaborative, and using more entrepreneurial and critical thinking skills.

To support young people to navigate the rapidly changing labour markets Australia will need to invest to ensure they are innovative, creative and enterprising. We need to support them to develop a portfolio of transferable skills which they are able to identify and articulate those skills, as well as understand the ways in which they can add to them to their skills portfolio through their education and over the course of their working lives.

Young people are facing a world of work where they will have on average 17 different jobs across five different industries throughout their lives. The traditional employment relationship is likely to become more fluid with people holding portfolios of activities, including paid employment, unpaid employment (internships or volunteering) and self-employment.

We must be cognisant of this vastly different context in shaping a careers advice strategy as this generation will have working lives that are fundamentally different to that of their parents and grandparents.

¹ World Economic Forum 2015, *New Vision for Education - Unlocking the Potential of Technology*.

2. Challenges in providing careers advice to young people transitioning from school to work

It is time for a radical rethink of the ways in which we prepare young people for the future of work and the management of career. We need to move from a mindset of 'a' career to one of supporting young people to develop a portfolio of skills that will expand and deepen over time that will make them highly portable across many jobs.

This thinking needs to form the basis of conversations with young people about work, the tools and resources we provide to manage career education in schools and the curriculum in which skills are identified, developed and assessed.

Right now, young people are still learning through a content (rather than capabilities) based curriculum, where the ability to learn and develop their future-proof portfolio of skills is not prioritised to the extent it needs to be. Coupled with dramatic changes to the future of work, young people are leaving school not equipped to successfully navigate the new landscape of work and life.

This rapid, fundamental change in the global economy has significant implications for education systems which were designed for the economies that developed in the wake of the industrial revolution (Winthrop & McGivney, 2016). The OECD has advocated the need to rebuild school curricula and education systems more broadly to prioritise 21st century skills or capabilities to ensure individuals develop creative, critical thinking and collaborative skills, and build the character attributes such as mindfulness, curiosity, courage and resilience (Schleicher, 2015).

FYA research has uncovered a growing demand from employers for young workers to have what we refer to as enterprise skills. These transferable skills will support young people to navigate complex careers across a range of industries and professions. Enterprise skills include problem solving, financial literacy, digital literacy, teamwork, and communication. They have been proved to be the most portable skills across all jobs in the economy.

Development and assessment of these skills should sit alongside career education strategies into the classroom in all subject areas. FYA has advocated for an overarching national framework to ensure consistency and quality. This is a deliberate piece of work that needs to be supported, well-designed and planned. A shift in focus from jobs to skills is the only way we can ensure that young people emerging from school or further education are 'work ready' for the 21 century.

Yet, virtually every child is still asked, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?', only 6% of adults end up in the careers they wanted when they were younger. Compounding the uncertainty is the reality that many jobs of the future don't exist today.

Amidst all this uncertainty, every young Australian has to make choices that will affect their future options like: what subjects to study at school; what courses to take at TAFE or university; what apprenticeships to go for; and what first job they should apply for? While none of these choices are irreversible, they are important because they collectively shape our career and employment options over time. In order for young people to make decisions, they need to have information that simplifies the complex world of work and helps them navigate work over a lifetime.

The portability of skills has important implications for how we think about our careers and provide career education. Many jobs are related and require similar skills. Rather than choosing an occupation with an

unbroken path to seniority, a young person could think about developing a portfolio of skills that opens doors to a group or 'cluster' of jobs, i.e. jobs with similar skill characteristics.

3. Career education must recognise that learning will be a lifelong pursuit for this generation

Young people need to emerge from education with an understanding that their working lives will be filled with change and that learning will be a lifelong pursuit. Yet a very linear and traditional picture of careers continues to dominate mainstream thinking about work, with people often still thinking of careers as a climb up the ranks of job seniority, starting in the trainee cubicle and aiming for the executive offices.

Today careers are often not so linear. Amidst this uncertainty, current and prospective students need to make choices that will affect their future options and need to have information that simplifies the complex world of work, helping them navigate work and learning throughout their lifetime.

Rather than making study and work decisions based on a narrow concept of one lifelong occupation, we must encourage young people to think about the broader direction of work type they want to perform and to build a portfolio of skills that give them a wide range of options.

This way of thinking about career education and work goes further than finding current best practice - largely that continues to be focussed on preparing young people for the work of today and yesterday. What is needed is a shift in mindset.

This mindset shift is required not just of young people but of employers, educators, parents and policy makers. On the supply side, young people can think about how their existing and emerging skills would be valuable for multiple different roles. On the demand side, employers could consider the breadth of potential candidates from different occupations with similar skills. If this mindset shift was to take place, we might view the debate around a skills mismatch differently: training for one occupation and working in another occupation would not be a 'mismatch' if a person was deploying a relevant skillset.

To build a generation of young people prepared for the future economy with strong enterprising capabilities and career management skills we know you must begin early and build consistently, year on year, throughout high school and beyond. Enterprising skills must be taught in ways students want to learn, through experience and immersion with peers.

However explicit work in this area is limited in Australian schools. With only 1 in 10 teachers receiving professional development in project and inquiry based approaches to learning, we also need to ensure our educators are equipped to help students' build their skills portfolio.

Australia needs a national enterprise skills and career education strategy that should adhere to the following principles:

- Begin early in primary school and build consistently, year on year, throughout high school
- Be provided in ways that young people want to learn: through experience, immersion and with peers
- Involve rethinking teacher training, methodologies and professional development
- Provide accurate information and exposure about where future jobs will exist and the skills to craft and navigate multiple careers
- Engage students, schools, industry and parents in co-designing opportunities in and outside the classroom.

4. Proposed strategy to improve the effectiveness of career advice activities

Working collaboratively with the Victorian government, key industry partners, education and parent organisations, FYA could design and deliver a trial of a new integrated approach to careers education to inform the development of pro-active and practical careers education guidelines that support collaboration between schools, industry, employers and parents.

Schools who are already delivering innovative approaches or leading practice to bringing a new approach to career education to life in their school would be identified and up to 10 schools would be selected to participate in a ground-breaking trial. The 12 month trial components would include:

Stage One

1. **Evidence collation:** An assessment of the key components of innovations and current leading practice models with particular focus on disadvantaged cohorts of students (for example Indigenous, regional/rural, non-English speaking background and LGBTI); and integration of key learnings from previous work, including the Partnership Brokers Network and the PTEC business/industry guidelines.
2. **Co-design:** Each school will implement a minimum of two project innovations, resulting in documented and evaluated examples other schools can adopt following the trial. These will be co-designed through a facilitated process with classroom teachers and local industry/employers these will form the basis for the development of the guidelines.
 - a. To steer and inform this work:
 - b. Each innovation will be co-designed with young people from the school (with representation from key target groups including LGBTI, Indigenous and are from regional/rural areas), to ensure diverse young people are at the centre of proposed interventions and solutions.
 - c. Each school will establish a “change champions” group of teachers, local employers, young people and parents to steer and guide the local design and delivery.
 - d. Each school will nominate a lead teacher to coordinate and contribute to the national trial group of schools to share learnings and experience.

Stage Two

1. **Delivery:** Each local innovation would include:
 - a. Curriculum renewal to integrate and assess Careers Education through multiple subjects, rather than as a separate discipline, including exploring the right links to the general capabilities.
 - b. Parent engagement strategies to support their children’s engagement in careers learning.
 - c. Careers learning activities and work exposure opportunities provided in ways that young people want to learn: through experience, immersion and with peers, both in and outside of the classroom
 - d. During this delivery FYA will coordinate monthly collaboration meetings with lead teachers from each school assessing key learnings and assisting with implementation across all elements of the planning and delivery of innovations.
2. **Results:** At the end of the project FYA would deliver a toolkit of practical guidelines for career education which will include a curated collection of trialled and tested models for effective engagement

of young people, their teachers and carers, local business and industry that jurisdictions can learn from and apply as is relevant in their context.

About FYA

FYA is committed to young people, their futures and the contribution they can make to Australia. Our work, informed by strong evidence, research and evaluation, backs young people and informs the national agenda on the issues that most affect them. FYA believes young people are ambitious, creative and capable of rethinking the world and solving tomorrow's problems today.

- We **back** young people by building the skills, capabilities and knowledge they need to thrive in the future of work.
- We **inspire** young people by providing ideas and opportunities to create purposeful lives.
- We **connect** young people by building a network of inspired and inspiring young Australians.
- We **transform** the way government, industry and community sectors engage with young people to rethink the systems that shape the world.