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## Parents' Voice in Government School Education

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Parliament of Victoria  
Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee

**Parents Victoria (PV) representing parents in Victorian Government Schools submission to the Victorian Parliament's Economic, Education, Jobs & Skills Committee's Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools.**

On 4 September 2017 PV Executive Officer, Gail McHardy participated in a teleconference interview with a Dandolo Partners Consultant, one of the agencies engaged by the Department of Education (DET) to complete a review of career education programs and resources in Victorian government schools.

Your questions are similar to that review so we've supplied below some answers and suggestions as we did in their consultation and we hope you find the input constructive.

### **Issues the Committee is investigating include:**

#### **1) the relationship between school career advice and youth employment outcomes**

Preparedness, building capacity, capability and confidence in students. Recognising areas of student interest and schools willing to work with external support training, employment and industry agencies is essential to achieve this objective. Career Teachers, Advisers and Mentors must be seen as a priority partner and reliable resource in our school system and should be funded to deliver support services in our schools.

Family engagement throughout the learning journey is essential, it must be authentic so parents feel they are respected partners in education. Career advice needs to be embedded in the curriculum in various forms to enable students to have the confidence and interpersonal skills to communicate effectively. They need to build a skill set as they graduate from one year level to the next in readiness for future learning and work capacity. Future work trends indicate our children need to have a very adaptive culture and are equipped with a wider array of skills to secure future employment.

#### **2) how well current career advice programs meet the needs of school leavers**

Feedback to us from parents and students claims it is inadequate and schools have difficulty in responding to student individual needs or aspirations.

The general trend across the state school system is that Year 10 students are supported by an onsite Careers teacher/advisor (usually a teacher fulfilling this remit part time with other class teaching responsibilities). This position should be a full time dedicated role and possibly rotated or offered to

those with a keen interest in this area. Some schools engage external providers to come in and speak to students in Year 10 & 11 and then they have a 1:1 session with the Careers Advisor. Sometimes parents are allowed to participate or play a role in this process, but mostly not.

Parents are often the receivers of some career advice information but predominantly it is usually consent forms to sign and requests for payment for external providers brought in for areas of specialisation, incursions or excursions relating to tertiary or other training opportunities.

Some schools have run excellent local Expos inviting local industry, small business and community members known for their professional skill. However, these are random acts and rely heavily on schools to coordinate and the good will of parents and teachers to deliver such an event.

As early as Year 9 students are asked to select year 10 subjects and electives and many complain this is extremely difficult without knowing their future direction or the prerequisites for tertiary or further training. There are more recent examples where some schools are adopting vertical learning and students are encouraged to sign up to a larger variety of curriculum options aligned with their areas of interest (refer to the Entrepreneurial Learning in Schools report by Mitchell Institute that was done in collaboration with the NSW and Vic Secondary Schools – noted under other useful reading references).

PV supported the VCAA *Where to Now* resource right from its beginning and is pleased to see over the years it has become a more detailed resource for those considering any of the pathways. However, we always urged VCAA/Government to make this resource accessible earlier rather than later. [http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/wtn/WhereToNow\\_2018\\_Web.pdf](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/wtn/WhereToNow_2018_Web.pdf)

It is imperative that DET Career Information and Youth Transition public facing information is kept up to date. There is nothing more frustrating than finding the information and then links are no longer accessible with static messages “Page not found”. It is important all education stakeholders are updated with relevant information to share with the relevant audiences too.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/careers.aspx>

### **3) the challenges faced by school career advisers**

Experience, relevance and current understanding of global, interstate and local employment and training market needs and trends. Those employed in these roles need to be qualified and know what employers are seeking and recent research reports like those produced by FYA under the New Work order series provide those future insights.

Some parents have shared examples where some School Career Advisors (onsite and external) have suggested or encouraged students in certain direction. They’ve made a judgement or assumption the student will have an interest in a certain pathway without exploring with them first what their aspirations may even be. A recent story shared by the mother of a Year 10 student wanting to enrol in a subject not offered by the school had to pitch to the Principal why they should be supported in this endeavour. Fortunately for this student, she had had great support from a teacher at the school who identified the student’s potential and provided some useful information noting this teacher was not a year level teacher for this student. This teacher was also not the careers advisor but recognised the student’s ability and skill to pursue a career of choice, where others had discouraged the student and suggested areas of employment the student had not desire or interest.

Career advisers are not provided adequate time to meet with parents and students to discuss and plan their individual learning plans or career pathways.

Unclear what professional learning opportunities are provided to Career Advisers to work with Employers; Training Providers and Industry to keep them abreast of the latest expectations.

Govt/DET and Schools rely heavily on the Career Advisers to source their own reliable resources and contacts to meet the school community and Government expectations to meet the needs of students.

Victorian Government Schools should utilise the LLENs more if they don't already. They forge links with local industry, training providers and employers and know their local community needs and challenges. Some of the LLENs over the years have developed useful family friendly resources to explain pathways and senior secondary school programs like the VCE, VET and VCAL far better than some schools do. Refer to these videos produced by Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCQ9OHI1do0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwNu6yYUzeQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYGkkFYwaXA>

#### **4) specific career advice needs of young people in regional Victoria and how to address them**

A conversation with the current Rural Ambassadors, Country Education Project (CEP) is a must for this Review if they haven't been listed to do so. Refer to their Rural Inspire website link at <https://cep.org.au/learning-initiatives/rural-inspire/>

Also the VicSRC (student led organisation) have students from non metropolitan schools that would keen to have a voice in this space too, refer to their webpage at <http://www.vicsrc.org.au/aboutus/who-we-are>

Rural and regional families have the same aspirations and needs of those living in the city or urban areas. The difference and challenge for these school communities is attracting and retaining teachers and leaders to their schools. Rural students have expressed at a number of events PV has attended or heard their voices on topics like this - they feel isolated and at times discriminated by where their families choose to live. If these young people don't even have the capacity to move to the city for other educational options or opportunities they are torn re to stay or to go. If they go, they know the decrease in student population has a direct impact on funding for the students who stay, which is unfair in the so-called lucky country. If they stay, there are limited subject selection and career opportunities, they often have to travel a distance to access a secondary college, Birchip P-12 have students travelling 2 hours or more to and from school in the district. Regarding the recent Victorian Government announcement re a 4 x secondary school merger in the Shepparton region, Government claims this decision was necessary to address the needs of local students but what are the overall impacts not realised yet by this decision? Rural students have expressed frustrations on internet and connectivity challenges in remote areas and as learning today relies heavily on technology, often these communities are not prioritised for the additional resources needed, compared to their city peers.

#### **5) interstate and overseas best practice models that could be implemented in Victoria**

PV does not endorse or recommend any particular interstate or international model but it appears other international report findings are saying very similar things!

[https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/state\\_of\\_the\\_nation\\_report\\_digital\\_updated01.pdf](https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/sites/default/files/uploaded/state_of_the_nation_report_digital_updated01.pdf)

[https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/documents/reports/CareerReport\\_Aug15.pdf](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/vetinschools/documents/reports/CareerReport_Aug15.pdf)

It is important that Federal and State Governments work together on future objectives and provide states with the required school funding to achieve their objectives if schools are to prepare students for future training pathways ie apprenticeships. There has to be a national commitment to do this effectively. <https://www.education.gov.au/news/release-careers-and-skills-pathways-report>

**Other useful reading references for the Committee:**

<http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/announcements/professor-bill-lucas-visit-to-australia-march-2017/> here is a link to the tweets that resulted from that session with FYA & Mitchell Institute:  
[https://storify.com/Mitch\\_Inst/transforming-education-for-the-future-of-work](https://storify.com/Mitch_Inst/transforming-education-for-the-future-of-work)

**FYAs research reports 2015 to 2017 re the new work order** - <https://www.fya.org.au/our-research/>

<http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/the-paradigm-shifters-entrepreneurial-learning-in-schools/>

<http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/finding-the-truth-in-the-apprenticeships-debate/>

**LLENs** <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/pathways/Pages/lens.aspx?Redirect=1>