



Submission: Inquiry into Career Advice Services

1. *Your thoughts on the relationship between career advice activities and the workforce participation of young Victorians? Are those with access to increased/improved/qualified career advice finding accessing the workforce more effective than those that do not?*

The link to career advice activities and workforce participation has been long evidence positively both across Victoria and internationally. Through member engagement and interview feedback, the CDAA has identified that the transition out of school is a major life event and the influence of career advice activities, specific to the needs of the individual student, can greatly influence the success of the students. Career Advice Activities undertaken before year 10, including interest based guidance and how to gain employment, greatly increased the confidence of students and allowed them to seek part time employment and new opportunities that will assist them in managing their transition post-secondary education. When career advice activities are also used to guide parents in understanding the future skills required for success there was seen an increase in guidance to part time work and guidance activities.

Evidence and feedback from our members identify that where schools have the inability to provide individualised support, or are challenged by not receiving appropriate funding to effectively develop targeted and up to date career guidance programs and interventions, there is a greater challenge in engaging the students and supporting them prepare effectively for post education transition. Additionally, where career guidance activities are not supported in low socio economic areas there is little influence in changing issues such as long term unemployment.

One key challenge is in ensuring that the career advice activities support the individual in being able to make the right choice for their own success. The increased enrolment in universities evidences that there is a great need for post high school education. Without effective guidance individuals are not receiving the appropriate level of information on the learning environment that suits their career goals, learning style and academic capabilities. This is resulting in greater numbers of individuals attending university unprepared and is understood to be a key driver of retention issues at university. Individuals that automatically transition to university when their ideal environment was apprenticeships, traineeships or an education through TAFE risk becoming disengaged pre-employment. Individuals disengaged are of greater influence of becoming long term unemployed and not developing the skills they need to gain suitable employment. Research has clearly identified that inaccurate and incomplete career intervention and guidance activities can lead to inappropriate choices post education and impact their overall ability to achieve success for the student (Haynes, McCrone, and Wade; Moon et al. 2004)

A great challenge for many is the quality of career advice within schools. Evidence suggests that in many schools this is a part time role that is not supported strategically within the school. Many individuals are pushed in to the role of career advisor pre-qualification and have limited understanding of the future world of work. This in turn means that the advice, support and guidance being provided to individuals within schools where this occurs may see that career advice activities will have a lower influence. Whilst career education and career development remains a part time activity within schools the outcomes will be in line with this.

There is substantial evidence on career advice activities being influential in successful employment outcomes for individuals. The ability to achieve this outcome however is ensuring quality and individualised guidance that is not influenced by marketing from education providers or generational influences. By providing quality career advice services within schools that is individualised students will be able to be guided in to the post-secondary transition that will support their interests, capabilities and needs. This individualised approach will greatly influence long term success as it supports the ability of developing career adaptability and career resilience which is integral for future employment.

2. In your experience, does the career advice activities and offerings that are available in schools meet the needs of school leavers?

The non-standardisation of career advice services across Victorian schools and the fact that it is an unregulated industry means that the career advice activities delivered in school may or may not be meeting the needs of the school leavers.

In engagement with our members various issues have been identified:

- Capabilities of the career advisor

As highlighted above, the role of Career Advisor within school is most of the time not an influential role that is part of the long term education strategy. For many schools this is resulting in a part time role that does not provide the right level of support for students. A review of the Australian schools career advice by McCrindle research identified that 19% of career advisors do not have relevant formal education, 41% have been in their role greater than 10 years and 52% work in their role in a part time basis. Working in an unregulated industry does not influence the importance of remaining up to date capabilities and skills to ensure the provisioning of advice to these students is appropriate.

- Funding

Nationally there is not enough funding to support the right level of support for career advice services in schools. 24% of career advisors are not allocated a budget that they can manage to support the provisioning of career advice services, 32% have less than \$1000 to spend on career development annually, and 50% of schools with students in excess of 1000 students has less than \$3 per student allocated to career advice services annually. This greatly influences the ability to provide individualised, timely and quality career interventions to support the appropriate outcome for students.

- Availability of time

There has been a decrease of time allowed to provide career advice services by 1.75x in the last 3 years and only 1 in 3 part time career advisors are actually employed to focus 100% of their role as a career advisor. The further time is spent in teaching as the provision of career advice services is not a priority.

With this information it is evidenced that the current delivery of career advice services within schools cannot meet the needs of school leavers. Career Advisors need to have the appropriate level/type of education, an up to date understanding of the world of work and the skills needed to succeed in the future world of work, the time required to effectively deliver individualised services and be able to access the appropriate quality of resources to undertake their job. Resources that are currently available, including the Australian Blueprint of Career Development, is greatly out of date and the right level of funding has not been allocated to ensure this material remains current or is delivered to an industry level.

To ensure that the services are suitable the career advice service within schools must be a key activity that is undertaken by someone that is both capable and qualified to deliver the role. It must be part of the ongoing education strategy for the school and have a greater influence on the school community to be able to support the conversations on career advice. Furthermore, career advisors need to be able to support the right career pathway for an individual and not personalised and individual perspectives about industries and roles. This will result in ensuring

that students are not steered away from roles that align with their interests and capabilities including moving in to apprenticeships and traineeships.

3. What do you feel the challenges are to those that are trying to provide advice and trying to help students in a career capacity?

As mentioned previously, the key issue associated to being able to provide advice is the level of capability and experience of the career advisor, funding and resources. With the focus on this role only being a partial activity within a part time role, the 3 minute allocation per student will greatly impact the outcome of the student and the success of the career advice service.

- Understanding and perception

It is also importance to identify that there is still a limited understanding of the challenges students face in the future world of work. The expectations of employment from 20+ years ago is greatly influencing the focus on career advice within schools, and this is greatly impacting the support for the role of career advisor within school.

- Ratio of career advice to students

It is important to ensure that there is an appropriate availability of qualified advisors for all students within the school. A mandated ratio which ensures the right level of support can ensure that students are able to access the support at a time that is pertinent to their needs.

- Availability and resourcing

It takes time to deliver effective and appropriate career interventions and programs. Even if resources available at a state level were updated and available, the need to individualised support is influenced by the time allocated to the programs. Employers and universities are greatly impacted by the lack of quality career advice provided within schools and actively support improvements in this by delivering outreach programs within schools. This however is still not influencing the need to focus on career advice as an integral part of the school education and learning strategy.

- Perception of education requirements

The push in to university has had an impact on the perception of the quality and value of education provided through TAFE and traineeships. This is also resulting in the perception that education provided lower than a Bachelor degree is a failure for the students. Furthermore the lack of career advice that effectively guides the student based on their own needs, capabilities and interests influences their post-secondary decisions which can result in disengaged from the work force and from education. Changing the perception from the education provider to what suits the student best can influence the issues that are currently being discussed such as skills shortages in trades, health care and services industries that do not require a university education to enter.

Many of the members provided feedback linked to each of the above and have greatly identified long term concerns with funding, support and resources for career advice services.

4. Do you have any recommendations or ideas on strategies that can improve the effectiveness of career advice activities (improved funding, targeted funding, training/qualifications expectations etc)?

There are a number of strategies that can be implemented to improve the effectiveness of career advice services.

- Qualifications AND experience

Measuring an individual solely on the qualification that they achieve does not demonstrate the individual has the experience required to deliver advice. Analysing qualifications, years of experience, completion of industry professional development and engagement with a CICA association is an effective measure to ensure the individual can deliver relevant and current

career advice services. Mandating membership to an association that provides the breadth of knowledge for the future world of work should also be undertaken.

- **Funding**

Funding should be allocated to ensure that the career advice services within the school can be linked with the education and learning strategy. There should be a greater allowance of the time required to deliver career interventions within school and this includes time for 1:1 support, annual career programs and industry visits/incursions/excursions. This will be greatly improved if the career advisor within schools was funded on a full time basis and provided a budget that allowed them to develop an annual program of career advice/development activities.

- **Mandating of activities**

Career programs within schools should be mandated and so should the provisioning of 1:1 assessments. Utilising tools such as the SuperStrong within schools can greatly influence the time required to provide the students insights into their interests and the pathways to achieve this, however this is best followed up with a personalised plan developed in conjunction with the school career advisor.

- **Career Leadership Team**

Developing a team of career specialists across different industry sectors and career groups will ensure the ability to maintain relevance of resources and guidance. This team should be implemented to manage the development of associated resources, linkages to the industry and communication of expectations for entrance into and progression throughout that industry as the world of work changes. These individuals should also be expected to deliver e-learning on their industry sector that is mandatory for all individuals working as career advisors within schools.

- **Relevance in delivery method of resources**

With this generation being the most digital, resources need to be developed to engage students in understanding the importance of career advice services for their future. Online and interactive resources such as using gamification in mapping of career pathways, developing e-learning modules and using globally recognised tools such as the SuperStrong will be imperative in ensuring that the students engage in the activities.

5. Is there challenges for regional students in being able to access career advice in their schools?

There are excellent career advisors located both regionally and in metropolitan however there are different challenges faced in regional areas. These include:

- **Availability of resources**

It is generally the case that the availability of resources in regional areas can be a greater challenge. With different dynamics in regional areas the complex nature of career advice means that the advisor needs to be available to address greater challenges including advocating for education, for the local labour market and for different dynamics relating to challenges that may be seen in regional and/or low socio economic areas.

- **Labour market challenges**

Our members have identified increased issues relating to challenges of understanding the world of work that is available to students when it may not be visible around them. Increased support to assist in industry visits, excursions and incursions need to be supported to increase student's awareness of future career options. There also needs to be continued engagement in working with the students to feel positive and confident about online education options which is a greater level of advocacy from the career advisor as well as their ability to understand and promote these options.

6. Are there any recommendations on other states or countries that can demonstrate an example of effective career advice within schools?

Within Australia it is recommended to look at the Career advice model being provided in Tasmania. Increased funding and support in to schools has resulted in greater access to resources and support for individualised student planning and guidance. Additionally, the Swinburne VCAL model has provided support to develop individual support plans for VCAL Year 12 students. The individualised support plan has provided increased engagement for the students and allowed them to develop a pathway to transition effectively post education. This has however been recommended to be initiated pre Year 11 to support younger students investigate what is required earlier.

Internationally services out of Finland, Canada and New Zealand demonstrate a strong focus on career development at different school levels. All of these programs clearly demonstrate the return on investment provided to individuals throughout their long term career journey when career advice within schools is effectively resourced, funded and managed with qualified and current career advisors.

All of these programs also provided blended learning models for career development which is something that must be considered and promoted.