

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

8 February 2023

Jobs and Skills Australia engagement – Submission discussion

The Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE) is pleased to provide feedback to support the establishment of the new Jobs and Skills Australia. ACCE is a national career association, subject expert, and thought leader in career education and development. Established in 1975 by the Victorian Department of Education, we deliver over 35,000 career interventions across Victoria annually to year 9 students in government schools and equivalent settings. We are the sole provider of the Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors Service and an endorsed provider of career practitioner training by the peak industry body, the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA).

Our work includes advocacy for the profession and the community. We are committed to ensuring workforce capacity development remains central to government planning so that Australia has thriving communities and a productive workforce. Notably, there is national inconsistency in the delivery of career education that connects student learning and career decision-making to skills training, tertiary education, and employment.¹ Some of these issues have been highlighted by ACCE in its submission to the Jobs and Skills Summit Employment White Paper – Consultation².

This submission outlines important considerations for the operations of Jobs and Skills Australia and represents an opportunity for Australia to embrace a whole of life approach to skill development, education, and employment. In many western countries, career development is central to national productivity and workforce capacity planning.

The establishment of Jobs and Skills Australia provides the Government with a unique opportunity to ensure that its operating principles, engagement, and data collection and reporting can support the current and future education, training, and skill needs of Australia's workforce.

ACCE welcomes the opportunity to address any additional questions you might have.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penne Dawe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Penne" and last name "Dawe" clearly distinguishable.

Penne Dawe

CEO

ACCE

¹ National Youth Commission Australia. (2022). *Careers Education 'You can't be what you can't see': Careers Education in Secondary Schools*. <https://nycinquiry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/120422-Careers-Education-Paper.pdf>

² ACCE, (2022), *Jobs and Skills White Paper Submission*, Retrieved from <https://ceav.vic.edu.au/media/252662/acce-jobskillssubmission-nov2022final.pdf>

Recommendations

Data collection: Ensure supply side data captures information about the preparation of school students to successfully transition and pathway to education, training, and employment. This should include student career decision making and destination planning decisions to inform Government policy.

Clearly define Australia's skills and skill gaps, including the 'soft skill' requirements of industry to inform government policy. Acquire CICA support to align and match frameworks, terminology, and reporting internationally so that Australia can understand its progress as a nation amongst other nations.

Representation: Include pre-tertiary education representatives to support Jobs and Skills Australia with student data, education stakeholder engagement, and the promotion of outputs relevant to the sector and to inform government policy.

Guiding Principles: Ensure a lifelong approach guides the new entity's work. Effective workforce planning needs to reflect the lifespan of individuals from education and training, through working life and into retirement if effective policies are to support individuals, communities, employers, and national productivity. Engage CICA to support the development of the lifelong principles.

Engagement: Ensure CICA provides guidance in relation to career stakeholders advice so that Jobs and Skills Australia accesses professional career expertise to supports its work.

Presentation of Data and Analysis: Labour market information is essential for career professionals and should be provided to the sector. Formats can include presentations, data packs, and representative speakers. An online, real-time data reporting solution could also be considered as a valuable tool for career professionals, stakeholders, representatives, and the public.

Jobs and Skills Australia should engage with employers to understand industry requirements in relation to making labour market data understandable. CICA can assist the new entity in its development of these standards and ensure they align to international frameworks, terminology, and reporting so Australia can understand its progress as a nation amongst other nations.

Discussion

Data Collection

- The emerging labour market data that Jobs and Skills Australia collects should include workforce supply side data from the school sector. If Jobs and Skills Australia is to have a clear picture and develop a national skills supply and demand model, it is imperative to understand how developing and emerging students are prepared to transition to meet future workforce needs. School students transitioning to training, education, and employment are a substantive supply side input. Understanding their preparation, pathway choices, and work readiness needs are essential for the creation of accurate and effective policies and investment.

It is role of schools is to prepare students for the workforce (jobs) and the role of tertiary education providers to prepare young people for employment (skills). The Australian Government currently provides career education funding to Australia's jurisdictions so that students receive career education and are able to make informed subject and pathway choices. However, career education is not delivered consistently across jurisdictions or school sectors and the decisions students make about their subject and career choices in senior secondary school is not understood at a national level. Without collecting and reporting on this data, Australia cannot know how well prepared its young people are to successfully pathway or what destination options they intend to pursue. This information at the local, state, and national level is essential if the Government to develop policies about the education, training, and work needs so that students can meet the needs of industry (demand-side requirements).

- Employers are looking for a range of employment and employability skills. In 2018, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, *Hire Education report* identified employers were overwhelmingly more interested in young employees with good motivation, attitude, and general skills like communication, than in specific knowledge of previous work experience. The Conference Board of Canada (2022) estimated that the unrealised value of skill vacancies in the Canadian economy was \$25 billion in 2020, equivalent to 1.3 per cent of GDP. Of the 35 skill vacancy areas examined, almost all the top 20 were 'soft skills' or 'human skills'.

Australian employers are also seeking a range of employment and employability skills, and this is relevant for young people who as a cohort are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed due to their limited work experience. In 2021, ACCE supported a leading construction program to attract secondary school students into entry-level work for a year with participating contract companies clamouring for employees. After successful promotion of the available opportunities to schools, students, and parents, only three students out of 19 applicants were hired. The three selected students were chosen for their intended academic destination plans despite the roles being entry positions.

Australian employers are suffering from the John West Syndrome, only the best will do. Without a thorough understanding of employer needs and gaps, the Government cannot develop policy to address the mismatch between employer needs and the current 'skills' of Australia's youth. Jobs and Skills Australia can support an increased understanding of these issues through the collection of employer demand data regarding employment and employability needs to compare to supply capacity and skills (for youth and other cohorts).

CICA can support Jobs and Skills Australia to establish classification terminology and measures that can be implemented and clearly understood by those involved across the supply and demand spectrum.

These should be aligned to international information and reporting so Australia can understand its progress as a nation amongst other nations.

Representation

To support data collection in relation to the education, skills and training needs of Australians, representatives from the school sector should be included in Jobs and Skills Australia. Pre-tertiary education representatives can support the new entity in relation to the collection of school education data, data interpretation, engagement with education stakeholders, and the promotion of outputs to the school sector.

The *CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions*³ identifies accountability measures for successful student transitioning and Australia has an opportunity to develop and monitor a range of measures and their outcomes. These measures will provide Australia with an opportunity to assess its successes and gaps in workforce development to inform policy development and for the allocation of funding.

Guiding Principles

Jobs and Skills Australia should be guided by workforce planning principles that consider the lifespan of individuals across the breadth of their education, training, working life, and exit to retirement. Career development is the process of reflecting on personal strengths and aspirations and managing life, learning, and work across the lifespan. It supports individuals to make informed and considered work, study, and employment choices and is a key factor in productivity measures. Therefore, the scope of the input and output measures should be guided by lifelong learning principles if Australia is to develop effective whole of life, workforce planning policies. Many of Australia's western counterparts have long applied a lifespan approach to workforce planning and CICA can support the development of national principles.⁴

As an example, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training contracted with the Canadian Career Development Foundation to develop a framework containing competencies that assist Atlantic Canadians to navigate and propel learning, work, and transitions throughout their lives⁵.

Engagement

Jobs and Skills Australia should engage with Australia's national peak body, CICA to ensure that Australia's lifelong learning and workforce planning has representation from endorsed career experts or entities with the career knowledge and expertise to support this work.

Presentation of Data and Analysis

Up-to-date labour market information is a critical output for Australia's career practitioners working in schools and community. It is a requirement of the CICA Professional Standards for Australian Career

³ Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (2017) *CMEC Reference Framework for Successful Student Transitions*. <https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/372/CMEC-Reference-Framework-for-Successful-Student-Transitions-EN.pdf>

⁴ Some examples include Scotland, Canada, and Wales.

⁵ Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training, *Atlantic competency Framework Online Platform*. <https://atlanticcompetencies.ca>

Development Practitioners that accurate and timely labour market information is used to inform and support participants to make sound career decisions. As a CICA member association, ACCE and other career members associations deliver this important information to members, schools, the community and partners, and include it in professional development.

Timely labour market information can be distributed in presentation format, by Jobs and Skills Australia representatives, or via the development of an online platform including presentations and live interactive data. Jobs and Skills Australia should seek input from CICA with respect to these outputs for the sector.

Jobs and Skills Australia should engage with employers, and subject matter experts like ACCE and CICA to ensure that labour market information is understandable to employers based on a clear set of definitions and requirements that industry has had input into. CICA can support the development of standards and ensure they align to international frameworks, terminology, and can be reported nationally and internationally enabling Australia to understand its progress as a nation amongst other nations.