Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into E-PET-078-25 and PET-041-26: Make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7–10 public school student

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GRATTAN Institute

Improving career guidance for young Australians

Submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into E-Pet 078-25 and Pet 041-26

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Grattan Institute welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the ACT Legislative Assembly's *Inquiry into E-Pet 078-25 and Pet 041-26: Make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7-10 public school student*. This submission draws on emerging work from Grattan Institute's Education and Skills Program on how post-school education can help every young person reach their potential.

Young people face a high-stakes post-school choice

A good first step after school is important to young peoples' development and wellbeing. Choosing well in the first instance avoids overpaying for multiple courses of education, and lowers the risk of drop-out and disengagement. And a positive post-school experience sets young people up to become active and responsible participants in society.

But the environment in which young Australians are making choices is increasingly high-stakes.

Australia's labour market is in flux. The 2026 Intergenerational Report highlighted an accelerating pace of change from five transformations: the rapid development of AI, geopolitical fragmentation, the energy transition, population ageing, and the economy shifting further towards services.[1] These trends will all influence the availability of, and payoff from, acquiring different skills. The changing labour market and education landscape increasingly saddles young Australians with responsibility for the outcomes of their first choice.

In this context, support for young people to make the best first choice is all the more important.

1. Treasury (2026).

We are not setting young people up to make the best choices

When compared to other countries, Australia's career development effort seems reasonable. A 2022 survey found that 15-year-olds in Australia were more likely than the OECD average to report having spoken to a career advisor at school.[2]

And most young Australians receive some form of career guidance. The 2022 Generation Survey found that about 90 per cent of Australian Year 10 students had accessed at least one form of school-based career education, and about 94 per cent had accessed at least one form of career guidance.

But the quality of that engagement is less clear. According to school staff, 91 per cent of students were at schools with one or more career practitioners employed. But only 48 per cent of students reported having talked to a career practitioner about their plans.[3]

There is persistent concern about the limited availability of high-quality career guidance for students in schools.[4] If career guidance is not prioritised in schools, school-based career practitioners may know more about university selection procedures than vocational education routes and apprenticeship or traineeship requirements. And they are often inadequately resourced.

There is also evidence that a lack of whole school engagement with career education translates to less-informed students, with poorly made plans sometimes translating to less-successful career starts.[5] Research suggests that about one in five Australians surveyed at age 15 had an educational plan that was not aligned with their planned occupation. Among intending tradespeople, this figure was closer to one in three.[6]

2. OECD (2025).
3. Edwards et al (2023).
4. Shergold et al (2020).
5. Parliament of Victoria (2026).
6. Blomberg and Nguyen (2014).

Recommendations

The first choice is critically important for people completing school and seeking to move into an uncertain and fast-changing labour market. Evidence-based career guidance can make this risky period easier to navigate.

Developing career-management competencies before the transition to adulthood is critical for the success of young people and contributes to their wellbeing as well as broader social cohesion and strong economic outcomes.[7]

Traditional approaches to supporting students through reactive and instinctual advice are less helpful than structured and systemised career guidance, with appropriate funding and planning.

Grattan Institute is researching this topic and next year will publish specific recommendations to improve support for school leavers' career choices.

7. DEWR (2022).

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