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

Submission number: 004

Submitter: Shannon Brennan

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Recommended Submission

Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Inquiry into E-Petition 078-25 and Petition 041-26

Make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7–10 public school student

Submitted by: Shannon Brennan
Organisation/role: Career Practitioner, ACT Education Directorate (Current Setting – Flexible Education)
[redacted]
Date: 21/09/2026

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Shannon Brennan. I am a qualified career practitioner and public high school teacher currently working in the flexible education space under the ACT Education Directorate. I am also an active board member of the Australian Capital Territory Career Association.

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy inquiry into E-Petition 078-25 and Petition 041-26, *Make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7–10 public school student*.

The petition presents a vital question of educational equity: **should a young person's access to a qualified professional career practitioner be determined by which school they attend?**

In my professional experience, and through seeing the importance of qualified career practitioners in supporting young people, I believe the issues raised in the petition warrant a move towards a consistent and appropriately resourced model of professional career development across ACT public schools serving Years 7–10, at a minimum.

The petition identifies that:

- three in five Year 7–10 students in ACT public schools do not have access to a qualified career adviser at their school;
- 13 of 22 ACT public schools with Years 7–10 do not employ a qualified professional career practitioner in a career adviser role; and
- there is a call from young people, school communities, industry, business, parents and tertiary education institutions for career provision to be given greater priority.

The formal terms of reference reproduce these matters and the actions requested by the petition. The petition calls for:

- professionally qualified career practitioners in all ACT public schools with Years 7–10;
- resourcing at a benchmark of one full-time equivalent career practitioner per 450 students;
- targeted scholarships for teaching and non-teaching school staff seeking professional career qualifications; and
- additional funding to implement the strategy in recognition of existing school budget pressures.

I strongly support the committee's consideration of these proposals as part of a strategy that establishes equitable career development provision across ACT public schools.

The key takeaway from this submission is that **career development should be treated as an essential component of a student's preparation for further education, training, employment and participation in society**, rather than as an optional or inconsistent service that varies between schools based on availability and resources.

This issue matters to me personally because I have seen the impact of embedding career development into the curriculum and the positive outcomes this can have in building meaningful and sustainable pathways for young people.

Since entering the teaching profession more than six years ago, my teaching background has primarily involved working with neurodiverse young people, young people with physical impairments, First Nations young people, disengaged young people, and young people who are either directly or indirectly involved with the youth justice system or who have experienced significant levels of trauma, including personal and intergenerational trauma.

Through engaging students in career and pathways education, I have witnessed renewed interest in attending school, the development of greater stamina and capacity for learning, tangible outcomes through work experience and exposure to career and educational institutions, and the development of lifelong career knowledge. I have also seen an increased willingness among young people to engage with their wider community and consider possibilities for their future.

Career development can sometimes be dismissed as too narrow in its purpose, or as simply preparing students for future employment. However, in my experience, particularly when working with young people in Years 7–10, career development supports much broader learning. It helps students to:

- develop an understanding of their interests, strengths, values and capabilities;
- explore occupations, industries and different ways of participating in the world of work;
- understand education and training pathways;
- develop decision-making and career management skills;
- experience workplaces and the world of work;
- build confidence in navigating future transitions; and
- develop the social and emotional capabilities needed to make informed decisions about their future.

Teachers and other education staff who provide this content play an important role and do their best to help fill existing gaps. However, career development is more than providing career information. Ensuring that professionally qualified career practitioners are employed in all ACT public schools serving Years 7–10, and that they are resourced at a benchmark of one full-time equivalent (1 FTE) career practitioner per 450 students, is vital.

A trained, qualified and accessible career practitioner can synthesise information from across education, training, employment and industry contexts and support young people to understand, test, question, challenge, choose, interpret and explore the world of careers. This helps young people

build foundational knowledge and capabilities that can support sustainable pathways, regardless of the direction they ultimately choose.

A career is not simply a job or a degree. It can be an important part of a person's identity, purpose, contribution and sense of fulfilment. Young people deserve equitable access to qualified professionals who can support them to understand themselves, explore their options and make informed decisions about their future.

This submission is therefore strongly supportive of accessible and professionally qualified career development provision for all ACT public school students in Years 7–10.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this submission. I encourage the committee to consider these measures and the significant impact that more consistent and equitable career development provision could have for students across the ACT.

Kind regards,

Shannon Brennan (He/Him)
Teacher / Career Practitioner
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