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: 015

Submitter: Livia Tigwell

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Terms of Reference

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

'The following residents of the ACT draw attention of the Assembly:

· 3 of 5 Year 7-10 students in the 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's role at the school; and

· Young people, the school community, industry, business, parents, higher and tertiary education institutions are calling out for high schools to make employment of careers advisers a priority.

Your petitioners, therefore, request the Assembly to call on the ACT Government to:

· Ensure professionally qualified career practitioners are employed in all ACT public schools with Years 7-10 and resourced at 1 full-time equivalent (1 FTE) career practitioner to 450 students;

· Offer targeted scholarships to school staff (teaching and non-teaching) who wish to gain professional level career qualifications to remove barriers to gaining a career qualification; and

· Provide additional funding for schools for this strategy and requisite actions in recognition of budget pressures currently facing public schools in the ACT.'

Submission from Livia Tigwell - [redacted]

43 years' experience as a teacher and Career Development Practitioner

[redacted]

Committee member and professional member, ACT Careers Association

I am willing to appear before the Committee at a public hearing if requested.

Career development education is now internationally recognised as essential in the early years of schooling.

Currently the students in 6 of the ACT's 22 public high schools have access to a qualified and professionally current career development practitioner. This is worse than at the time of the petition earlier this year from ACT Careers Association (ACTCA) and the Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA) calling for action to make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7-10 public school student.

This means that 16 ACT high schools do not offer the full suite of career development services, including career education, guidance, information, transition support and workplace learning.

Aligning career development service delivery to the ACT Education Directorate's *Future of Education Strategy*

The foundations of the ACT Education Directorate's *Future of Education Strategy* focus on:

- placing each student at the centre of their learning
- empowering teachers and other professionals to strengthen learning for all

- creating strong communities for learning
- strengthening the system to focus on equity and quality.

It is therefore unacceptable that there is no assurance of equitable delivery in ACT high schools to ensure universal access to careers services.

The 2025 ACT Youth Assembly called for consistent, high-quality career pathways support in schools.

Equitably resourcing the ACT school-based career practitioner workforce would enable all high school students to have access to:

- Personalised career guidance and support throughout their secondary school years
- career education and workplace learning programs
- the benefit of school-family-community collaboration in support of individual career goals
- targeted learning and programs to meet diverse student needs and support barriers
- Industry connections

Guided by a Career Development team in the Education Directorate Schools would be in a better position to:

- Use evidence to inform continuous improvement
- Strengthen school capability to link curriculum to post-school pathways by ensuring all students have access to career education classes

The benefits of professionally delivered career development support

As a qualified career development practitioner I contribute a unique, specialised skill set to my school community that complements the services provided by other professionals and play a central leading role in helping students to:

- understand the relationship between self, learning and work
- align education decisions at school with later training and employment
- explore options
- set goals
- build confidence and optimism
- navigate labour market opportunities
- cope with barriers encountered in achieving personal goals and making decisions
- source, evaluate and analyse information about the range of learning and work opportunities and their requirements
- make meaningful career decisions and transitions
- acknowledge and respect others
- develop persistence and resilience in maintaining a positive attitude in challenging situations.

At the [redacted] School in the past 7 months with a 50% time allowance for career development work with students I have facilitated:

- 83 work experience placements
- 150 careers meetings discussing USIs, resumes, college course selection, career goal setting, apprenticeships and employment
- 23 safety construction course completions
- 81 Year 10 student/family member college transition meetings
- 3 Australian School Based apprenticeships

- guest speakers: careers in psychology, university H course guest speakers, Australian Defence Force
- Vocational Learning Options expressions of interest and Head Start ASBA applications
- Careers excursions to data centre, CIT renewable careers, CIT Try-a-Trade, Women in Property, CIT coffee course, IT careers
- Offsite safety courses
- Classroom based career education
- Pathway support for educationally vulnerable students

Imagine what more I could have achieved if the school were funded to provide full time career development services!

Testimonials from those familiar with the careers service at [redacted] School

How has having a qualified careers practitioner at [redacted] School helped the students?

What services did the career practitioner provide that were helpful?

Your thoughts: Does it matter that many high school students have no access to a qualified careers practitioner in their school?

"It gives a clear direction and access to disadvantaged students to pursue career opportunities. It further incentivises students to regularly attend and maintain a positive relationship with the school.

work experience, ASBA, guidance and support to students

It is a shocking flaw that so few high schools have access to qualified careers practitioners. The issue places students being without guidance for their time in high school." [redacted], *teacher*

"Having a career practitioner at [redacted] means our students have access to opportunities and paths for their future that they wouldn't otherwise have.

Students/families that are sure that their young person wants to go into a trade/work means they can move towards their future goals consistently. It allows our students to try different career paths while supported at school.

Yes, it is an issue! Students deserve and <u>need</u> to have access to future career/job opportunities."

[redacted], *teacher*

"We have many students who are not suited to the classroom environment and our careers practitioner has assisted them by providing both work experience and white card, silica and asbestos training and supporting these students to obtain ASBAs

Work experience in any career students wish to trial; training in safety courses held at school, ASBAs, CIT training courses; assisting with resumes and job applications; linking students up with employers for work experience; checking with employers of students on work experience.

It absolutely matters. Career practitioners are an integral part of the school's ability to provide career opportunities to students and allows them to trial jobs in careers they believe they are interested in pursuing. I will also add that Livia Tigwell is the most dedicated, hard working careers advisor at any school I have worked at or been involved in." [redacted], *Finance Officer*

"Livia has been able to provide students and families with practical post-schooling experience and advice around work and careers. This has been able to give students confidence in their abilities, boost their self-esteem and give them hope for what their futures can hold (especially when schooling has been difficult).

Support for students and families to navigate college and/or work experience; track down and build relationships with suitable employers for student work experience; have future-focussed conversations with students and families; support students accessing ASBA/TAFE programs.

Absolutely. Education is more than purely academics. Students need to be prepared for independence and learn how they can contribute in society. Finding their purpose, and learning their capacity in work can be powerful." [redacted], *School Psychologist*

"Career practitioners put square pegs into round holes.

It 100% matters that all students have access to a professionally qualified careers practitioner, because when they have access to labour market information and experience of workplace expectations they are encouraged to step up, be part of a team, respect authority and learn. They see that following workplace expectations has financial rewards, and this is something school cannot provide."

[redacted], *Building Services Officer*

"Having a qualified practitioner in the school means there is a person here, known and trusted by the students and community, who is able to offer disadvantaged students an alternative pathway to success. These young people are able to find direction and connection through real-word experiences.

One-on-one settings with students for career and transition planning; connecting the school with businesses and agencies; careers skill teaching; organising work experience and apprenticeships; navigating bureaucracy of different industries; working with students on successful career pathways.

Of course it matters. The services provided to all students, and especially the vulnerable, cannot be quantified. Careers practitioners have a skill set not found anywhere else, and are essential to developing our young people into good citizens." [redacted]
Deputy

"Engagement and hope are two of the many ways that stand out. Not every young person works well under the education structure, but a qualified career practitioner can link school to opportunity. Access comes from knowledge and students need a career expert to help them find options to succeed.

Work experience; parent/carer and student future opportunity meetings; ASBAs; college transitions; constant open communication for families and students to seek advice.

Absolutely! The help and advice that is provided to booth students and their families about "where to next" is BEYOND valuable! So many missed opportunities for young people to fully grasp their options without careers services in schools." [redacted], *Teacher, Year 10 Coordinator*

"Many of our vulnerable disengaged students struggle to see a positive future or do not know what pathways are available to them. The career practitioner provides individual support, guidance and encouragement, helping students identify their strengths, interests and realistic options for the future. This helps students become motivated and engaged with school.

Individual career guidance; support and encouragement; helping students identify strengths, interests and future options; assisting students to explore education, training and employment pathways helped them set realistic goals. For our vulnerable and disengaged students having someone who could build rapport and provide personalised support increased their motivation, confidence and engagement with the future."

[redacted] *Social Worker*

“The careers teacher got me lined up with great work experience, and helped me with my classes and learning. Work experience all this year has helped me realise what more there is to life. Not just sitting in school and the possibility of an apprenticeship at the end of year 10 has given me courage to keep on going to experience at the diesel business.

Yes, I think every school should have it because it helped me a lot.” [redacted] *year 9*

“Our teacher helps students focus on their future and get jobs. Students at schools without a qualified careers practitioner would be disadvantaged.” [redacted] *year 10*

“The careers teacher has helped me in many fields, I have learned so many skills, learning work experience, about college, and how it’s like as well as what subjects will be helpful for me. Not only that, but also exploring future jobs and linking work experience for that.

I believe it’s really helpful, especially as a young person who has no idea what they want to do in life, with a careers teacher I have so many options to explore and an understanding on what I may want to do in life.” [redacted] *year 10*

“I've had two work experience placements. Having a careers teacher has helped me get experience for my resume. I don’t like being in a classroom, so found work experience helped me because it was tactile, there was a lot going on, and it was in a different environment where I could be useful and develop skills. As someone who has a disability, getting experience outside of school has helped me learn what the outside is like. I find the school environment really hard. Work experience was also hard, but I powered through. Now I have hope for the future. I know I can do it if I power through.” [redacted] *year 10*

She got me work experience and helped me with what college to go to.

Yes, it does matter because students without a careers teacher are at a disadvantage. [redacted] *year 10*

She has helped me get work smart. I now know how many options I have and I can get work experience. Yes, having a careers teacher helps a lot.” [redacted] *year 10*

“Ms Tigwell has helped me by arranging work experience that furthers my knowledge in different areas and branching out my expertise, while narrowing and refining what I now know I do or do not like. Ms TIgwell always makes time for every individual student and everyone appreciates how dedicated and determined she continues to be, as she creates a personal experience for each student who needs anything from work experience to an ASBA.

Yes, it should be addressed since it opens up multiple opportunities in your future job or career and it helps students feel heard in the professional sense.” [redacted] *year 10*

“ Thank you! Without your help I’d not be at [redacted] College.” [redacted] *year 11*

“ Miss, you changed my life.” [redacted] *year 11, extended placement at ANU Research school of Biology*

"Having access to a dedicated careers teacher at [redacted] School has been incredibly valuable for our son, [redacted] throughout his high school years.

[redacted] has complex learning and support needs and, at times, has been vulnerable to disengaging from school. Livia Tigwell's consistent careers guidance and practical support have helped him connect his schooling with his own interests, strengths and future aspirations. This has given greater purpose and relevance to his education and helped him see that there are meaningful pathways available to him beyond high school.

One of the most valuable aspects of this support has been [redacted] access to work experience opportunities in Years 9 and 10 that genuinely reflect his interests and abilities. These experiences have allowed him to develop confidence, independence, communication skills and an understanding of workplace expectations. Importantly, they have also given him opportunities to experience success outside the traditional classroom environment and to recognise his own capabilities.

The support has extended well beyond organising work experience. Livia has assisted [redacted] with exploring future schooling and vocational options, subject choices, career expos, pathway courses and other extracurricular opportunities. She has also provided practical and inclusive support within the school environment, including prompting, encouragement and supervision to help him remain engaged and follow through with opportunities.

As [redacted] prepares to transition to college, this continuity of support has been particularly important. Rather than expecting a young person with additional needs to independently navigate a complicated range of educational and vocational choices, he has had a trusted person at school who knows him, understands his strengths and challenges, and can help him turn his interests into realistic plans and experiences.

I consider a dedicated careers practitioner to be an extremely useful service in a high school. Career development is not simply about helping students decide what job they might want in the future. At its best, it helps young people understand why their education matters, identify their strengths, build confidence and independence, and make informed decisions about the next stage of their lives.

For students such as [redacted], who may be at greater risk of disengagement, this kind of individualised and consistent support can be especially significant. Our experience has shown us that having a qualified careers practitioner embedded within a school can make career development part of a young person's education and wellbeing, rather than something that only begins when they are about to leave school."

[redacted], *parent*

"You have empowered [redacted] in a way that I don't think you can understand, but I can see it has helped him find his own voice and path."

[redacted], *parent*

"I am a strong supporter of careers education, and the important role Careers Practitioners play in ACT public schools. At [redacted] School, we see firsthand the difference this role makes for our students. Our Careers Practitioner goes above and beyond to find work experience opportunities that are the right fit for individual students, source ASBAs, and build connections that open doors for young people. The relationships she has developed with industry leaders, local businesses, and training providers are invaluable and have been built over many years. This level of expertise, knowledge, and networking is not something classroom teachers, administrators or school leaders can realistically provide alongside their many other responsibilities. **Every student deserves access to high-quality careers guidance from a dedicated professional who can help them explore pathways, make informed decisions, and transition successfully into further education, training, or employment. I believe every young person in the ACT should have access to a Careers Practitioner, regardless of the school they attend.**"

[redacted] *Principal*

Request for Action

As a minimum improvement should include:

- Ensuring professionally qualified career practitioners are employed in all ACT public schools with years 7-10 and resourced at 1 full-time equivalent career practitioner to 450 students;
- system-wide workforce planning, including succession planning of retiring careers practitioners, to ensure every high school student receives career development support
- the gathering and publication of data on career guidance provision in each school with Years 7–12 to establish equitable future student access to qualified careers practitioners
- providing additional funding for schools to ensure staff gain professional level career development qualifications.

I am requesting that the Assembly call on the ACT Government to align with the evidence, with the voices of our young people and community members, and with international research and best practice—to ensure every ACT high school student is equipped to make informed, supported decisions about their future.

When all schools do not employ qualified practitioners, the expert guidance that young people need to navigate their future options is unavailable. At such a critical stage in the development of our youth, availability of career development services should not be a matter of chance.

Our youth deserves better! Fund all schools equitably!

Reference list

CEDEFOP (2026). *An EU reference framework for lifelong guidance EN 18 guidelines for policy and systems development*. [online] Available at: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/3098_en.pdf [Accessed 12 Apr. 2026].