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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Submission to the Inquiry into Career Guidance in ACT Public Schools

About the Author

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Introduction

As a current Year 9 student beginning to wonder what career pathways would best suit me, I have noticed a lack of sufficient career education and guidance being provided at schools. Although I do not currently attend an ACT public school, I believe it is important to voice my opinion as a teenager who may be equally affected by this disparity in career advice impacting the ACT's younger generation. In this short document, I will outline my opinion and thus the reasoning behind my opinion, my perceived benefits of making career guidance a right and finally some recommendations or ideas I think could contribute to the policy change.

My Opinion and Reasoning

Background

The reason I came across this parliamentary inquiry in the first place was due to a school assessment which was based around civic duty and taking an action to support an issue. Evidently, I chose to focus on the lack of career guidance in schools for young people, primarily for students in Years 7 to 10 as they are the secondary school cohorts at my school which receive the least amount of career education.

Opinion

Personally, I strongly believe that career education should start from at least Year 9 – not to force students to immediately choose their future careers, but to provide clarity on possible pathway options and jobs that would best suit individuals.

Reasoning

Schools in the ACT are designed to provide young people with the adequate knowledge needed for them to support themselves throughout their lives, but if aspects of this knowledge are neglected like career guidance, then a student's schooling experience,

and even aspects of their life, are affected by the fact that they were not given the opportunity to engage with 100% of the information that other students were able to. Concerningly, this also creates conflict with a pillar of Australian democracy: an inclusive and equitable society, by creating a rift of disadvantage between students from one school and another.

Summary

Consequently, career guidance is a matter that extends beyond a few students and schools – it affects a much broader community and challenges our very foundations of society – which is why it should be considered with urgency.

Benefits

Short-Term

Making career guidance a right for all Year 7 to 10 students at ACT public schools is a change that would yield multiple benefits for the students who are affected. Clear benefits of this approach would be:

- Reduced stress on students and more informed decisions for subject selection such as electives.
- Higher engagement in learning from younger years due to a better understanding of how academic content can be applied for the future.
- The transformation of apprehension and fear into confidence and readiness for the transition from schooling into the workforce.

Long-Term

Furthermore, these positive consequences are not purely temporary or one-off, but can accumulate over a period of time to lead to long-term benefits that could help address other issues. A key example of this is youth unemployment as it ties in with career guidance. Educating ACT youth about training routes, career pathways and the world of work plays an important role in whether individuals are sufficiently prepared and suited to be employed, thus meaning that higher levels of career guidance can correlate to higher employment rates and lower unemployment rates. And while youth unemployment in Canberra and the ACT may not be as worse as it is in other states, the ever-changing job market has the power to affect this status quo, which is why it is much safer to reduce the chances of future unemployment for students by providing them with career guidance as soon as possible.

Summary

Ultimately, both the short-term and long-term benefits of career education primarily impact ACT youth, but it is up to the government to decide if they will continue to ignore these vital opportunities.

Recommendations

Overview

In the Terms of Reference for this parliamentary inquiry, it is stated that a step towards better career guidance in schools would be to employ professionally qualified career practitioners at a ratio of 1 full-time equivalent councillor to 450 students. In my opinion, this is a great idea and change that would meaningfully contribute towards the issue, but I acknowledge that it can take time and resources to fully integrate into the ACT schooling system. This is why I have some recommendations that could act as smaller, less demanding initiatives in the lead up to this main action.

Recommendation No. 1: Making Information Available via Online Documents

Firstly, providing access to career information in the form of small online documents and papers would allow hundreds of students to benefit from a few resources and engage with career guidance to their preferred level. Students would not feel as pressured or stressed to immediately learn about career pathways or, on the other hand, eager students would be able to develop their knowledge quicker in their personal time via online documents.

Recommendation No.2: Providing a Platform for Students to Share Questions/Concerns

Secondly, an additional option would be to have a space for students to share their questions or concerns about career guidance and possible routes they are considering. These responses could be answered by experienced teachers (e.g. a question on chemistry pathways could be answered by a chemistry teacher) and eventually a designated career councillor.

Summary

Essentially, both options would act as initial measures to improve the quality of career guidance at ACT public schools, but could also be adopted into the school's offical career education system, easing pressure on the career practitioner and supplying students with multiple ways to take part in career education.

Conclusion

To conclude, the lack of ample career education beyond Year 11 and 12 is a pressing issue that not many people are aware of, impacting today's ACT youth. Students in all schools could benefit greatly from higher-quality career education, letting them boost their clarity around future professional pathways, better-inform their decision-making in relation to course selection and, fundamentally, be well prepared for their eventual journey through the job market. All things considered, making sure that we adequately educate now the people who will form the basis of our society in the future has never been more crucial, hence why I am supporting the notion for career guidance to be more than an afterthought – for it to be a priority.