



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: 016

Submitter: Dianne Bradford

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Dear Standing Committee Members,

I am writing to support the petition presented by the ACT Career Association (ACTCA) and the Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA), ACT Division, asking for ***career guidance to be made a right for every ACT Year 7-10 public school student.***

I have over 30 years' experience working in the ACT Education system as a Career Development Practitioner and in that time, I have been President of the ACTCEA, (ACT Career Education Association), the CDAA, (Career Development Association of Australia), ACT Division and ACTCA, (ACT Career Association).

I have served as a member of the Career Industry Council of Australia, (CICA), for both the ACTCEA and the ACTCA and have been involved in planning National and International careers events and have served on committees writing national careers teaching and reference materials.

I have also worked in the Federal Government Department of Education developing careers resources for Australian schools and have worked at the Australian Institute of Sport, (AIS), assisting athletes to plan educational courses and to research future career pathways. I have also worked in the ACT Department of Education in the VET and Career pathways division.

All these experiences and more have provided me with a great deal of professional knowledge and I believe I am well placed to write in support of this petition.

I will be addressing the following Terms of Reference:

- ***3 in 5 Year 7-10 students in the ACT do not have access to a qualified career practitioner, (careers advisor), in their schools;***

The OECD Career Readiness project is a longitudinal study analysing data from 8 countries with the aim of providing "advice to governments, schools, employers and other stakeholders on how to best prepare young people to visualise, plan, and prepare for their working lives. It identifies how career guidance can be used to address social inequalities, enable progression towards fulfilling careers and to develop student motivation and success". (2021) **1**.

This preparation is acknowledged in many studies to be ***most beneficial when it is started early*** and when it empowers students to recognise barriers which may prevent them from developing and fulfilling career aspirations, thus enabling them to develop career self-efficacy, and to recognise the influences which shape their career ambitions.

In order for this to be achieved, students' pre-conceived ideas about careers and career pathways need to be identified and sometimes challenged. For this to occur, relevant, targeted and useful information needs to be provided, and this can best be done by qualified career practitioners who maintain currency of career development knowledge and information. They are also best able to interpret this information and provide pathways for guided student exploration due to their knowledge and training.

- ***13 of 22 ACT public schools with Years 7-10 (or part thereof), do not employ a qualified professional career practitioner (careers advisor);***

I have always been perplexed by the fact that many schools choose to place unqualified people in the role of the careers advisor or simply do not see the need for having one at all. There would be protests if mainstream classes such as English, Mathematics, Science etc. were staffed by teachers not trained to teach the subject, but providing young people with professionals with the skills and knowledge to help them make informed decisions about their futures seems not to matter.

Providing students with careers knowledge as early as possible is vital. The younger they are when they begin to actively explore their future pathways and the depth of knowledge they acquire in relation to their understanding of what having a career means, the better.

Preparing high school students for making subject choices at college which may underpin their future pathways is vital.

When students come to college and are confident in the subject choices they are making, the less time is spent on making subject changes and their progression through college is smoother and more rewarding. This also applies when students go on to higher learning. Much time, (and money), is wasted in tertiary institutions when students have no depth of understanding of what their initial course choices entail.

Having a qualified professional CDP in the picture as soon as possible in high schools to help young people navigate their way through overwhelming choices and to help them identify and shape their aspirations cannot be overstated. It lowers their anxiety about their futures because the more knowledge they acquire, the better prepared they are to make informed and targeted decisions about a rapidly changing world of work. Because CDP's are required to maintain currency through continuing professional development (CPD), they are able to ensure that students receive up-to-date information and are thus not at a disadvantage when they are making important life choices.

Today's young people will form the workforces of the future, so it is up to schools to provide them with as much knowledge as possible, so they have the confidence to fulfil their roles in society.

This is best done by qualified people who can help them acquire this knowledge and give them strategies for applying it critically so that they can be participants in a vibrant and prosperous workforce.

In order to achieve these goals for our young people I call upon the ACT Government to:

- Ensure professionally qualified career practitioners are employed in all ACT public schools with Years 7-10 (or part thereof), and to:
- Offer targeted scholarships to support school staff, both teaching and non-teaching, seeking professional level career development qualifications.

Yours sincerely,

Dianne Bradford (Master of Education, University of Canberra)

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References:

1. <https://doi.org/10.1787/cec854f8-en>