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 ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Social Policy

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

Submitted by: ACT Careers Association (ACTCA) Committee

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ACTCA committee members would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Standing Committee to provide further information, answer questions and expand on the evidence and recommendations presented in this submission.

1. About ACTCA

The ACT Careers Association (ACTCA) is a not-for-profit association established in 2020. It is a Member Association of the national peak body for the Australian careers industry, the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA).

The ACTCA's purpose is to:

- Support and service members to deliver quality evidence-based career development services for young people in the ACT and Capital region.
- Serve as a conduit between local industry and members.
- Provide continuing professional development to ensure ACTCA Professional and Associate members (career development practitioners) maintain their professional competency and currency set out by the CICA Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners.
- Advance the career development profession through collaboration, advocacy and innovation.

ACTCA currently has 62 members. 35 members are Professional o Associate or Associate members and hold career development qualifications and 22 members are Industry members. 5 members hold Collegial membership.

As organisers of the petition, in partnership with the Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA), the ACT Careers Association supports equitable access to quality career development services for every young person in ACT public year 7- 10 schools (or part thereof) and evidence shows that professionally qualified and current career practitioners are best position to implement and lead career services in ACT public schools.

ACTCA career practitioners

- Career development practitioner is the Australian umbrella term for a qualified career practitioner who holds a CICA endorsed graduate certificate or Certificate IV qualification in career development and maintain their professional currency and competency by engaging in continuing professional development.
- ACTCA career practitioner professional development must align with CICA's Professional Standards. The Standards detail the core and specialised knowledge and skills that the profession recognises as being essential for the provision of quality career development service.
- ACTCA career practitioners utilise four key Australian career development frameworks to guide quality assurance of practice in Australian career service delivery.
- Services provided by ACTCA career practitioners to support student career development in schools include career education, work-based learning, career transition, career exploration/exposure/experience learning activities, career guidance and career information. These services are delivered in a variety of ways including individual career counselling, group workshops, classroom-based career education, online, workplace learning, career information events and curated resources, career assessment, and facilitated connection with industry, further education and training, and employment representatives.
- ACTCA career practitioners are professionally and ethically required to personalise career services for students, including for those requiring additional career development support.
- ACTCA regularly uses career practitioner as the title for qualified career development practitioners in this submission. In the ACT Education Directorate, the Education Support Office and schools, use a variety of titles for career practitioners, such as career practitioner, career adviser, Transitions and Careers Officer (TaCO), career coach, and career counsellor.

2. Executive summary

Approximately **3 in 5 years 7-10 students in ACT public schools do not currently have access to a professionally qualified and current career practitioner at their school.** ACTCA's October 2026 review found that only six of 22 mainstream ACT public schools with years 7-10 (or part thereof), employ a qualified career practitioner.

Why early access matters

Career development is not simply preparation for a first job. Quality career development helps young people understand themselves, explore education, training and employment opportunities, develop career management skills, make informed decisions and navigate transitions.

International evidence from the OECD and PISA demonstrates the relationship between participation in career development activities and career confidence, career management skills and employment outcomes. The evidence also highlights the importance of equitable access, particularly for young people who may have barriers to access career information, networks and experiences through their families and communities.

The ACT context

The current level of access is inconsistent with the ACT Government's commitment to equity in education and with the Australian Governments vision of *Future Ready*, which identifies high-quality career education as an important component of successful transitions from school to further education, training and employment.

The ACT has previously demonstrated that it can build career practitioner capacity at a system level. The *Moving Forward – Transitions, Careers and Vocational Learning* initiative provided scholarships for ACT teachers to gain career development qualifications and established Transition and Careers Officer (TaCOs) positions in ACT public colleges.

However, over the last 10 years access to a qualified career practitioner access in years 7-10 ACT public schools declined. ACTCA's evidence indicates that current data does not support equitable access to qualified career development expertise and the full range of effective career services in ACT public schools.

ACTCA's recommendations

ACTCA recommends that the ACT Government:

1. **Provide equitable access to qualified career practitioners** and ensure every ACT public school with years 7-10 employs a professionally qualified and current career development practitioner, with a proposed minimum resourcing benchmark of one full-time equivalent (FTE) practitioner per 450 students.
2. **Establish a targeted career development qualification scholarship program** covering the full cost of professional and paraprofessional career development qualifications for both teaching and non-teaching ACT public school staff.
3. **Provide dedicated and accountable funding to build and sustain qualified career practitioner positions in ACT public schools** and ensure that funding allocated for this purpose is used appropriately.
4. **Establish a consistent system-wide framework for career development provision**, including clear career practitioner requirements, minimum expectations for career education and career guidance in schools, and support for implementation of the Australian and school-based career education curriculum.

The opportunity

The ACT Government has an opportunity to strengthen career development provision at a time when young people are navigating increasingly complex education, training and employment pathways and rapid changes in technology, the labour market, and the world of work.

Every young person has a career, and a career is more than just a job. Ensuring equitable access to professionally qualified career practitioners would provide ACT public school students with the specialist support they need to understand their options, make informed decisions and navigate their futures.

3. Key Issue - 3 of 5 year 7-10 students in ACT public schools do not have access to a qualified career practitioner in their school.

3.1 Current access to qualified career practitioners

The July 2026 ACT Government school census reported 9,099 year 7-10 students were enrolled in ACT public schools. Current ACTCA data shows 3,548 year 7-10 students have access to professionally qualified career practitioners at six mainstream ACT public years 7-10 schools. For the remaining 5,551 students there is no professionally qualified and current career practitioner at their school.

This means approximately 3 in 5 ACT public school students in years 7-10 do not have access to a qualified career practitioner at their school.

Qualified career practitioners have the specialist knowledge and skills to design and deliver a suite of evidence-based career development services, including career guidance and career education, that support students to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to navigate their futures.

3.2 International evidence on career preparation

The OECD's The State of Global Teenage Career Preparation reinforces the importance of providing effective career development opportunities during secondary school. The report finds that too many young people are navigating their futures without sufficient support, with students reporting high levels of anxiety, career uncertainty and confusion about their futures.

The report also found that students' job aspirations have changed little since year 2000, and may have little alignment with actual labour market demands and the changing world of work.

OECD research shows that participation in a range of career development activities, including career guidance, is positively associated with increased career confidence, the acquisition of career management skills and improved employment outcomes. The OECD concludes that career guidance is increasingly important as young people navigate a labour market that is becoming more complex.

3.3 Career guidance and educational equity

The OECD publication Challenging Social Inequality Through Career Guidance identifies effective career services encourages and enables young people to make greater use of career guidance services, develop their career thinking, engage with a wider range of occupations, and develop more ambitious and informed plans for their future.

The report identifies several ways in which career guidance can contribute to more equitable outcomes including:

- **Broadening aspirations:** Disadvantaged students may limit their career goals to a small pool of traditional or highly visible occupations that do not necessarily align with labour market opportunities. Career guidance can expose young people to a wider range of occupations, supports and pathways.
- **Demystifying education and training systems:** Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may have less access to current and unbiased information about the financial and career benefits associated with higher education and vocational training. Career guidance can provide information, clarify options and help bridge this knowledge gap.
- **Building capital:** Targeted career guidance, career services and employer engagement can help students build economic, social and cultural capital that more advantaged students may have greater opportunities to acquire through their families and communities.

- **Combating uncertainty:** PISA data indicates that career uncertainty is associated with socioeconomic status. Proactive career interventions can provide support before students disengage from education or underestimate their abilities, interests and potential.

For ACT public school students, equitable access to qualified career practitioners is therefore not simply a matter of providing additional careers programs. It is an important component of an equitable education system.

3.4 Equity an ACT Government commitment

The ACT Education Directorate's mission is to provide excellent, fair and equitable education where students are supported to thrive. The Directorate's publication The Future of Education – Why does Educational Equity Matter? states: "Equity in education matters. It is the hallmark of a fair and just society, it is the vehicle by which people can improve their long-term health, wealth and wellbeing and it is an issue that matters to the ACT community."

The publication further acknowledges that, while the ACT education system is doing some things well, there are areas that need improvement "so that no student is being left behind, so that no group of students are failing and so that all students can access what they need to achieve educational outcomes".

The ACT Government's Future of Education Strategy similarly identifies as a foundation the provision of a system that supports learning, promotes equity of opportunity and delivers excellent outcomes for all learners.

In the context of career learning, however, equitable access to career development services opportunities and a career practitioner remains a significant challenge for the majority of Years 7–10 students in ACT public schools.

3.5 The importance of early career development support

The 2023 ACT Post School Destinations and Pathways in 2024 report states that 52.1% of students who left school before achieving their ACT Senior Secondary Certificate, and 61.8% of students who graduated, reported receiving career guidance during their college years. Approximately one-third of leavers and graduates in 2023 participated in workplace learning, while 15% participated in career education. The data provides a useful snapshot of students' participation in key career development activities during their college years, and shows that, although many students engage in career activities, a significant proportion do not.

OECD and PISA research indicates that students who face greater risks of poorer transitions into further education, training and work are often less likely to engage in career development activities during school. These students may also demonstrate higher levels of career uncertainty and lower levels of career preparedness.

ACTCA career practitioners working in year 7-10 schools report that they have the opportunity to build trust and provide sustained career development support to students during their early years in secondary school, and over four years. This is particularly important for students experiencing barriers to school engagement, as it enables career practitioners to establish relationships and provide career support before students transition to college.

ACT public school career practitioners have extensive knowledge of vocational education and training pathways and access points. They apply this knowledge every working day. This was recently highlighted at the 2026 ACT Training Awards. Millions of dollars are invested into VET nationally and locally. ACT public school career practitioners are champions of informing students about the benefits of vocational pathways, but this needs to in all ACT year 7-10 schools, not six.

ACARA's soon-to-be-published *Future Pathways* career education curriculum, will provide an important opportunity for ACT year 7-10 public schools to develop a whole school approach to structured career education learning. However, the ACT Government may miss the opportunity to strengthen career education

delivered in years 7-10, if schools do not have access to teacher career practitioners who can play a key role in implementing a whole-school approach to delivering career education

3.6 A system-wide response is needed

Approximately three in five year 7-10 students in ACT public schools cannot access the support of a qualified career practitioner at their school. ACTCA considers this does not represent equitable access to career development support for ACT public school students.

The ACTCA believes that all ACT year 7-10 public school students deserve access to qualified and professionally current career practitioners who can help young people understand not only which jobs exist, but also who they are, what they value, what opportunities are available to them, and how they can navigate realistic pathways towards their preferred futures.

The ACT Government should make student access to qualified career practitioners in years 7-10 a priority. The career development of ACT young people is too important to be left to chance.

4. Key issue - 13 of 22 ACT public schools with years 7-10 do not employ a qualified professional career practitioner in a career adviser's role

4.1 Declining career practitioner provision in ACT public schools

In October 2025, ACTCA and CDAA, the organisers of the petition *Make career guidance a right for every ACT Year 7 - 10 public school student* calculated that 13 of 22 ACT public schools with years 7-10 did not employ a qualified career practitioner at the school.

In October 2026, the ACTCA rereviewed the data and found 16 of the 22 mainstream ACT public schools with years 7-10 public schools (or part thereof) do not employ a qualified career practitioner at the school. Only six of the 22 mainstream ACT years 7-10 public schools employed career a practitioner in October 2026.

Historical career association data indicates that, in 2016, the ACT Education Directorate employed at least 24 teachers with career qualifications in ACT Years 7–10 schools alone. By October 2026, this number had fallen to six, despite an increase in the number of students attending ACT schools over the same period. This represents a significant decline in the availability of qualified career practitioners in ACT public schools.

4.2 A previous ACT Government investment in career practitioner capacity

The ACT has previously recognised the value of investing in teacher career development expertise. Between 2008 and 2012, as part of the ACT Education Directorate's *Moving Forward – Transitions, Careers and Vocational Learning* Budget Initiative, approximately 65 ACT teachers received scholarships to study a Certificate IV in Career Development. Many teachers who completed their Certificate IV subsequently went on to study a Graduate Certificate in Career Development.

The *Moving Forward* initiative remains the ACT Government's most significant investment in building career practitioner workforce capacity in ACT public schools. It demonstrates that a system-level approach to developing a qualified career practitioner workforce has previously been implemented in the ACT.

The decline from at least 24 qualified teacher career practitioners in Years 7–10 schools in 2016 to six in 2026 raises an important question about how career education and career development services are currently delivered across the ACT public school system, and how well Education Support Office sponsored career programs are supported by untrained school staff who may view their career development role as secondary to other priorities.

ACTCA however, welcomes the ACT Education Directorate's announcement in July 2026 that career education will, for the first time, be included within the vocational education and training scholarship priority

area and therefore form part of the ACT Education Directorate's Teacher Scholarships Program. This is a positive step towards rebuilding career development workforce capability within ACT schools. However, teacher scholarships alone will not address the immediate inequity in access to qualified career practitioners across schools.

4.3 Cross-school collaboration is not a substitute for dedicated provision

The ACT Government has advised that, unlike ACT public colleges, years 7-10 schools are not specifically funded for career practitioners comparable to the Transition and Careers Officers (TaCOs) employed in colleges. Instead, years 7-10 schools may access career development support through cross-school collaboration. For example, a college TaCO may work with students in the network of feeder schools associated with that college. The Gungahlin College TaCO, for example, may work collaboratively with Gold Creek, Harrison and Amaroo Schools.

While collaboration between schools and colleges is valuable, it does not provide an equivalent level of dedicated career practitioner provision within each school.

For example, the February 2026 *Census of ACT Schools* indicates that Gungahlin College had 1,137 students, while three of its five feeder schools had a combined years 7-10 enrolment of 1,511 students. If one FTE TaCO were expected to provide career development services to the college as well as these three feeder schools, that would represent a responsibility for the career development of approximately 2,648 students.

A model that relies on one college-based practitioner to provide career development support across a college and multiple feeder schools therefore raises questions about workload issues, and the expectation that one career practitioner provide consistent, accessible and appropriately resourced career development services to students across the network.

4.4 Career education requires specialist expertise

The ACT Government website states that career education in ACT Years 7–10 schools is delivered through a "variety of approaches", using "varied resources" and accessing professional support. It also states that public schools offer a "range of programs, pathways and tools" to help students develop important skills for the future.

While schools will necessarily use a range of approaches and resources, these descriptions do not establish a consistent level of career education provision or access to specialist career development expertise across ACT public schools.

ACTCA considers that ACT young people should have equitable access to a planned program of career education delivered by appropriately qualified career development practitioners, working collaboratively with teachers and other school staff.

The Victorian Government provides a useful comparison. Its website states that career education is a core activity in secondary schools and that effective career education supports student engagement and motivation, informed decision-making and confidence about the future.

Victorian government secondary schools receive career education funding and are required to deliver a planned program of career education activities for students in Years 7–12. This includes providing students with access to career counselling services. Since 2019, the Victorian Government has funded more than 460 secondary school staff to undertake a professional-level career development qualification.

4.5 The contribution of qualified career practitioners to school systems

Qualified career practitioners make a unique and valuable contribution to the work of schools. They provide specialist expertise while also reducing the pressure on other staff who may otherwise be expected to undertake additional career-related responsibilities alongside their existing teaching roles. Without

dedicated staffing and appropriate resourcing, the delivery of career services can become additional duties for unqualified teachers and school staff.

Teacher career practitioners also contribute to curriculum planning by bringing specialist knowledge about the relationship between school subjects, prerequisite or assumed knowledge, and pathways into university, apprenticeships, VET and employment. They also contribute to student wellbeing and support teams. Their knowledge of career development, post-school pathways and programs and services available within the ACT community can help students develop career readiness , career management competencies and engagement with school learning.

Career practitioners connect students with the world of work through activities in school, such as school career expos, organising guest speakers, providing employment and apprenticeship provider workshops, Try a Trade demonstration, short courses, classroom learning, mentoring opportunities, transition programs, career assessment activities and presentations on post-school pathways.

They also support students to experience and explore the post school options and world of work through excursions and activities outside the school, such as Try a Trade events, Canberra Careers Xpo, TAFE, CIT and university open days, Come and Try It events such as Studio 26, transition visits, external VET courses and workplace learning programs.

These activities are not simply additional programs. They form part of a broader career development program that helps students build career skills, understand themselves, explore education and employment opportunities, make informed decisions and navigate transitions.

4.6 Student voice

Inequitable provision of career guidance in ACT public schools was highlighted in the 2025 Youth Assembly Report: Our Voice, Our Impact. The report identified the complexity of the education and training landscape and the challenges this creates for equitable outcomes for young people.

The Youth Assembly reported that:

- access to career advisers is particularly limited and inconsistent;
- significant disparities in career guidance and planning exist in public schools, reinforcing systemic inequities and leaving many students without the support they need to make informed decisions about their futures; and
- students across the Territory experience unequal opportunities for career planning, post-school transitions and vocational exploration.

The Youth Assembly recommended that the ACT Government:

- invest in teaching resources that deliver consistent education in civics, financial literacy and career pathways, with delivery of these resources as a mandatory requirement within the school curriculum; and
- increase funding for all ACT high schools to employ at least one dedicated career adviser to enhance support for students' career development and facilitate a smoother transition into college, vocational training or employment.

These recommendations reinforce the need for a consistent, system-wide approach rather than relying on different arrangements from school to school. Career programs developed centrally would also benefit from expert implementation in schools.

4.7 A national expectation for career education

The vision of the Australian Government's National Career Education Strategy, *Future Ready*, is that every student in every school has access to high-quality career education to help them make a successful transition from school to further education, training, work or a combination of these.

Achieving this vision requires more than providing a stand-alone, work experience program not connected to the Australian curriculum, for year 7-10 students which is the case in the majority high schools. It requires access to appropriately qualified career development within schools to provide the expertise to design and deliver a whole school approach to career education.

Career practitioners are a critical resource for designing, coordinating and delivering high-quality career education services and programs. Ensuring that ACT public school students have equitable access to qualified career practitioners would provide a stronger foundation for consistent career education, career development and post-school transition support across the ACT.

5. Key issue - Young people, the school community, industry, business, parents, higher and tertiary education institutions are calling out for high schools (schools with years 7-10) to make employment of careers advisers (practitioners) a priority.

This petition has provided an opportunity for members of the ACT community to share their views with ACTCA members. The experience has been both empowering and enlightening for members. What we have learnt is that many of the ACT community, including students, assumed that qualified career practitioners were employed in all ACT public schools, and that work experience and an excursion to the Canberra Careers Xpo represented the extent of career education programs available in schools. Feedback received by ACTCA from young people, parents, industry and key stakeholders has been overwhelmingly supportive of the petition's aims and requests.

One example of community stakeholder support is from the Australian Education Union ACT (AEU ACT). In the AEU's 2025-26 log of claims, the AEU states that career practitioners should be included as part of school's guaranteed minimum staff structure. This structure must address the need for every school to have sufficient school leaders, classroom teachers, as well as classroom support with LSAs, effective access to school psychologists, specialist program teachers, dedicated qualified teacher librarian, qualified career development practitioners, and sufficient administrative support for teaching staff and school leaders.

Awareness within the ACT community that access to career development services across ACT public schools in not equitable is growing. The ACT community believes young people deserve access to quality career services in schools delivered by professionally qualified career practitioners.

6. Requests

6.1 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.

The title career practitioner is used by ACTCA to denote an individual who holds CICA endorsed qualifications in career development and who annually meets the competency and ethical requirements defined in the CICA Professional Standards.

Membership to ACTCA as a Professional or Associate member indicates that individuals have met the relevant qualification and currency requirements. To verify career practitioner status, the ACT Education Directorate should request that career practitioners provide evidence of their CICA Member Association membership and maintain accurate records of individuals who are eligible to be employed as a career practitioner in ACT public schools.

The correct use of recognised terminology for career practitioner titles helps students, families, school leaders and the ACT community identify practitioners who have met nationally recognised standards for qualifications, ethical practice and ongoing professional development. If these titles are applied to ACT Education Directorate employees who do not meet these standards, the title becomes diminished.

With the rise of AI and social media there is an increasing need to ensure that young people have access to unbiased, and current career information. Career practitioners work with young people to make career information accessible, relevant and meaningful.

The emergence of a commercial career bot developed by Anyway, and promoted to schools, including inducements and commercial sponsorship, raises significant concerns about the potential for schools substituting authentic, professional and ethical career support with AI-based tools.

Historically teacher career development practitioners have been resourced one timetabled line from their teaching allocation to deliver career services in schools. One timetabled line equates to approximately 3-4 hours a week. Teacher career practitioners who have transferred to an ACT public college TACO position from high school all agree that the career service provided when a full-time college career practitioner position supports more students, provides personalised service and ultimately better career outcomes than a 0.1 or 0.2 allocation in year 7-10 schools.

The ratio of 1 full-time career practitioner to 450 students was recommended by the Victorian parliamentary inquiry into student pathways into in-demand industries in 2025. The Report recommended Victorian Government schools has at least one qualified full-time equivalent career practitioner per 450 students.

In ACT year 7-10 public schools with fewer than 450 students, employing teacher career practitioners provides an opportunity to utilise teachers with a proportional teaching load to deliver career education to students in the classroom. It can also be considered that students with additional needs and barriers to career development such as students with disability and First Nations students would benefit from more personalised and intensive career development support. Proportional release from class for the delivery of whole school career services combined with the delivery of career education, and specialist career services would provide an effective model for utilising a full-time employee.

This submission does not address the provision of career development practitioners in ACT Government specialist schools and programs, such as The Woden School, Black Mountain School and the Flexible Learning Program. It is acknowledged that a ration of one full-time career practitioner to 450 students would not be appropriate for specialist learning environments requiring intensive support. However, the provision of career practitioners in these settings is outside the scope of this inquiry.

6.2 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.

Evidence provided by this submission points to the need to remove barriers to gaining a career development qualification for those who wish to study career development. Scholarships should be made available to cover the full cost of study and should be accessible to both teaching and non-teaching ACT public school staff who wish to become a qualified career practitioner.

Currently, ACT Government offers scholarships to teachers only. Targeted scholarships have the potential to attract the interest from a broad range of school staff, including LSAs, Indigenous Education Workers, youth workers, Building Services Officers, librarians, administration officers, school leaders as well as teachers. Such an approach would provide opportunity for a diverse range of scholarship recipients.

There are currently school staff working in roles of workplace learning/work experience coordinator. ACTCA's conversations with these staff indicate that many would welcome the opportunity to gain qualifications and upskill. However, many are not teachers, or have the financial resources to undertake a qualification that would benefit of schools and students.

ACTCA supports expanding opportunities to study either a professional or paraprofessional, such as a Certificate IV in Career Development, would also provide options for scholarship applicants. Conversations with some ACTCA members indicate that some staff may prefer to gain paraprofessional qualifications and

support a professional career development practitioner within their school. Although this is not CICA policy, in times when public school career practitioner workforce numbers are in dire decline, a number of strategies need to be on the table.

As previous mentioned in this submission, a targeted scholarship program can attract interest and produce good outcomes. ACTCA has previously assisted public-school teachers to apply for teacher scholarships, that supported study in the career development field. However, uptake of these scholarships has not been overwhelming, and not to the scale that has impacted on the declining number of career development practitioners employed in ACT public schools.

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

An example of providing additional career practitioners in schools was implemented by the ACT Government in the past. The *Moving Forward – Transitions, Careers and Vocational Learning* Budget Initiative increased the number of teacher career practitioners (TaCOs) in 8 ACT public colleges in 2009 and allocated a 0.4 position based in the Education Support Office to manage the implementation and accountability process of the initiative. With the opening of Gungahlin College, and the inclusion of career practitioners at The Woden School and Black Mountain School ACT Government funding was subsequently increased to support has 11 TaCO positions in public schools that have years 11 and 12.

Many year 7-10 public schools already employ unqualified school teaching and non-teaching staff who are performing a limited roles implementing workplace learning programs in schools. An ACT government budget initiative, similar to *Moving Forward* would provide additional resourcing for schools in recognition of the budget pressures facing public schools in the ACT.

Centrally sanctioned funding schools however, needs appropriate oversight. ACTCA members report that some colleges' obligations under the *Moving Forward* funding initiative have been diluted over recent years. Accepting funding for TaCO teacher career practitioners, while employing administration staff or a staff members who are not professionally qualified and current does not meet the intent of the original funding initiative. Funding provided to schools should be appropriately classified and resourced to ensure it is used for its intended purpose.

The ACT Education Directorate's approach to resourcing of schools is undergoing significant change. ACTCA encourages the Education Directorate examine potential duplication of service provision by the Education Support Office, where some services are already carried out in ACT public schools and colleges.

For example, a recent informal ACTCA survey of three of nine ACT public colleges, found that in September 2026 those three colleges had 155 students participating in Australian School-based apprenticeships (ASBAs). ASBA students in colleges are supported and managed by the college career practitioners, as part of their provision of the career services to all students. The ACTCA considers program and service delivery undertaken by the Education Directorate that duplicates services already being delivered in schools and colleges should be examined, particularly where schools and colleges may be better placed to provide these services directly to students they know well and see regularly.

7. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Provide equitable access to qualified career practitioners

The ACT Government should ensure that every ACT public school with years 7-10 provides students with access to a professionally qualified and current career development practitioner, resourced at a minimum ratio of **one full-time-equivalent career practitioner for every 450 students**.

The model should allow schools with fewer than 450 students to employ a teacher career practitioner through an appropriate combination of career education teaching and proportional release from classroom teaching. Staffing arrangements should also recognise the additional resourcing for the career development

needs of students experiencing barriers to engagement, including students with disability and First Nations students.

Recommendation 2: Establish a targeted career development qualification scholarship program

The ACT Government should provide targeted scholarships covering the full cost of professional and paraprofessional career development qualifications for **both teaching and non-teaching ACT public school staff**.

Scholarships should be available to staff who can contribute to the delivery of career development services in schools, including teachers, LSAs, Indigenous Education Workers, youth workers, workplace learning and work experience coordinators, librarians, administration staff and school leaders.

The program should provide pathways to both professional-level qualifications and appropriate paraprofessional qualifications, enabling schools to develop a broader and sustainable career development workforce.

Recommendation 3: Provide dedicated and accountable funding to build and sustain qualified career practitioner positions in ACT public schools

The ACT Government should provide dedicated funding to ACT public schools to establish and sustain qualified career practitioner positions, recognising the budget pressures facing ACT public schools.

Funding should be specifically identified for career development provision and subject to appropriate accountability requirements to ensure that funding intended for qualified career practitioners is used for that purpose.

The ACT Government should also review existing Education Directorate career programs and services to identify opportunities to reduce duplication and ensure that resources are directed towards services that provide direct benefit to students within schools.

Recommendation 4: Establish consistent system-wide standards for career development provision

The ACT Education Directorate should establish a consistent system-wide framework utilising CICAs four frameworks for quality assurance for career development provision in years 7-12 that:

- defines the role and professional requirements of a career development practitioner;
- uses recognised professional terminology consistent with the Australian careers industry and CICA frameworks across ACT public schools;
- establishes minimum expectations for career services delivered in year 7-12 schools including career education, career guidance, workplace learning and career development activities;
- supports implementation of the *Future Pathways* and other Australian and BSSS career education curriculum through appropriately qualified career practitioners and teachers;
- ensures students have access to current, unbiased and reliable career information; and
- supports schools and colleges appropriate oversight and evaluation of career development provision across schools.

This framework should complement, rather than replace, the professional expertise and school-level knowledge of career practitioners working directly with students.

Every young person has a career, and a career is more than just a job.