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Over the past ten years the changing landscape of society, work and education has led to a significant transformation in career development services.

School students now have access to an array of information about possible career paths.

- While most students are satisfied with the advice they receive, their aspirations tend not to match available opportunities in the Australian labour market.
- One issue is that vocational education and training (VET) has a poor image and the focus remains on pathways to university rather than on options for pursuing apprenticeships or courses in technical and further education (TAFE) institutes.
- Career development services also need to cater to adults returning to the workforce and those in the middle of their working lives who are seeking change.
- TAFE and higher education career development services feature many of the characteristics recommended for effective adult career development services.
- However, some groups need more tailored career development services than those offered by tertiary education providers. These include older people, disengaged adults, Indigenous Australians and people with disabilities.
- Services for these groups should ideally be community-based and responsive to local conditions.
- The introduction of professional standards and qualifications for career service practitioners is evidence of the effort underway to strengthen career development services in Australia.
- However more remains to be done, including greater promotion of VET pathways and support for parents and adults.
- Enhanced data collection on career development services will also play an important role in designing, planning and implementing improved services in the future.

at a glance

Career development services are becoming increasingly important in Australia

Young people are confronted by many more education and employment options than were their parents at the same age. Most people can now expect to experience several changes of employer and of career during the course of their working lives.

Over the past ten years the changing landscape of society, work and education has led to a significant transformation in career development services

The emergence of a knowledge economy, increasing labour market demands, and shortages of skilled workers have all contributed to a growing range of occupations and greater mobility of the workforce. To capitalise on the extended opportunities this new world offers, people can benefit from professional advice on how to choose the most appropriate career and educational paths. In recent years in recognition of this need, there has been an increasing focus on career development services in Australia—not only to help young people make the transition from school, but also to assist older people adapt to a changing workforce and engage in lifelong learning.

Paving the way to better career development services has been a series of important developments. Australia's participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) 2002 review of international career information guidance policies and practices saw a national push towards the support and promotion of career development services, especially for young Australians.

In 2006, for example, the Australian Government established Career Advice Australia, which is working with industry and business at local, regional and national levels to provide a national career and transition support network for young Australians aged 13 to 19 years.

CAREER EDUCATION is one part of a comprehensive career development strategy. It concerns the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences in education and training settings to assist students to make informed decisions about their study and/or work options and therefore enable effective participation in working life.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT is the process of managing life, learning and work over the lifespan. It concerns the individual in the ever-changing contexts of their life, self and circumstances.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT SERVICES refers to a wide range of programs and services provided in many different jurisdictions and delivery settings. Their object is to assist individuals to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to manage their life, learning and work in self-directed ways.

CAREER INFORMATION refers to information (print, electronic, personal contacts and other resources) that assists the process of career development. Career information includes occupational and industry information, education and training information and social information related to the world of work.

CAREER INFORMATION SERVICES encompass a variety of resources that provide current, unbiased information about work roles, educational programs and work opportunities. Such resources include computer-based career information delivery systems, the internet, print and media materials, informational interviews, workplace speakers and more.

Adapted from The Australian Blueprint for Career Development (Department for Education, Science and Training 2006) and Professional standards for Australian career development practitioners (Career Industry Council of Australia 2006).

'Career development' is the term that captures the idea that people are likely to make several career choices during their working lives

Career development services are offered by government agencies (particularly employment-related services such as those offered by Centrelink, various online services such as myfuture, and some state government-based services); schools, universities and VET institutions (especially TAFE); private providers (dedicated career consultants, psychologists and employment agencies); businesses and industry associations (providing services to existing employees and intending employees); and community and not-for-profit organisations, such as youth support agencies.

There has been a shift to increasing provision by community stakeholders and the private sector—the shift to private sector providers being due, in part, to the government contracting-out some of the services it has traditionally provided (OECD 2002).

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL-AGED STUDENTS

School students now have access to an array of information about possible career paths

A survey of Year 10 students by Rothman et al. (2008) found that the vast majority had participated in at least one type of career advice activity (usually receiving written material) and that they were positive about the value of that advice.

Most are satisfied with the advice they are receiving. However, their aspirations do not match well with the opportunities in the Australian labour market

Naturally enough, these young people were ambitious about their future careers. Unfortunately, their aspirations did not match the likely labour market opportunities, with far more aspiring to professional jobs than are likely to be available. This makes it important that young people understand where vocational education and training can take them.

Nevertheless, the focus remains on pathways to university rather than on options for pursuing apprenticeships or courses with TAFE

There are many factors that enhance the promotion of VET as an option to school students: a school's ability to offer a broad curriculum inclusive of VET options; teacher knowledge of VET and its accreditation; effective liaison between schools, TAFE, business and industry; parental support; and understanding of modern VET options. Schools which provide vocational education and training in their curriculum are more effective in promoting non-university options to their students through careers counselling and advice and are more successful in creating pathways to tertiary VET providers.

Factors inhibiting promotion of vocational education and training also exist: a conservative university-trained teacher background; unclear or inadequate funding arrangements for VET in Schools; inflexible school curriculum and timetabling structures; and the distance between schools and VET providers. What is required is dedicated career staff familiar with the VET system who can provide suitable career advice.

VET has a poor image and is perceived as being an easier study option than higher education

More also needs to be done to improve the image of vocational education and training among school teachers and parents. The introduction of VET in Schools has successfully increased career study options for school students, but it remains unattractive for academically inclined students.

Workplace experience undertaken as part of schooling and part-time work can assist students in making career choices

Opportunities to undertake programmed workplace experience while at school can provide students with a great deal of information about their abilities and interests prior to their making pathway decisions and career choices. Workplace experience also enables them to make networks of contacts and become aware of a range of opportunities (Smith & Green 2005). Billett (2006), reporting on work experience programs in schools, notes that, to many students, paid part-time work was seen as the best way of understanding work and post-school pathways. Those students who were working welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences and insights with other school students. Billett suggests that students in paid employment offer a potentially effective educational resource that is freely available in most Years 11 and 12 classrooms. With minimal organisation of school programs, he says, class activities reflecting on the world of work beyond school can be accommodated by both teachers and high school students. Participating in paid part-time work is less about identifying a career path, and more concerned with enabling students to experience the realities and complexities of the workplace, thus building employability skills.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR ADULTS

Career development services need to cater to all adults, including people returning to the workforce and those in the middle of their working lives and seeking change

In a project investigating learning and career development for adults, particularly those disengaged from the labour market or education systems, Beddie, Lorey and Pamphilon (2005) found that existing career development services are primarily designed to cater for school and tertiary students rather than for older adults, many of whom cannot afford (or would not contemplate) private career counselling sessions. Their research finds that a culture of career development needs to be built in Australia which focuses on all age groups and encourages older adults to recognise that they, too, have career and learning options that can help them cope with changes in their working or personal circumstances.

While career planning services for adults and young people of post-school age are available through Centrelink, the services are restricted to registered job seekers.

Harris, Rainey and Sumner (2006) point out that, while existing careers services have tended to focus on people in educational institutions, the unemployed and special groups, future services should cater for all people, embracing a 'whole of life' approach that operates seamlessly throughout a person's lifespan and is proactive rather than remedial.

The *Australian Blueprint for Career Development* (Department of Education, Science and Training 2006) is premised on the lifelong approach, which identifies 11 broad career management competencies to help people to direct and manage their career path, beginning at school and continuing throughout their working lives.

TAFE and higher education career development services feature many of the characteristics recommended for effective adult career development services

TAFE institutes and universities often have qualified career development professionals able to link career development activities with employment opportunities, use a range of information and communication technologies in their delivery, and embed career activities within a curriculum.

However, there are some groups who need more tailored services

There are also some groups in society who, because they are unaware of the potential benefits of pursuing a career path, need specially tailored services.

Older people and adults who are disengaged from the labour market or education system are best helped by career development services that are proactive, community-based and impartial

Noting that services available to adults who are disengaged from the labour force often follow a remedial or 'band-aid' approach, Beddie, Lorey and Pamphilon (2005) suggest that career development for disengaged adults is best when it is community-based, affordable, and impartial (that is, one step removed from agencies offering other assistance, such as welfare, job matching or training). They also suggest it should be 'actively' offered, because most adults disengaged from the labour force are unlikely to be proactive in seeking career development services.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR EQUITY GROUPS

The desirable characteristics of career development services for Indigenous Australians differ in several important respects from those of the general population

Overall, Indigenous students are less likely to have access to career guidance, and many students report that they do not know how to go about pursuing their goals. Career development programs for Indigenous students need to be designed to take account of cultural differences. For instance, career advisers indicate that they often need to take the initiative to approach Indigenous students to offer advice because the students were generally diffident about approaching them.

Craven et al. (2005) present a strong case for incorporating special provisions and delivery strategies in career development services catering for Indigenous Australians to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

Career development services are more effective if they are responsive to their local communities, particularly in rural and remote areas ...

Beddie, Lorey and Pamphilon (2005) found that advice on career and learning pathways for older people was more effective when provided by people who understood the employment scene and had good networks in the district.

... and people with disabilities deserve tailored services to help them return to work

For adults and young people of post-school age with disabilities, CRS Australia (formerly known as the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service) offers a variety of services aimed at career development and the placement of individuals in employment. In one year CRS Australia (2007) helped over 11 000 eligible job seekers to find suitable employment.

Working in conjunction with each other, regional disability liaison officers and disability coordination officers aim to assist people with a disability to move between school, VET and higher education, to succeed in their chosen studies and then move to suitable employment. In order to do this they provide information, coordination and referral services for people with a disability who are interested or enrolled in post-school education and training.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

A concerted effort is underway to create coordinated career development in Australia with the introduction of various programs and the implementation of professional standards and qualifications for career service practitioners

The Career Industry Council of Australia, a national body representing 12 practitioner associations and charged with developing professional standards for the career industry in Australia, developed a set of professional standards for career development practitioners. These standards comprise six major elements: *terminology*; *membership of the profession*; *code of ethics*; *entry-level qualifications*; *continuing professional development*; and *competency guidelines*. Minimum qualifications for practitioners in accordance with the standards will be mandatory by 2012.

Another significant contribution to the professional standards of careers services practitioners has been the creation of a comprehensive code of ethics for practitioners, covering professional competency and conduct and principles for career development practitioner–client relationships. These have been developed by the *Australian Association of Career Counsellors*, a peak body for career development practitioners in Australia.

Career Advice Australia is expanding professional development opportunities, providing study and industry placement scholarships for career advisers, and funding school and industry forums.

SIGNIFICANT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

Job Guide, published by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, provides extensive information on occupations and associated training pathways. For each occupation, the guide lists a job description, describes the personal qualities and education and training required, and gives a brief summary of employment opportunities and sources of additional information. Job Guide also provides guidance on choosing a career, applying for a job and choosing post-secondary education and training. It also directs people to sources of government assistance. Incorporated in the Job Guide site is a guide for parents, which is designed to assist them to work with their children in making decisions about careers and vocational study.

myfuture.edu.au is an interactive, online career exploration service aimed at all Australians wishing to

explore their career options, with a particular emphasis on 16 to 24-year-old students. It helps the user see possibilities in the world of work, identifies their interests and skill areas and sets career goals and plans to achieve them.

OZJAC published by the Curriculum Corporation (a national educational support organisation owned by all the Australian Ministers of Education) is a computer-based program designed to help young people and adults to map out and pursue their career decisions. Available both in online and CD format, it can be accessed through secondary schools, TAFE institutes, universities, JobNetwork, private employment services providers, and independent career development consultants as part of their career advisory services.

ReCaP (Resource for career teachers and practitioners) is a national resource designed for

career practitioners providing information, guidance, support and advice on career development to students and clients. This includes careers teachers, teachers from a range of departments in a school, VET teachers and coordinators, counsellors and community-based organisations. Available in hard copy to careers practitioners, it provides access to a consolidated set of materials that can be used and organised flexibly to facilitate the development of a customised quality career service or program.

Career advisor, published by the South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (2006), is designed to provide career advisers, teachers, parents and young people with information about labour market trends, employment and training patterns, job opportunities, and pathways relevant to young people.

ISSUES STILL TO BE RESOLVED

More remains to be done, including greater promotion of VET pathways, support for parents and adults, and collection of data on career development services—an important tool to be used in designing, planning and implementing services in the future

While there has been a great deal of activity in the careers development arena, there are still many challenges. One is the issue of actively promoting VET-based career paths in schools. A second is that parents, whose influence on their child's early career choice is substantial, require greater support. Finally, Australia still needs more comprehensive career planning services for adults, especially for people disengaged from education and the labour market, for those with disabilities and for those living in regional and remote parts of the country, in particular in Indigenous communities.

Underlying many of these issues is a need for improved collection of data on career development services. Although jurisdictions, statutory authorities and service providers gather information for their own purposes, the data are not readily accessible, nor are they directly comparable. Improved data on the nature and extent of services being provided, to whom they are provided, where and how they are delivered, and performance measures to gauge their efficacy are essential for effective policy and planning of these services at national, state and institutional levels.

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An at a glance is a synthesis of research focused on a particular topic of interest, drawing on information from various sources.

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