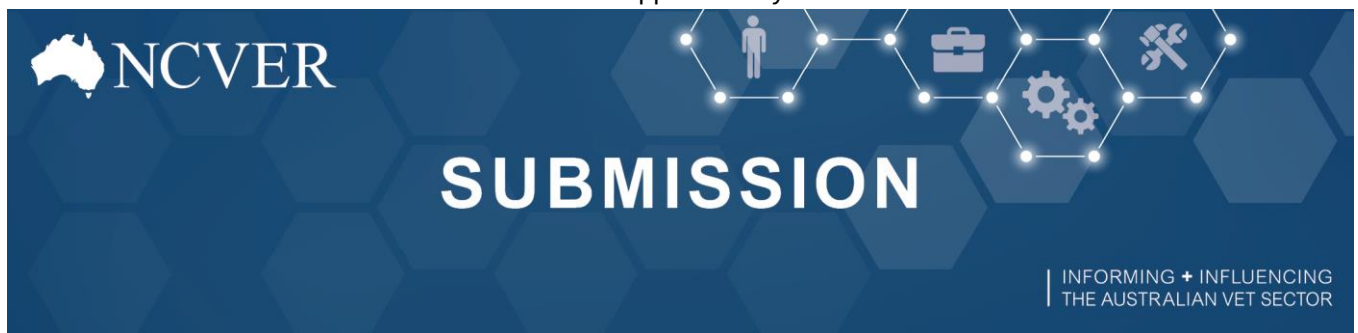




Inquiry into the perceptions and status of vocational education and training

Responses to questions on notice

May 2023

Name: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
Contact: Simon Walker, Managing Director
Phone:
Email:

Overview

The following information is provided in response to questions on notice arising from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training's Inquiry into the perceptions and status of vocational education and training public hearing on 16 May 2023. It is further material to NCVER's submission to this Inquiry; for more detail, please see submission number #36.

Responses to Questions on Notice

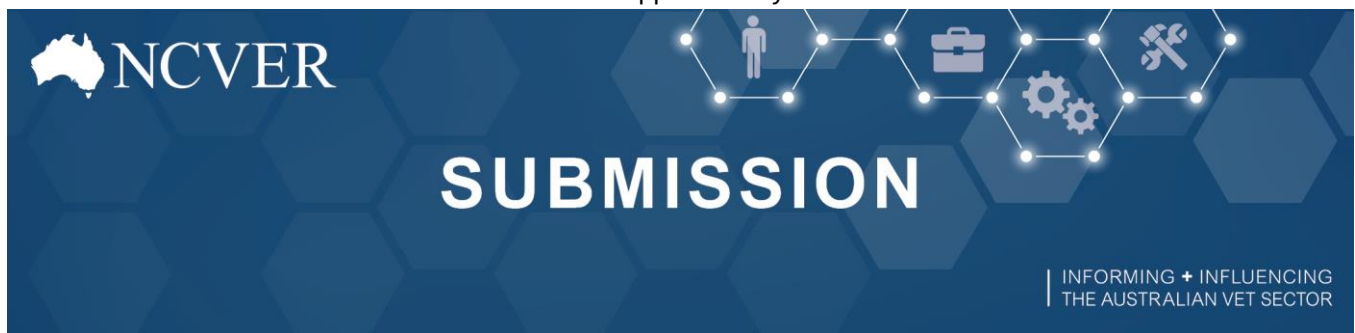
- (1) Question from the Chair: In your experience, in the research, did it show up anything about how often they [schools career counsellors] do PD or how often they are actually able to reach out? Are there any best practice models out there that exist in any states or educational sector that we could look at seeing adopted more broadly to help careers counsellors be able to do a better job to help young people navigate a pathway or a career option?**

The following NCVER research may offer insights into school-based careers advice drawn from a synthesis of VET for secondary school students and the role VET can play for COVID-19 youth unemployment recovery. The highlights outline findings from the work that may be relevant to the Committee's area of interest on careers advice and possible solutions.

NCVER research

Circelli, M & Siekmann, G 2022, *VET for secondary school students: a research synthesis*, NCVER, Adelaide

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/vet-for-secondary-school-students-a-research-synthesis>



Brief description

The aim of this synthesis is to provide an overview of VET for secondary school students in Australia. The focus is on nationally recognised VET qualifications that contribute to a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education and not on the more general career education and work experience activities that constitute vocational learning. The paper focuses on reasons for choosing and participating in VET programs delivered in schools; models of delivery; quality of delivery; and outcomes, both short and medium-term, from these programs. Current knowledge gaps are identified with areas for further research suggested. The quality of pathways and career support is considered in the synthesis.

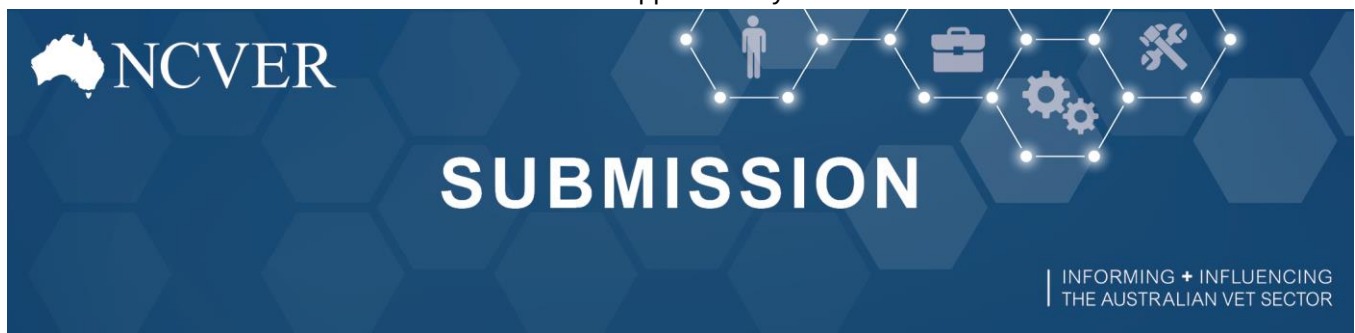
Highlights

- Several reviews highlighted some issues, including:
 - Personalised student support and career advice is hampered by curriculum delivery, assessment, work practices and structural environments in which schools operate (Gonski 2018, Panel for the Education Council Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training 2020).
- The messenger (the 'who') appears to be equally important as the message (the 'what') with career advice. Students take advice more often from some groups than others, with teachers not necessarily being the most trusted source of subject choice and career information (Palmer 2019).
- Career advice is most effective if it:
 - Is industry informed
 - Identifies emerging skills in demand by sector
 - Identifies potential areas of job growth (Panel for the Education Council Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training 2020).
- Career advice should also allow students to consider the full cost of courses, the potential level of debt involved and the availability of government support, as well as starting salaries and career prospects (Panel for the Education Council Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training 2020).

The synthesis also includes an overview of changes to VET for secondary school students' programs, including the then NSW Educational Pathways Pilot Program, which focused on enhancing careers education and strengthening post-school pathways, including equally valuing VET and academic subjects. Further information about the program is available from <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/career-and-study-pathways/educational-pathways-program>.

Waugh J & Circelli M 2021, *What VET can offer to COVID-19 youth unemployment recovery*, NCVER, Adelaide

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/what-vet-can-offer-to-covid-19-youth-unemployment-recovery>



Brief description

Examining responses to past economic downturns and recessions, both in Australia and internationally, this paper discusses the role of vocational education and training (VET) in mitigating the effects of economic downturns on young people and helping them move into employment. Vocational pathways in school, quality career guidance and work-based training are found to be critical to youth employability, especially for disadvantaged young people.

Highlights

- Vocational pathways in secondary school broaden young people's understanding of the types of jobs that potentially await them and smooth the school-to-work transition, but the experience must be meaningful and supported by personalised career guidance
- Career planning is essential for enabling youth to understand the breadth of occupations open to them. Individualised, ongoing support from an informed and objective person works best, especially for disadvantaged youth.

National research

The following national research was identified as offering insights into career advice in Australia and is available through [VOCEDplus](https://vcedplus.voced.edu.au/), NCVER's international tertiary education research database.

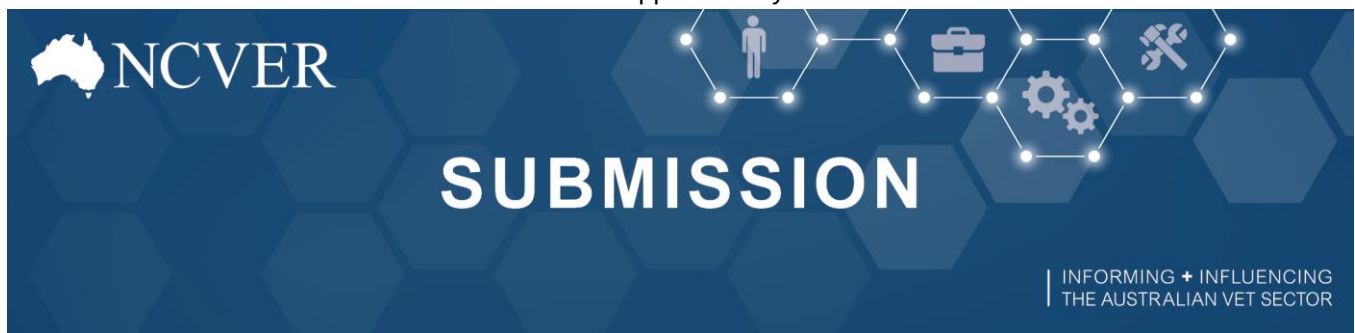
Austin K, O'Shea S, Groves O & Lamanna, J 2022, *Best-practice career education for students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds*, Curtin University, Perth

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/636957>

Brief description

This report details the findings and recommendations from the 18-month, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE)-funded project 'Higher education career advice for primary and secondary school students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds'. The study critically investigated best-practice initiatives in career education for students from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, including those in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

The purpose of the study was to establish overriding best-practice principles to guide career education provided to school students and non-school-leavers who are considering higher education and other pathways. In doing so, the project sought to gain a better understanding of the ways that young people from low SES backgrounds may consider their educational and vocational futures, and to provide suggested best practices in the provision of career education for this cohort.



National Youth Commission Australia (NYCA) 2022, *'You can't be what you can't see': careers education in secondary schools*, NYCA, Brunswick

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/618930>

Brief description

'Careers education' is the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences in schools that assist students in making informed decisions about their senior school pathway and subject choice as well as post-secondary education and training and/or work options that enable effective participation in working life. It may include providing career information, career advice or guidance, and career skills development. Careers education in secondary schools varies across the country in quality. This report summarises the key issues that emerged during hearings conducted by the NYCA and presents four recommendations the NYCA believes will improve students' careers education as you can't be what you can't see.

Education Council 2020, *Looking to the future: report of the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training* (Shergold Review), Education Council, Carleton South

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/545520>

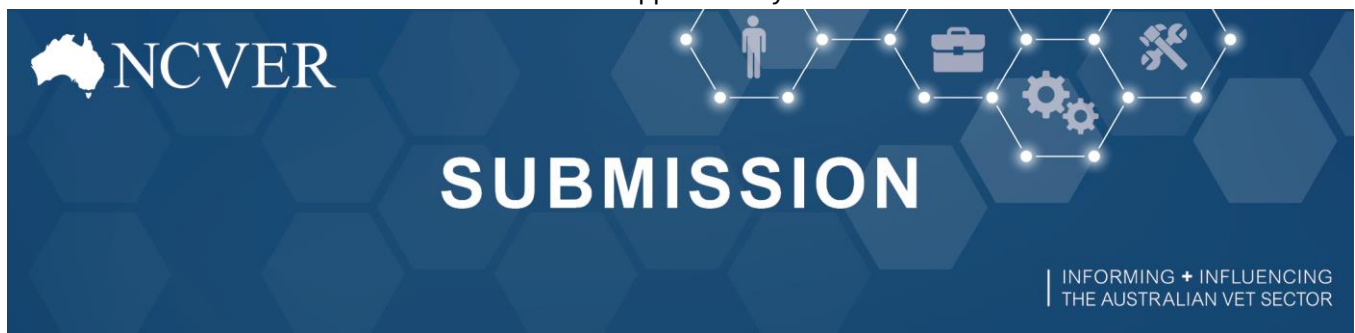
Brief description

This review aims to provide the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Education Council with advice and recommendations on how senior secondary students can better understand and be enabled to choose the most appropriate pathway to support their transition into work, further education and/or training.

In undertaking the review the expert panel considered the different contexts faced by disadvantaged students, including students with disability, those in regional, rural and remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Responsibility for senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training fall across levels of government, from the schooling system to vocational and higher education sectors as well as employers and industry. While the review reports to the COAG Education Council, which has responsibility for schooling, the recommendations may have broader systemic implications and will need to be considered in this policy context.

Specifically, the expert panel:

- (1) explored the efficacy of senior secondary education in preparing young people for diverse pathways to further learning and work
- (2) investigated whether current certification and university entry requirements, including other credentials such as the International Baccalaureate, assist in allowing students to make the study choices that are right for them to develop the skills and knowledge they need to access the most appropriate pathway into work, further education and/or training



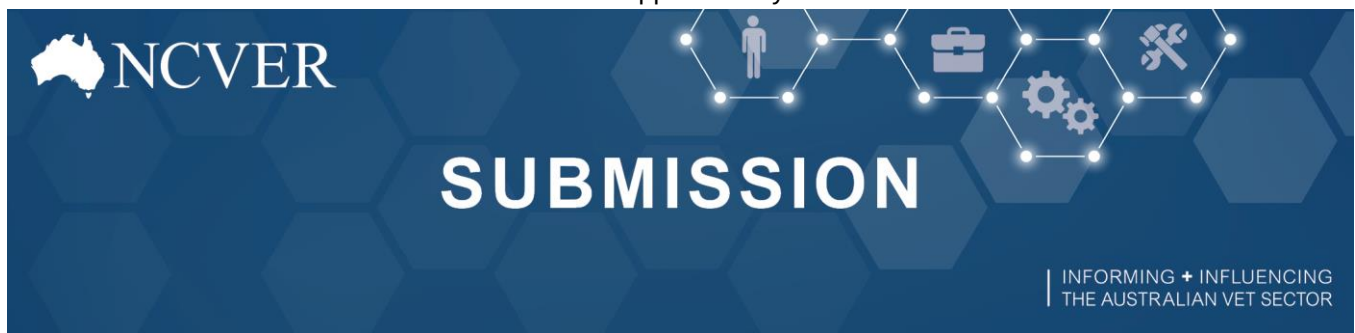
- (3) investigated barriers to students being able to equitably access all pathways, particularly for students in rural, regional and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability, those who struggle to make transitions to work, further education and training, and potential early school leavers
- (4) identified best practice in flexible delivery options, transition and engagement support arrangements for students transitioning from Year 10 to Year 11, as well as from Year 12 to post-school destinations including:
 - a. career education and awareness that supports inclusion and includes information linked to labour market outcomes for all pathways, to support students to make informed decisions about their study, training and career options, as well as develop career management skills
 - b. the role and impact of teachers, school leaders, and different models of schooling, such as alternate education settings for disengaged students, distance education and/or home education, in successful transitions
 - c. VET delivered to secondary students that leads to strong transitions
 - d. work-based learning and industry partnerships
 - e. higher education
 - f. the role of student wellbeing on their ability to engage in different types of learning, including VET, academic and work-based learning, to facilitate completion of year 12 and transition to successful pathways
- (5) investigated what, when and how data should be collected to capture experiences, identify pathways and measure the impact of delivery options, subject choice (including academic and VET) on student outcomes and destinations, to ensure continuous improvement.

Kelle, S, Swann, R & Davie-Smythe A 2020, *Identifying best practice in career education and development in Australian secondary schools*, Sage Publications in association with ACER, London

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/536707> (published abstract)

Brief description

This review aimed to identify the tenets of best practice in career education and development within Australian schools. Analysis of 13 articles revealed that career education and development is increasingly recognised as the critical transitional mechanism for young people. An embedded, whole-school approach with services tailored to the individual, school, community and culture was a central theme. Furthermore, one-on-one counselling by appropriately resourced and qualified professionals, provision of experiential learning opportunities, and the inclusion of activities aimed at inspiring students and equipping them with the skills of forethought, reflection, flexibility and decision-making were also critical. Designing a perfect model of delivery or theoretical framework is untenable, but identifying attributes of exemplary practice provides a basis for improvement and adaptation to students and contexts with differing needs. Opportunities for future research are also discussed briefly.



Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA), *Professional standards for Australian career development practitioners* 2006-2019, CICA, Greensborough, Victoria

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/498864>

Brief description

Career development practitioners provide a wide variety of career development services to diverse client groups. Such services may include career counselling, career education, job placement, employment services, recruitment, career coaching, training, mentoring and coordinating work experience or internships programs. Career development practitioners may work at either a Professional or Associate level.

The inaugural Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners were launched in 2006 and fully implemented in conjunction with CICA's Member Associations by 1 January 2012 and outlined the minimum requirements needed by Australian Career Development Practitioners. In late 2017, it was agreed by all CICA Council Member Associations to review the Standards. In particular, the core competencies and specialised competencies were reviewed to ensure those entering the profession are provided with skills and knowledge appropriate for contemporary career development practice.

International research

The following international research was identified as focusing on career guidance/advice in overseas locations; in most instances the research is available through [VOCEDplus](#).

Hooley T, Percy C & Alexander R 2021, *Exploring Scotland's career ecosystem: evidence to support the Career Review*, Glasgow, Skills Development Scotland

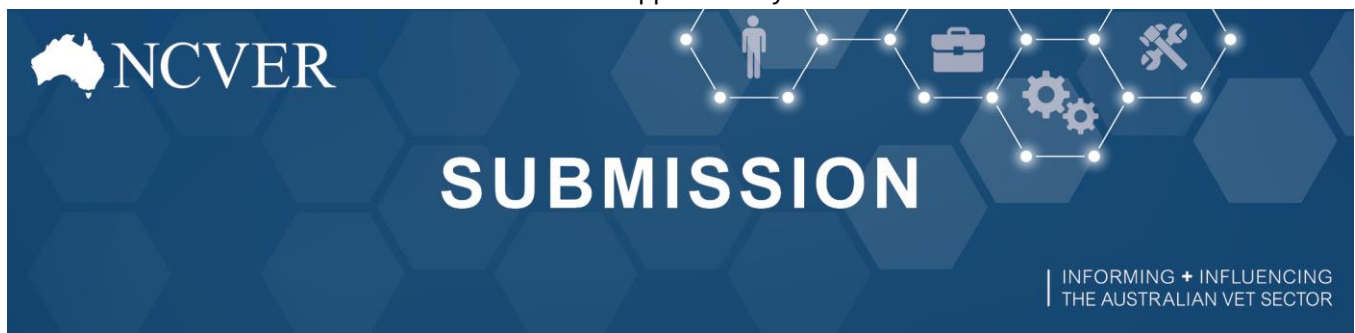
<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/593872>

Prepared for Skills Development Scotland, this report explores career services for young people (up to the age of 25) in Scotland. It describes the overall organisation of career services in the country (what we describe as an 'ecosystem'), compares it with six other countries (Austria, Canada [Newfoundland], Estonia, Finland, New Zealand, Singapore) and considers options for the development of these services.

This research feeds into the Career Review, which is working to ensure that Scotland's careers services are fit for purpose and to move forward the agenda for the future of career services set out in Scotland's Careers Strategy (available in VOCEDplus at TD/TNC 139.633).

The Career Review takes place amidst a series of major changes to Scotland's labour market, resulting from automation, digitisation, other forms of technological change, globalisation, migration and wider political and economic changes. Recent changes associated with COVID-19 have interacted with longer-term trends to produce increased uncertainty about what the future of work and career looks like.

This report draws on extensive new research conducted in Scotland and internationally. Data collected as part of the research process was reviewed to develop a 'map' of the Scottish system and propose a series of options



which offer potential ways forwards. The research also sought to develop an estimate about the overall size and cost of the Scottish systems. This report is working at the system level, seeking to understand the organisation of policy, strategy, funding and organisations and will be complemented by other work to collate what is understood about the motivations, aspirations and perceptions of current users of careers services.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2021, *How schools can help protect young people in a recession*, OECD, Paris

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/568659>

Brief description

Career guidance has never been seen as more important but what really makes a difference to the prospects of young people? This paper provides guidance to schools on how school leaders, teachers and guidance professionals can be most confident that they are providing useful support to students. It summarises available research on how schools can be most effective and shares examples of how countries are helping to prepare young people to become career ready even at the most difficult times. In particular, it focuses on three important teenage attributes, which act as indicators for whether they can be expected to do as well as possible in the jobs market. It matters: (1) What teenagers think about their futures in work; (2) How they explore their potential futures at home or at school; (3) Whether they experience workplaces through part-time working, internships or volunteering.

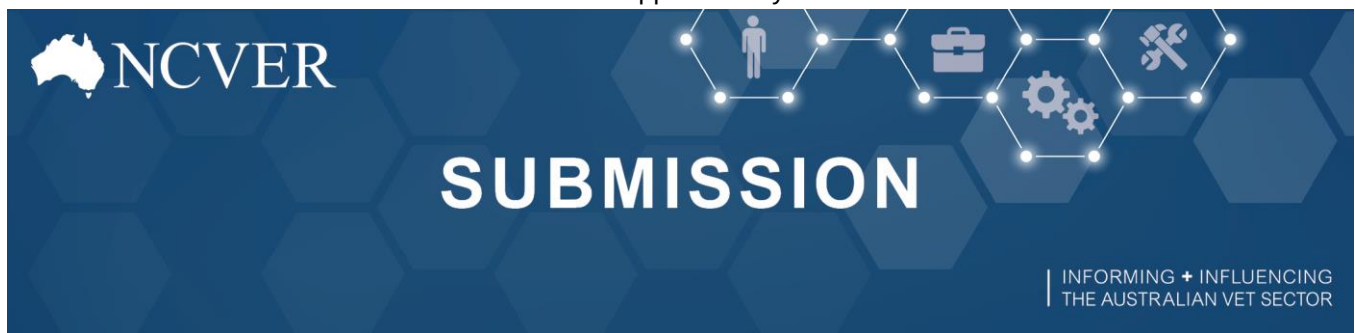
Young people who think about, explore and experience potential future lives in work are much better placed to make decisions that are right for them and compete for available jobs. The paper summarises the key evidence, sets out principles underpinning more effective career guidance and shows how well students are doing in different countries. Finally, it encourages interested policy makers and practitioners to stay in touch with OECD work that will conclude late in 2021 with the development of data-driven tools for practice.

Mann A, Denis V & Percy C 2020, *Career ready?: how schools can better prepare young people for working life in the era of COVID-19*, OECD, Paris

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/562995>

Brief description

The focus of this working paper is how secondary schools can optimise young people's preparation for adult employment at a time of extreme labour market turbulence. By reviewing academic analysis of national longitudinal datasets, it is possible to identify indicators of comparative adult success. How teenagers (i) think about their futures in work and what they do to (ii) explore and (iii) experience workplaces within and outside of schools is consistently associated with better-than-expected employment outcomes in adulthood. Data-driven career guidance will take such indicators into account within delivery. Analysis of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 illustrates substantial variation in the extent of such career readiness between



and within countries. Variation in career readiness is particularly associated with disadvantage. More effective education systems will ensure schools systematically address inequalities in teenage access to information and support in preparing for working life.

See also the associated Policy Perspectives paper *Getting a job: how schools can help students in the competition for employment* (2021, OECD) <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/583771>.

Hooley T, Matheson, J & Watts AG 2014, *Advancing ambitions: the role of career guidance in supporting social mobility*, Sutton Trust, London

<http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/349443>

Brief description

Career guidance describes activities which support individuals to learn about education and employment and plan for their future lives, learning and work. The authors of this report argue these activities contribute to social mobility, helping people to discover and access opportunities that might exist outside of their immediate networks. They also encourage individuals to challenge their pre-existing assumptions about what they are capable of and to develop practical strategies to operationalise their aspirations.

This study explores the relationship between career guidance and social mobility. It seeks to answer the following questions: What can career guidance contribute to social mobility? How have the policies of the UK coalition government impacted upon the provision of career guidance in state schools and colleges in England? What does quality career guidance look like? What evidence is there of the impact of quality career guidance? These questions were explored through a four-stage methodology comprising: (1) policy analysis and literature review, (2) gathering the core sample, (3) data analysis, and (4) case studies and interviews. This report follows the same format.

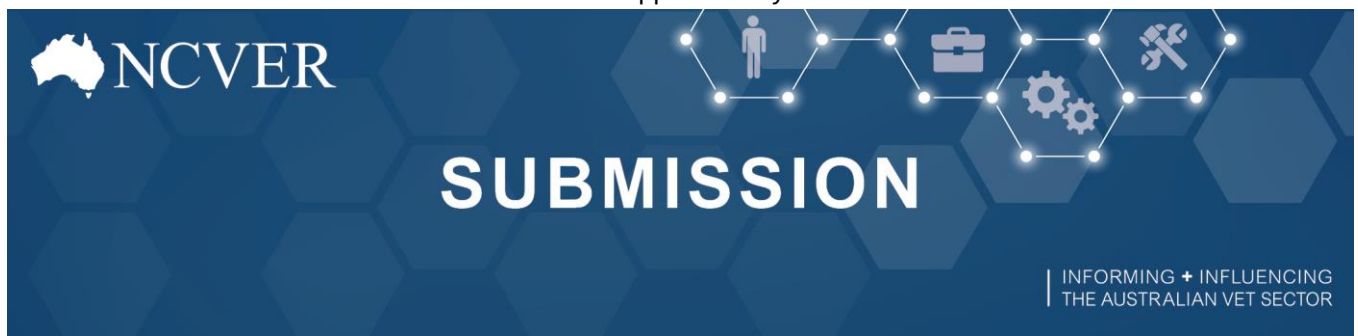
Resources

The following resources may be of relevance to the Committee's Inquiry.

- Career Industry Council of Australia <https://cica.org.au/>
- Education and Employers research <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/>
- Gatsby Foundation <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/programmes/embedding-the-benchmarks-in-school-and-college-practice>

(2) Question on notice regarding the release date of forthcoming research into student supports.

The forthcoming publication *Effective teaching practices and student support services in online VET* is scheduled to be published on NCVER's website on 22 June 2023.



NCVER will ensure the secretariat supporting the House of Representatives Standing Committee is sent the active link to the document on the day of release.

The research examined the characteristics of teaching approaches and student support services across eight qualifications delivered online and found there are five common best practice features of effective teaching practice:

- simplicity, clarity, and consistency
- development of varied and engaging learning material
- communication and engagement
- flexibility
- student support.

In terms of student support, best practice involved proactive provision, with the support being individualised, flexible and responsive to student need.

