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Career industry Council of Australia submission to the Productivity Commission enquiry into the Vocational Education and Training Workforce

The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) is the only industry body concerned specifically with work and learning transitions and is the national peak body representing the broad range of organisations and associations involved in providing career development services and programs throughout Australia. Broadly, career development services include all of those services that help people to make educational, training and occupational choices, and to manage their careers.

The OECD has indicated that such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis and may be face-face or at a distance (including help lines and web based services). They include career information provision (in print, ICT-based and other forms), assessment and self-assessment tools, counselling interviews, career education programmes (to help individuals develop their self awareness, opportunity awareness, and career management skills), taster programmes (to sample options before choosing them), work search programmes, and transition services.

Career development is critical to workforce development, in three respects:

- a. *Workforce preparation* - supporting the career development of individuals with the support they need to enter the VET sector.
- b. *Workforce adaptability and sustainability* - supporting the career development of employed workers throughout their career in the sector
- c. *Workforce reintegration* - supporting the career development of adults in and out of the labour market, and between jobs in different enterprises and back into the sector

CICA is concerned with systemic improvements in the quality and access of career services. The Council notes that various OECD and government reports over the past decade consistently demonstrate a gap in access to sufficient career development services across the VET sector and that this gap is impacting on outcomes.

Current practices in career service delivery within the sector are too often little lineally focused. Supporting the career development of the vocational education and training workforce would therefore have benefits for individual workers and students.

What is required for the future development of the workforce in this sector is to consider the development of a workforce career development strategy focusing on meeting VET system priorities through individual career development strategies.

At present, there is little evidence of talent management through career and performance coaching; redesigning of workloads and roles to maximise usage of talent within the

workforce; By way of contrast, the university sector has embraced a strengthening of career development services as a workforce development strategy.

It is important that the VET sector takes a similar position if only because the impact of demographic change on the VET sector will become more noticeable over the next few years as competition for the skills within the VET workforce become more intense.

Anecdotally, there appears to be a degree of complacency within the sector that what it is offering will continue to be of value to those interested in working in vocational education training.

However, given that the targets for training in the VET sector are ambitious, the sector is going to have to improve its career development services CICA in relation to better usage of the skill set within the workforce.

When considering a largely casualised and part-time workforce (many of whom are working in multiple jobs) it is apparent that this workforce is operating quite complex work/life roles. And, it is also clear that further investigation is required to understand and support the development of career management skills that are likely to result in higher productivity to the sector and benefit to the individual.

The Council notes that there is a significant range of resources and frameworks available (including the Australian Blueprint for Career Development) to build career management skill capacity in the sector.

Compared to sections of corporate Australia the VET sector is lagging behind in relation to career development workforce development and management strategies. For example, it is clear that a casualised workforce has far less access to professional development and other performance improvement strategies that ultimately will strengthen the human capital of the entire VET sector.

There are many opportunities with the establishment of the vocational broadband to improve career development support to staff - when and where they need it and at low cost.

Before progress can be made there needs to be a structural shift in relation to career development and the VET workforce. Consideration needs to be given to the development of a national VET workforce career development policy that outlines minimum requirements for career development for all staff.