



AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY
GROUP

**Submission to Department of
Education, Employment and
Workplace Relations (DEEWR)**

**National Career Development Strategy
Green Paper**

August 2012

About the Australian Industry Group

The Australian Industry Group (Ai Group) is a peak industry association in Australia which along with its affiliates represents the interests of more than 60,000 businesses in an expanding range of sectors including: manufacturing; engineering; construction; automotive; food; transport; information technology; telecommunications; call centres; labour hire; printing; defence; mining equipment and supplies; airlines; and other industries. The businesses which we represent employ more than 1 million employees. In preparing this submission Ai Group has drawn on the expertise of its Education and Training Policy team and also its member advisors located in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia who are dealing directly with member companies on a day-to-day basis on skilling issues.

Introduction

Employers need a skilled workforce to enable their organisations to be productive, innovative and profitable and to prosper in an increasingly competitive world.

A country's skill base is a critical national asset, contributing to economic achievement, standards of living and, through its impact on individual well being, social cohesion. A highly skilled Australian workforce is one that enables us to compete in the world economy — to produce goods and services that Australians and people overseas will want to buy from Australian companies, because we produce the best, the most cost effective, or something that others do not. It is international competitiveness that underpins continuing economic and employment growth in Australia, and rising standards of living.

In an increasingly global world, Australia's future economic prosperity depends in part on our having access to, and making use of, education and training that will help us to be world class.

This means that we need individuals who can make appropriate choices about education, training and work, and to manage their learning successfully so that all Australians fully participate in our workforce.

Ai Group is interested in career education at all occupational levels and across the working life individuals. One of our key interests relates to the currently funded Manufacturing Careers Information Service under the Australian Apprenticeship Advisers Program of the Australian Apprenticeships Mentoring Package. This initiative is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and tertiary Education. The overarching aim of the Mentoring package is to increase the retention rates of Australian Apprentices in order to improve completion rates and support the supply of skilled workers in occupations and sectors where there is a current or emerging skills need. Ai Group believes the key to successful apprenticeship arrangements is the provision of appropriate career information advice to enable potential apprentices to make informed career choices.

This principle and the importance of appropriate career information and advice extends well beyond the apprenticeship model. Such information and advice at any stage in an individuals working life, especially the formative stages, can be instrumental in achieving a range of enduring and successful outcomes.

The Australian Industry Group welcomes the opportunity to comment on this paper.

Australian Industry Group Response

In this response Ai Group wishes to focus on the following aspects canvassed in the Green Paper:

- The key priorities and proposed direction for the National Career Development Strategy
- Possible direction for the Australian Government
- Enhancing the role of industry
- Formation of a national leadership body.

Key priorities and proposed direction for the National Career Development Strategy

An effective National Career Development Strategy must provide joined-up services for all Australians that focus on delivering social and economic value to individuals and the Australian economy.

Currently careers services are disconnected and focus too heavily on particular:

- age cohorts
- education and training or industry sectors
- institutions eg. schools, TAFE or university
- equity groups eg. aboriginal students, disabled students or early school leavers
- courses eg. apprenticeships
- welfare recipients eg. long term unemployed, single mothers
- priority policy outcomes eg. recognition of prior learning.

This piecemeal and disconnected approach is preventing the implementation of an individualised service that can promote itself as being inclusive and effective. An individualised approach should bring together education, training and employment options into the one service delivery area.

A National Career Development Strategy must have staff with the skills and knowledge to be able to help people reflect on what they want to achieve in their work life. This includes assisting individuals to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses, interests and capabilities, and providing them with options for consideration. Staff must have a focus on what individuals need as well as the skills and abilities that industry needs. They must be able to bring the supply and the demand side together.

The National Career Development Strategy must help individuals to explore their own interests and abilities, make decisions, investigate what courses, qualifications or programs are most suited to them and help them to choose the most suitable education and training providers available to them. Career development services should teach people how to put together job applications, résumés and curriculum vitae, as well as

give advice to those looking for jobs and preparing for interviews. This must be done within an industry and employment context and include up-to-date labour market information.

The National Career Development Strategy must use technology to enable all Australians to access comprehensive and joined-up information through online career development services. Current career website information often only provides a portion of a comprehensive careers service. The *myfuture* website, The Job Guide and other publications are not sufficient within the current environment of a heavily market-driven education and training sector. There are gaps in information to help individuals navigate the education and training market. For example gaps are evident in:

- Skills shortages and labour market information
- Choosing a quality training provider or higher education provider
- Choosing a quality course
- Information about credit transfer and pathways
- Access to recognition of prior learning
- Access to recognition of overseas qualifications
- Access information about scholarships
- Access to information about funding entitlements

The fragmented and disconnected approach to career services is also reflected in the extensive range of career information and development advice on websites, online registers and tools. For example, the Australian Government currently provides, has provided funding for, or is investigating the provision of a whole range of careers related websites. These include:

- myfuture,
- myskills,
- myschool,
- myuniversity,
- training.gov.au,
- the skills builder,
- training.com.au,
- Skills Info,
- Apprenticeship Pathways,
- Make It,
- Job Outlook,
- Group Training Australia
- Australian Job Search

Other website/products are often related to short term funding cycles that are maintained during the life of the project but can quickly become out-of-date when the project finishes, consequently causing confusion for individuals who are dependent on making decisions on accurate and timely information.

The huge range of websites means that individuals now need help managing the vast array of information that is available - a National Career Development Strategy must assist with this.

Possible direction for the Australian Government

The Australian Government should set out what it sees to be its role in career development, particularly as it has national responsibilities in economic management and the labour market and the key role that labour productivity plays in contributing to this. The Australian Government's role in career development should extend to provide support for industries that are experiencing skill shortages and those that are dealing with structural adjustment. A coordinated National Career Development Strategy must address how industries and individuals will be able to manage these career transitions.

Anecdotal evidence from Scotland, when the Scottish government established its National Career Education Service, is that they were able to harmonise 63 different government funded programs into the National Career Education Service. The Australian Government could find that there are similar opportunities for consolidating programs and services.

Enhancing the role of industry

There is much more that can be done in relation to involving industry. One of the most important roles of a National Career Development Strategy is to provide real-time labour market information that can assist individuals make informed decisions about job opportunities.

As an example, the current unfettered approach to skills training is causing a severe oversupply of graduates in some courses, without regard to employment prospects or skill shortages. To make matters worse individuals could be burning their entitlement to government funding for a course that doesn't give them prospects for a career path or direction. Consequently there are wasted education and training opportunities without appropriate advice. There is a desperate need to provide information for individuals that can help them make informed decisions. This information should be on websites, but also through face-to-face careers development services.

Australian Industry Group supports the notion that industry could engage more fully in career development and lifelong learning processes. It needs to be remembered however, that currently business and industry do not have the qualifications to train their employees in career development. The potential of greater industry involvement requires further investigation in full consultation with industry.

Formation or proposed direction for a National Leadership Body

Ai Group advocates the establishment of a secretariat and national council that oversees the implementation of the National Career Development Strategy. This could have broad representation across states and territories and national bodies and persons with expertise in career development. The council must have direct links to Ministers and should complement rather than compete with national agencies. Ai Group has recent productive experience in this approach such as the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Manufacturing and the Defence Industry Skills Taskforce. This approach can yield effective results and provides an opportunity to achieve representation from industry.