



Australian Parents Council

Submission to the Review on senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training.

The Australian Parents Council thanks the panel for the opportunity to participate in this review and puts forth the following perspectives.

- **Parents and carers, teachers and schools are equal partners in the education and career education of students**
- **Parental knowledge and understanding of modern education pathways is a barrier**
- **Disadvantage plays a significant role in equitable access to further education**
- **Increasingly students are self-seeking education so the education system needs to accommodate**
- **A single numerical ranking does not speak to the holistic achievement of 13 years of schooling**

The Australian Parents Council has provided parents and governments with a trustworthy voice in education policy for over 55 years. We are a non-denominational, non-party political organisation that advocates for parents with children in non-government schools (Catholic and independent) and for Australian parents more generally. We are an independent, diverse and inclusive organisation of parents from all states and territories of Australia. Our interests and activities extend down to early learning and up to post-school transitions, and to the ongoing support of Parents Australia Incorporated, which we established as a national charity and deductible gift recipient in 2011.

The work of the Australian Parents Council over many years, and of Parents Australia Incorporated more recently, has contributed to the improvement of children's educational experiences and outcomes, progressive reforms in schooling, and the social capital of school and Indigenous communities throughout Australia.

We welcome this opportunity to contribute our views on the review into senior secondary pathways into work, further study and training from the parent perspective.

Kind regards,

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1. What are the essential skills and knowledge young people should leave secondary school with, and whose job is it to make sure they have them?

It is the collaborative responsibility of parents, teachers and schools to ensure that all children have the skills required to be successful when they complete their schooling. Students need to leave school employable. Regardless of whether they are going onto higher education, paid work or vocational education, they will need to be employable. Increasingly, university students are working part time whilst they study, making being work ready a key requirement of school education. Further to this student's need to be adaptable, undistracted and able to self-teach. 65% of student software developers are self-taught. [1] Our children need to leave school as competent digital inventors and producers, not just consumers and far beyond the current practise of PowerPoint presentations and word-processed documents. [2] Students can now attend online classes through youtube's creator academy to create their own media content. They are already seeking alternative education models and we need to ensure their needs are being met by an engaging, credible, reliable, robust and evolving education system.

2. Are current arrangements both in schooling and entry arrangements for tertiary education supporting students to access the most appropriate pathway?

In the most part, schools are well equipped to enable children to access suitable pathways to further education. However, this can be impeded by teacher knowledge as well as parental expectation. In our experience school careers advisors are exceptionally knowledgeable and skilled in establishing pathways for students. However, when this work is conducted in a silo it has limited impact. A fully integrated career education model commencing in late primary school and becoming more refined during the senior secondary space would be more appropriate. All teachers should be skilled and have access to suitable and appropriate information on varying pathways not just the pathway they themselves are most familiar with. This would enable a wider dissemination of reliable and timely information. Opportunities should be sought to share through tailored communication this information with parents and caregivers.

Universities are increasingly taking ownership of entry arrangements to allow for a more diverse entry method. Additionally, universities are offering flexible course qualifications ranging from certificate to diploma and degrees, often giving students the option to leave whilst still achieving a level of qualification. Whilst this model sounds to have greater flexibility and achievement will it muddy the water between traditional education institutions? Will this increase clarity for parents steering their children along education journeys or will it further complicate this space?

3. What are the barriers to students being able to equitably access all pathways?

Parents from our affiliates across the nation have flagged the following barriers:-

- Parental knowledge of options is a huge barrier to accessing pathways.
- The impost incurred on ATAR rankings due to subject changes during the years of senior secondary study enables a lack of flexibility in senior secondary courses and can be a barrier to students. Sometimes they get part way through their studies and have a change of direction or realisation that the path they have chosen is not the right one but they are committed to that pathway and changing can be a disadvantage.
- The mix of VET courses and BSSS courses not being conducive to getting an ATAR or schools not supporting students to be able to achieve VET qualifications whilst concurrently studying for courses that can gain them access to an ATAR.
- A single numerical ranking does not speak to the holistic achievements a student collects over the course of a high school career. Students may have an aptitude suited to a course of

further study that is not demonstrated by their ATAR ranking. A student statement of attainment in conjunction with a character statement would be more broadly representative.

- The perceived status of vocational education as lacking compared to tertiary education, this means that some students are missing the opportunity to pursue vocational education due to perception of inferiority.
- Disadvantage still plays a huge part in any equitable access to further education.

4. What is being done well to help students make effective choices through career education, different schooling models, VET in schools, work-based learning and industry partnerships, higher education and supporting student wellbeing?

The Australian Parents Council in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training produced some infographic and case study collateral to assist parents and student to understand the VET options available to them and the extent and breath of courses. They can be found here.

<https://austparents.edu.au/information-and-advice/vet-infographics/> These infographics are the most visited page of the Australian Parents Council website.

5. Do we have the data we need to understand pathways and make informed policy?

Certainly schools, universities and RTO's have plenty of data available to inform policy decisions but a lack of collaboration and sharing of information would be prohibitive in understanding transition successes and detractors. The use of a Unique Student Identifier or a Student portfolio where they could collect their qualification, course and achievements would be beneficial.

References

[1] M. Hughes, "Over 60 percent of new developers are self-taught. I'm surprised it's not 100 percent.," January 2019. [Online]. [Accessed 4 December 2019].

[2] N. Mirra, E. Morrell and D. Filipiak, "From digital consumption to digital invention: Toward a new critical theory and Multiliteracy," *Theory into Practise*, vol. 57, pp. 12-19, 2018.