

Productivity Commission 5-year Productivity Inquiry:  
**From learning to growth**  
Interim report no. 5 – September 2022

Submission from:

Career Development Association Australia  
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[CDAA website](#)



## About CDAA

The Career Development Association Australia (CDAA) welcomes this interim report reviewing Australia’s productivity performance and providing recommendations on productivity-enhancing reform in relation to education, and thanks the Commission for the opportunity to provide feedback.

The CDAA is Australia’s national, multi-sectoral professional association for career development practitioners, with more than 1300 members working across Australia in all sectors of the profession. This broad membership servicing Australians at all career stages means CDAA grasps the interconnections within the careers ecosystem, speaks for career-related issues that impact Australians across their lifespan, and explains the connections between multiple policies and diverse programs. Please refer to the [CDAA website](#) for further information.

Career Development is a specific discipline underpinned by accredited qualifications, proven theory, and recognised practice. CDAA members are recognised Career Development Practitioners who conform to a Professional Standards Framework and a Code of Practice. Members are governed by ethical standards, require substantiated, industry-related qualifications, and are obliged to complete a minimum number of professional development hours every year.

Read our latest report [Navigating Life’s Career Transitions](#)

## Summary of this CDAA Submission

Reference Chapter 2 *Building productivity in schools* and Section 2.4 *Making the best use of school staff*.

### Recommendation 1:

**The final report include recommendation of funding of increased numbers of Specialist Support Staff careers advisors to support and complement teachers and educators to assist to rebalance the roles of teachers and other school staff to better use their expertise**

Reference Chapter 1 of the interim report; *The value of human capital*, asks “What skills are needed for Australia’s future workforce?”

Sub-heading #2 (page 8) states “Soft Skills are critical for non-routine work”.

### Recommendation 2:

**Replace “soft” skills with a more appropriate word such as “social” skills and rewrite the section to reflect the importance of social-emotional skills to most work roles.**

### Building productivity in schools

Chapter 2 of the interim report; *Building productivity in schools*, finds that

- Schools will need to rebalance the roles of teachers and other school staff to better use their expertise, and that
- Teachers should be supported to spend less time on non-core teaching tasks, such as administration, and more time on tasks that directly enable quality teaching and learning.

Section 2.4 *Making the best use of school staff*, (pages 28-33) asks

- Are teachers working on the right tasks?
- More school staff, but are they used well?

Figure 2.4 – *A greater diversity of types of staff in schools* shows the change in staff to student ratios between 1993 and 2021.

- The ratio of Specialist Support Staff (including) student support services such as career advisers, student counsellors or liaison officers increased 154%.
- However, this is listed as rising from 0.2% in 1993 to 0.4% in 2021.

*The number of Specialist Support Staff therefore must have been at extraordinarily low levels in 1993 and remain very low in 2021.*

It is not identified what professions or roles the specialist support staff fulfill, nor whether they are full or part time?

Career advisers specialise in critical information and skills which are additional to and complement, core disciplinary subject teaching. Funding of increased numbers of Specialist Support Staff careers advisors to support and complement teachers and educators, will

- Assist to rebalance the roles of teachers and other school staff to better use their expertise, and
- Support students to build skills in understanding, identifying and applying the skills they gain during their education.

### Recommendation 1:

**The final report include recommendation of funding of increased numbers of Specialist Support Staff careers advisors to support and complement teachers and educators to assist to rebalance the roles of teachers and other school staff to better use their expertise**

This is consistent with findings of previous government – commissioned and other reports and therefore supports the implementation of those recommendations.

*Looking to the Future* - Report of the review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training June 2020. Chair Professor Peter Shergold

#### *Recommendation 6*

- Career guidance within and outside of schools should be strengthened significantly and accorded higher status.
- All those who provide career guidance both in and outside of schools should be expected to have certificated professional qualifications

*Future Ready National Career Education Strategy* - Australian Government Department of Education and Training 2019

- The Vision: Every school student will have access to high quality career education.
- Support tailored and high quality career education through engagement with professional career practitioners.

*Unique Individuals, Broad Skills - Inquiry into school to work transition* - Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, May 2018  
*Recommendation 17*

- The Committee recommends that the availability of career advisory programs and information within the school sector be increased, and that such counselling emphasise VET, apprenticeships and alternative post-school pathways to the same extent as higher education.

*Recommendation 18*

- The Committee recommends that all high schools should have access to trained career advisors on staff.

*Navigating Life's Career Transitions: Essential Support and Services* - Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA). 2022.

*Recommendation 7*

- When recruiting staff for services that involve providing career guidance, including career information, advice and support, qualified Career Development Practitioners with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience must be sought.

*Improving retention, completion and success in higher education* - Higher Education Standards Panel Final Report 2017

- School students and mature-age people need better access to effective career advice
- Career advice cannot be left to schools. Every higher education institution should ensure that their students are given the opportunity for career planning and course advice on entry to the institution and as they require it throughout their studies

## **The value of human capital**

Chapter 1 of the interim report; *The value of human capital*, asks “What skills are needed for Australia’s future workforce?”

Sub-heading #2 (page 8) states “Soft Skills are critical for non-routine work”.

While ‘soft’ skills is a commonly used term, it is problematic. “Soft” skills implies these skills are of a lower value and/or importance and the implied contrast is to “hard skills” which are somehow more important or tangible.

The Career Development Association Australia concurs with Dr Ann Villiers in her commentary on this topic, including:

- Time to dump ‘soft’ skills, *Australian Career Practitioner*, Summer 2018
- Why we should stop using ‘soft’ skills, Topical Issues, Asia Pacific Career Development Association, May 2021: <https://asiapacificcda.org/Topical-Issues#Villiers>
- Why we should stop using ‘soft’ skills, Career Convergence Web Magazine, National Career Development Association (USA), 1 February 2020: [https://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news\\_article/278124/PARENT/CC\\_layout\\_details/tru](https://associationdatabase.com/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/278124/PARENT/CC_layout_details/tru)  
[e](#)

There are alternatives to using 'soft' skills, including:

- When discussing specific skills, use specific skill words, like communication skills, problem solving skills, interpersonal skills.
- When grouping skills that relate to working with people, use social or human skills and use this term consistently.

**Recommendation 2:**

**Replace “soft” skills with a more appropriate word such as “social” skills and rewrite the section to reflect the importance of social-emotional skills to most work roles.**

**Contact details**

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