

Australian Government  
House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services  
**Inquiry into Workforce Australia Employment Services**

Submission from:

Career Development Association Australia  
PO Box 378 Brighton  
SA 5048 Australia  
[CDAA website](#)



31 January 2023

## About CDAA

The Career Development Association Australia (CDAA) welcomes this inquiry into Workforce Australia Employment Services and thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide input.

The CDAA is Australia's national, multi-sectoral professional association for Career Development Practitioners, with more than 1400 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

This submission pertains to Section 10 of the Submission Guide; **Oversight, quality and assurance**, and in particular the discussion question under 10.1:

***Should the government put in place minimum staffing qualification requirements? If so, what should these be? How can the lived and practiced experience of employment consultants be reflected in any minimum qualification framework developed?***

### 1. Benefits

Based on Australian and International research and experience, there is significant benefit to be gained from mandating minimum staffing qualification requirements:

- Benefit to Jobseekers
- Benefit to Cost
- Benefit to the Economy

### 2. Minimum Staffing Qualifications are Critical

Relevant minimum qualifications and experience should be mandated for all Workforce Australia staff directly assisting clients with complex needs. This should apply to all aspects of support - whether in career guidance, job search, mental health, physical health, relationships, financial matters or other specialist fields.

### **3. Requirement for Career Development Practitioners**

Career Development is a specific discipline underpinned by accredited qualifications, proven theory, and recognised practice. For effective outcomes, services that involve providing career guidance, including career information, advice and support, must be provided by qualified Career Development Practitioners with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience. This is particularly important in the context of current workforce constraints and transitions to new economies.

### **4. Effectiveness of qualified Career Development Interventions**

- 4.1. Job seekers participating in qualified Career Development interventions are 2.67 times more likely to obtain employment
- 4.2. A return on investment (ROI) of 2x from qualified Career Development interventions for unemployed adults in Wales
- 4.3. Case Study: Helping job seekers at risk of long-term unemployment – 20x target value

### **5. Supporting better outcomes – professional career guidance for all New Zealanders**

### **6. UK Labour plans to embed careers advisors in health services**

### **7. OECD recommends Career Guidance support for mid-career adults who are unemployed in Australia**

### **8. State Government career advice services providing qualified career advice**

## **Detailed Comment**

This submission pertains to Section 10 of the Submission Guide; **Oversight, quality and assurance**, and in particular the discussion question under 10.1:

***Should the government put in place minimum staffing qualification requirements? If so, what should these be? How can the lived and practiced experience of employment consultants be reflected in any minimum qualification framework developed?***

#### **1. Benefits**

Based on Australian and International research and experience, there is significant benefit to be gained from mandating minimum staffing qualification requirements:

- Benefit to Jobseekers
- Benefit to Cost
- Benefit to the Economy

#### **2. Minimum staffing qualifications are critical**

According to the submission guide, *“the evidence is that there has been a de-skilling of the employment services sector workforce since outsourcing and privatisation and that the sector’s workforce is predominantly female, low paid and without post-school qualifications.”* This is a tragedy as Workforce Australia provides critical and complex services to the most vulnerable in Australian society and is the Commonwealth’s largest procurement program outside Defence. The human and economic cost of allowing potentially unqualified and/or unskilled staff be responsible for the future well-being of this disadvantaged group in society must cease.

Relevant minimum qualifications and experience should be mandated for all Workforce Australia staff directly assisting clients with complex needs. This should apply to all aspects of support - whether in career guidance, job search, mental health, physical health, relationships, financial matters or other specialist fields.

“Alternate Pathway” systems can be put in place to assess and accept staff with appropriate life experience but not necessarily the relevant qualifications.

This submission will only focus on the benefits from engaging appropriately qualified and skilled Career Development staff, which is the area of CDAA expertise, however it is considered that similar arguments can be mounted for other professional interventions required by Workforce Australia clients.

### **3. Requirement for Career Development Practitioners**

Career Development is a specific discipline underpinned by accredited qualifications, proven theory, and recognised practice. For effective outcomes, services that involve providing career guidance, including career information, advice and support, must be provided by qualified Career Development Practitioners with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience. This is particularly important in the context of current workforce constraints and transitions to new economies.

[\*Navigating Life's Career Transitions: Essential Support and Services\*](#), Career Development Association Australia (CDAA) 2022, explains career guidance work is not a “soft” or “easy” option. Understanding and navigating an unpredictable, changing labour market requires relevant and expert career guidance, most particularly for those who have been out of work for some time and/or have complex needs. Career Development Practitioners are professionals who help people build career management skills. Their work is far more complex and broad than people imagine. These professionals know what’s involved in career transitions and where to find credible information. They continually update their current, relevant information and skills to meet the shifting demands of the labour market, technology and employers. Most importantly, they have specialised skills to adapt information to a person’s interests, skills, ambitions, age and circumstances, and foster the mindset to notice and respond to opportunities when they arise.

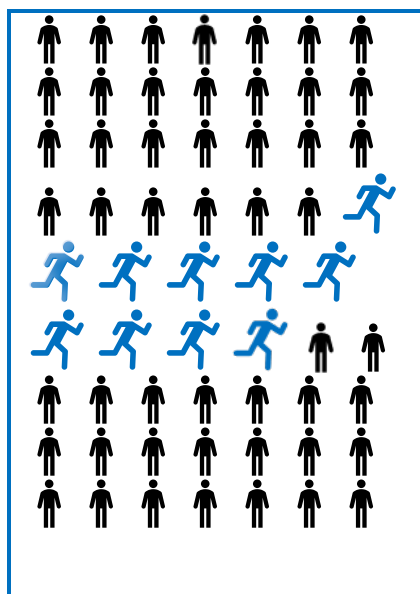
### **4. Effectiveness of qualified Career Development Interventions**

#### **4.1. Job seekers participating in qualified Career Development interventions are 2.67 times more likely to obtain employment.**

*Whiston, S. C., Li, Y., Goodrich Mitts, N., & Wright, L. (2017). Effectiveness of career choice interventions: A meta-analytic replication and extension. Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 100, 175–184.*

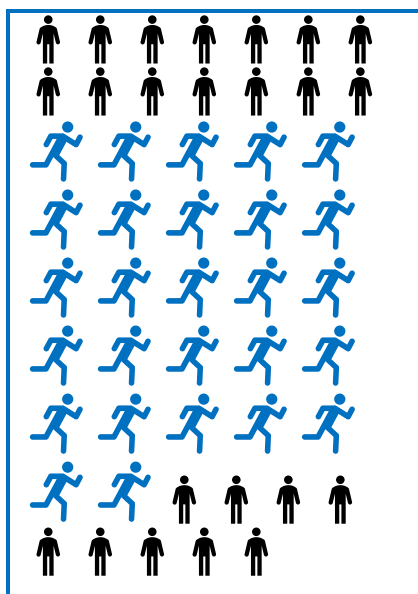
Meta-analysis of the effectiveness of Career Development interventions demonstrates that:

- The odds of obtaining employment are 2.67 times higher for job seekers participating in qualified Career Development interventions compared to jobseekers in a control group
- The most valuable ingredient is one on one counsellor support
- The least valuable ingredient (on its own) is computer guided or passive online support
- These outcomes only occurred when motivation enhancement and skills development were both included
- The outcomes are consistent for:
  - Young jobseekers
  - Older jobseekers
  - Jobseekers with special needs and conditions, and
  - Jobseekers unemployed for less than six months.



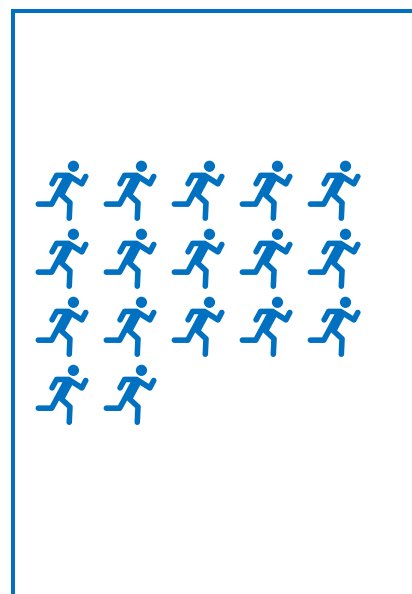
*If as an example:*

With no intervention, 10 of 50 jobseekers find work....



*Based on the research:*

Then with support from qualified career practitioners, 27 of 50 will find work.



*That's great news for 17 in 50 people, their families, the community, and the economy!*

#### 4.2. A return on investment (ROI) of 2x from qualified Career Development interventions for unemployed adults in Wales

*Chris Percy, Visiting Research Fellow, University of Derby (UK) Dr Deirdre Hughes, DMH Associates & Honorary Associate Professor, University of Warwick IER, England (UK): Lifelong guidance and welfare to work in Wales: linked return on investment methodology*

In May 2019, a new government-backed flagship Working Wales programme #ChangeYourStory was launched, managed and delivered by Careers Wales. The idea was for a simpler approach to employability support for individuals with a single point of contact through which they can access qualified, personalised career guidance to help find and maintain appropriate opportunities. Adults registered with Working Wales (WW) participate voluntarily and receive a personalised programme of support. For the Welsh Government, working closely with professionally trained careers advisers is part of an added-value solution to provide specialist careers guidance and coaching to those most in need.

Analysis of the results of individuals able to find employment and/or to increase their earnings capacity through engagement with the range of activities and interventions, and cross-referenced with the reduction in unemployment benefits claimed, demonstrated the link between activity cost, short-term outcomes and long-term fiscal consequences as calculated at 2 x ROI.

#### 4.3. Case Study: Helping job seekers at risk of long-term unemployment – 20x target value

*Career Development Association Australia (CDA) 2022: Navigating Life's Career Transitions: Essential Support and Services p43*

Bridget Hogg PCDA. Development at Work Australia: CDA Excellence in Practice Award 2020

Development at Work Australia received a Federal Government grant in 2019 to help 350 South Australian job seekers aged 50+ to find work. The Next Steps program targeted job seekers at risk of being on benefits long-term, with many referred by a Disability Employment Service Provider. More than a simple employment program, Next Steps provided a full set of services for rethinking career, professional and personal goals.

The Next Steps program consisted of 12 workshops (each run in 3 locations) and approximately 8 individual coaching sessions for the participants.

Participants needed help with deciding what jobs to apply for, improving confidence and hope, improving resumes and interview skills, and overcoming limiting beliefs. By teaching employment skills and techniques as well as fostering resilience, optimism, confidence and hope, participants not only gained improvements in their knowledge, skills and job search behaviour, they were also motivated, and inspired to see themselves as employable.

Staying on government benefits long-term carries significant cost to taxpayers. The government calculated that if just 2% (N = 7) of the proposed 350 job seekers assisted found work and stayed off benefits, then the program would more than pay for itself. So far 172 participants have found work (more than 20 times the number costed to create an economic benefit).

Career Development Practitioners' support to participants included providing:

- guidance on tailoring resumes and assistance with applying for jobs
- knowledge about how to find hidden jobs, applying for jobs online, and targeting organisations
- networking events at which participants met employers
- connections to organisations and individuals to freely support their entrepreneurship aspirations
- help with assessing their business readiness and building a sustainable small business
- help with seeing new things, seeing things in more effective ways and creating thought patterns and beliefs that support them to create their future
- a team of coaches, counsellors, peer mentors and digital literacy mentors to listen to their needs and support them

## **5. Supporting better outcomes – professional career guidance for all New Zealanders**

*NZ Tertiary Education Commission. (2021). Insights Report. <https://www.tec.govt.nz/assets/Reports/TEC-Insights-Report-Oct-2021.pdf>*

New Zealand's Direct Career Service (DCS) was initiated in 2020 as a response to COVID-19, to support those who lost jobs. Career Development Professionals (CDPs) who are members of the Career Development Association of New Zealand (CDANZ) deliver this service. They were specifically chosen to ensure a high level of competence, quality and customer service.

The evaluation report provides evidence of effectiveness-supporting factors. Survey data and qualitative feedback shows that New Zealanders received the knowledge, skills and confidence to take the next step in their work and learning journey. This was particularly true for New Zealanders:

- whose work and learning trajectory have been disrupted or thrown a curve ball
- feeling without direction or hope
- struggling with finding their next step
- searching for a change in their work or learning
- planning their future and looking for specific work and learning opportunities

A key finding in the report is that interventions led by Career Development Professionals resulted in considerable change for clients, with three main categories of impact:

- guided, strength-based conversations get to the heart of the matter
- building job-seeking knowledge and skills supports self-management
- motivation and confidence are key to moving forward and taking the next steps

Clients stated the real value for them lay in the relationship-based approach to identifying their work and learning pathways from this information. The report concludes that:

- Given the CDPs' skill level and experience, this was not a protracted process, but targeted, focused and cost-effective

## **6. UK Labour plans to embed careers advisors in health services**

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jan/11/labour-plans-to-embed-career-advisers-in-health-services-to-help-people-into-work>

According to a report in the Guardian, UK Labour will put health and wellbeing at the heart of its employment strategy by embedding qualified career advisers in health services, including addiction clinics, rehab centres and primary care.

The new employment services will be located within existing mental health, addiction services or charities, away from job centres, and involving specialists trained to support people with complex needs. There will be a particular drive to help young people into work who were suffering with anxiety, depression and stress.

## **7. OECD recommends Career Guidance support for mid-career adults who are unemployed in Australia**

*OECD Publishing Paris (2022): Strengthening Career Guidance for Mid-Career Adults in Australia, Getting Skills Right*

**Recommendation 3.5:** Scale up publicly provided career guidance programmes to support mid-career adults who are unemployed or out of the labour force.

For the most part, Australia's federally funded employment services provide job matching support and not career guidance. Any career guidance programmes are offered on a small scale, and do not have to be delivered by professional Career Development Practitioners. Rather, they tend to be offered through employment services by counsellors without specialised training in career guidance.

Career guidance can help unemployed mid-career adults find sustainable work. It encourages them to reflect on their skills and career aspirations, to identify relevant job opportunities and to find training opportunities in case of skills gaps. Adults with more complex barriers to employment can receive tailored support to overcome these barriers, thus avoiding long-term unemployment or a succession of poorly fitting jobs and subsequent unemployment spells.

## **8. State Government career advice services providing qualified career advice**

The Victorian and New South Wales governments are providing career advice services to their citizens as part of their workforce development strategies. The services, *Jobs Victoria* and *Careers NSW*, are available to all residents including both employed and unemployed. Both services provide a component of one-on-one career advice, either face to face or online. Recognising the importance and value of "getting it right", both State services stipulate that the advice is provided by qualified Career Development Practitioners with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience.

Similarly in State Departments of Education, after many reviews and recommendations, it is becoming increasingly common for it to be mandated that career advice in schools is provided by qualified Career Development Practitioners with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and experience.

## **Contact details**

For further information or clarification, please contact CDAA CEO Peter Mansfield, 0422 099 781 or [peter.mansfield@cdaa.org.au](mailto:peter.mansfield@cdaa.org.au)