

University Dropout Rates Due to Overemphasis on Higher Education

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The increasing dropout rates of first-year university students quoted in *The Age* today, is in part due to the overemphasis of higher education as a pathway plan.

The Age wrote that the national dropout rate for first year students has peaked at 21 per cent, the highest in more than a decade.

Career Development Association of Australia spokesperson Rebecca Fraser said these numbers could be attributed to a combination of the aggressive selling techniques of private universities and schools aiming for maximum enrolments in university.

“CDA recognises this is a complex issue, but part of the solution is definitely improved career support for pathway identification,” Ms Fraser said.

“While it is important for universities to market their courses, it is imperative that pathway guidance is offered by qualified professionals at the same time.”

According to Ms Fraser, Australia currently has an educational system where school teachers are often forced to provide career support on top of their full teaching loads.

“Qualified career practitioners however, can provide individualistic advice based on assessment tools to determine skills and interest and labour market information to identify future career options,” she said.

Ms Fraser said this overemphasis placed on university is also contributing to the skills shortages in the vocational sector.

“If we only push for people to enrol in university, the VET sector loses out on students who would possibly flourish in their courses,” Ms Fraser said.

Ms Fraser said growing life-pressures is another reason for increased university dropouts across Australia.

Swinburne has highest dropout rate for first-year Victorian university students, The Age, September 8, 2016, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/swinburne-university-tops-dropout-rate-for-firstyear-victorian-university-students-20160908-grbgex.html>

The Career Development Association of Australia (CDA) commenced as the Australian Association of Career Counsellors in 1989, and is Australia’s largest cross-sectoral association of career development professionals working in a diverse range of roles, delivering services in industry, government, education, employment programs and community organisations. The primary purpose of the CDA is to support its members by leading, building and growing the career development profession.

Georgia Kelly-Bakker, Communication & Events Officer CDA

Phone: 08 82116961 | 0415619180

Email: communications@cdaa.org.au