



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Inquiry into Combining School
and Work: Supporting Successful
Youth Transitions**

ACCI SUBMISSION

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ACCI – LEADING AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS

ACCI has been the peak council of Australian business associations for 105 years and traces its heritage back to Australia's first chamber of commerce in 1826.

Our motto is "Leading Australian Business."

We are also the ongoing amalgamation of the nation's leading federal business organisations - Australian Chamber of Commerce, the Associated Chamber of Manufactures of Australia, the Australian Council of Employers Federations and the Confederation of Australian Industry.

Membership of ACCI is made up of the State and Territory Chambers of Commerce and Industry together with the major national industry associations.

Through our membership, ACCI represents over 350,000 businesses nationwide, including over 280,000 enterprises employing less than 20 people, over 55,000 enterprises employing between 20-100 people and the top 100 companies.

Our employer network employs over 4 million people which makes ACCI the largest and most representative business organisation in Australia.

Our Activities

ACCI takes a leading role in representing the views of Australian business to Government.

Our objective is to ensure that the voice of Australian businesses is heard, whether they are one of the top 100 Australian companies or a small sole trader.

Our specific activities include:

- Representation and advocacy to Governments, parliaments, tribunals and policy makers both domestically and internationally.
- Business representation on a range of statutory and business boards, committees and other fora.
- Representing business in national and international fora including the Australian Fair Pay Commission, Australian Industrial Relations Commission, Australian Safety and Compensation Council, International Labour Organisation, International Organisation of Employers,

International Chamber of Commerce, the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Confederation of Asia-Pacific Employers.

- Research and policy development on issues concerning Australian business.
- The publication of leading business surveys and other information products.
- Providing forums for collective discussion amongst businesses on matters of law and policy affecting commerce and industry.

Publications

A range of publications are available from ACCI, with details of our activities and policies including:

- The ACCI Policy Review; a analysis of major policy issues affecting the Australian economy and business.
- Issue papers commenting on business' views of contemporary policy issues.
- Policies of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry – the annual bound compendium of ACCI's policy platforms.
- The Westpac-ACCI Survey of Industrial Trends - the longest, continuous running private sector survey in Australia. A leading barometer of economic activity and the most important survey of manufacturing industry in Australia.
- The ACCI Survey of Investor Confidence – which gives an analysis of the direction of investment by business in Australia.
- The Commonwealth-ACCI Business Expectations Survey - which aggregates individual surveys by ACCI member organisations and covers firms of all sizes in all States and Territories.
- The ACCI Small Business Survey – which is a survey of small business derived from the Business Expectations Survey data.
- Workplace relations reports and discussion papers, including the ACCI Modern Workplace: Modern Future 2002-2010 Policy Blueprint and the Functioning Federalism and the Case for a National Workplace Relations System and The Economic Case for Workplace Relations Reform Position Papers.
- Occupational health and safety guides and updates, including the National OHS Strategy and the Modern Workplace: Safer Workplace Policy Blueprint.

- Trade reports and discussion papers including the Riding the Chinese Dragon: Opportunities and Challenges for Australia and the World Position Paper.
- Education and training reports and discussion papers.
- The ACCI Annual Report providing a summary of major activities and achievements for the previous year.
- The ACCI Taxation Reform Blueprint: A Strategy for the Australian Taxation System 2004–2014.
- The ACCI Manufacturing Sector Position Paper: The Future of Australia's Manufacturing Sector: A Blueprint for Success.

Most of this information, as well as ACCI media releases, parliamentary submissions and reports, is available on our website – www.acci.asn.au

Introduction

1. Australian industry needs a skilled, flexible and motivated workforce that further contributes to economic growth. Successful transitions from school to the world of work and beyond are of critical importance for Australia's youth and society in general. An understanding of the rigours of the workplace through combining education activities with employment whilst at school will actively contribute towards achieving successful school to work transitions for many young people.
2. The pathways undertaken by youth as they move between education and work are diverse and individualised. The passage from secondary school to employment is no longer a continuous trajectory. Many students seek part time or casual work while studying and move readily between school or higher education and the workplace.
3. The jobs they seek may or may not be related to their future career aspirations or their course of study, but nonetheless, this employment plays valuable role in providing the study with skills and knowledge that will assist in transitions into full time work upon the completion of their studies.
4. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research report, *School students' learning from their paid and unpaid work*¹, examined the extent and nature of the way in which Year 10, 11 and 12 school students experience the workplace. Some key findings from the report included:
 - the major reason for seeking work was for extra spending money, although around ten per cent needed the money to help support themselves or their families. Around 20 per cent sought work mainly to get experience
 - student jobs differed from the general workforce in two major respects: they were more likely to be casual, and they were concentrated in two industries (fast food and retail)
 - students worked on average 8.5 hours a week and generally found little difficulty in fitting in their school work around their jobs
5. Some valuable lessons learned from the Australian Technical Colleges and Australian School Based Apprenticeships show that employment participation plays an important role in providing opportunities for students to apply their learning in a work environment providing real life validation of acquired skills and knowledge in their workplace.

¹ Annette Green, Erica Smith, 2001, *School students' learning from their paid and unpaid work*, NCVER, Adelaide.

6. As a result, the skills acquired by students will be directly relevant to the needs of the local industry. This will enhance the prospect of young people remaining in the region and give them the opportunity for further training and employment. This in turn supports the long-term prosperity of each of the regions in which the Colleges are located and, of course, assists Australian businesses to remain competitive in a global economy.
7. In the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth Research report, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, (ACER, 2003)² found that for students whose future is in the workforce rather than in tertiary study, participation in part-time work has some positive benefits:
 - There is a 65 per cent increase in the odds that a young person will gain an apprenticeship or traineeship, rather than be unemployed, if that young person worked in a part-time job during high school; and
 - There is a 46 per cent increase in the odds that a young person will be in full-time employment, rather than unemployed, if that young person worked in a part-time job during high school.
8. Student participation in employment can be seen as a valuable learning experience that gives students essential employability skills along with the ability to balance multiple constraints on their time.
9. Successful transitions from school to the world of work and beyond are of critical importance for Australia's youth and society in general. NCVET research shows that part time and casual employment have a particularly positive effect on the transition to successful post-school activities for school leavers. There are very few people in Australia who will not participate in paid or unpaid work at some point in their lives, an understanding of the world of work and access to quality education that recognises the contribution that employment can make to an educational outcome contributes strongly towards achieving successful transitions. Beyond the development of employability skills, the wider value to the student participation in a structured social environment is very real. As are the benefits, to society from a transition from school to work through learning and employment participation.

Providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part time or casual work

10. The range of skills developed by students engaged in part time or casual work will be as varied as the range of jobs in which they are employed.

² John Hinkley, Stephen and Lamb Margaret Vickers, 2003, *Student Workers in High School and Beyond: The effects of part-time employment on participation in education, training and work*, ACER, Camberwell, Victoria.

The skills they develop may be specific to their workplace, specific across their industry or generic employability skills.

11. In 2002, ACCI and BCA produced the *Employability Skills for the Future* paper for the Department of Education, Science and Training. The papers outlined the required skills and knowledge that Australian industry regarded as an essential foundation for all employees. The skills represent the transportable “soft skills’ that underpin the technical skills that enable an employee to perform effectively in the workplace. The paper outlined eight key employability skills:

- Communication;
- Teamwork;
- Problem Solving;
- Initiative and Enterprise;
- Problem Solving;
- Self Management;
- Learning; and
- Technology.

12. Students that are engaged in part time or casual work will be developing these skills explicitly through the on-the-job training they receive or implicitly through their work practices. NCVET research has indicated that 70% of students who work are employed in the hospitality or retail industries³.

13. Students employed within these industries would be expected to develop a suite of employability skills that are focussed on customer service, for example, a student employed in the retail sector in a large department store would essentially develop strong communication skills from dealing with staff’ management and customers; strong teamwork skills from working with other staff members; self management skills in organising their rosters around their school and other commitments; technology skills from using store inventory management systems or checkout equipment as well as some problem solving skills, learning and initiative and enterprise skills. These skills will often be developed informally over an extended period of time but can be easily tracked and recorded by both the school and the student’s workplace.

14. Students will also develop technical skills in the workplace. Many of these skills will be transferrable within the specific industry of employment or across a breath of industries. Students can also develop specific technical skills pertaining to operations explicit to their workplace for example,

³ Green & Smith, NCVET 2001

operating a specific type of machinery or using specific types of IT equipment; these skills may not be transferrable to other employers or be relevant to the learning environment.

15. Some employers may also offer formal training to employees such as short courses for example first aid or forklift operations, VET qualifications or traineeships. In these cases the learning can often be directly tracked and recorded by the employer and can contribute directly to an educational outcome.
16. The Commonwealth Government, in the lead up to the November 2007 federal election, proposed to introduce a Job Ready Certificate recording and reporting on the Employability Skills gained through training for secondary schools students who undertake Vocational Education and Training competencies as part of their schooling.
17. The development of a Student Portfolio or Skills Passport that can be used to record activities in the workplace would enable schools to record activities undertaken in the workplace and map them against the subjects undertaken at school.
18. The use of a credit matrix to track and map technical skills gained through employment could be used to transfer technical skills and knowledge across to applicable subject areas of the student; e.g. if a student works in retail and is doing subject that include assessment of communication skills or IT use, the skills obtained in the workplace could be applied to a credit matrix that gives a weighting to the developed skills and contributes to the overall outcome.

Identifying more flexible, innovative and/or alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which support students to combine work and study

19. The time commitment for secondary schooling is usually regarded by students, teachers and the broader community as six hours a day for five days a week. The modern workplace, through necessity has moved away from the traditional 9am to 5pm, 38 hour week model to accommodate those who have different needs and constraints on the time. Some schools are currently offering alternative schooling hours, e.g., increasing the school hrs from 9am – 5pm and requiring students to attend only 4 days a week thus giving them one day to devote to employment opportunities.
20. Education is no longer viewed as being bound to the bricks and mortar of our learning institutions. Learning can occur in a multitude of settings, from a range of differing media and from a variety of differing people, including teachers, trainers, parents, employers, coaches and peers.
21. South Australia has recently announced changes to its higher schooling model to allow greater flexibility for students to undertake different

- subjects, participate in different learning activities and combine school and work to provide a more holistic educational outcome.
22. The new South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) is to be progressively introduced from year 10 in 2009. The SACE is designed so that students can develop their skills both within and outside of school through school, in Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and other VET studies, University studies, internet courses, community learning and work experiences and other roles such as being a caregiver or participants in community service organisations.
 23. The SACE has moved away from the traditional two year senior certificate model to a credit point model where the student gains points for activities undertaken. To gain the new SACE certificate, students must earn 200 credit points. Some elements of the SACE are compulsory. These are:
 - A personal learning plan that includes career exploration, development, planning, work placements, industry visits, etc
 - Literacy and numeracy courses,
 - A external research project of the students choice,
 - Completion of standard school subjects and courses, all subjects will include employability skills.
 24. All States and Territories have developed educational models that recognise the multifaceted inputs to the educational process that participation in the community of the workforce can bring. The Western Australian Curriculum Council allows up to 50% of Endorsed Courses or programs to contribute to the Western Australian Certificate of Secondary Education. Schools may work in partnership with other providers to deliver courses, VET or other programs, but retain the responsibility for managing programs, reporting achievement to the Curriculum Council and maintaining a record of learning for all students.
 25. The Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) offers a high degree of flexibility in the delivery of educational components as well as the learning location. Students have a wide range of learning options; these can include senior school subjects, vocational education and training, workplace and community learning, as well as university subject's undertaken while at school.
 26. As a new national curriculum is being developed, it is essential to also consider the teaching and learning structures in which it will be delivered. Flexible learning options that recognise the value of employment and community activities as contributors towards educational outcomes will ensure that students have access to a holistic educational experience that

provides skills and knowledge that will assist them in all areas of their future lives.

Support that may be required to assist young people combining work and study to stay engaged in their learning, especially where work and study intersects with income support

27. The task of balancing educational commitments, work commitments, extracurricular activities such as sports and social activities can be difficult for some students and their parents. Some students may need the support of a peer to enable them to successfully complete their studies and transition into higher education, VET or work.
28. One approach could be encouraging schools to engage with industry to develop mentor programs that would give students access to a recently completed university graduate or completed apprentice that has experience the same competing demands and constraints on time faced by the students could assist in providing advice and support for the students and increase the likelihood of a successful educational outcome.
29. Schools are both microcosms and hubs of local communities and the springboard for educating the future workforce. Schools' engaging with business is an immediate and effective way for businesses to contribute to their future viability by taking a proactive role in building skills for the future, as well as gaining community legitimacy. Partnerships provide an ideal mechanism, enabling businesses to have direct input and control over the process and outcomes. In essence, school-business partnerships are solid business-community investments.
30. Business and industry have successfully developed such partnerships with schools and training providers at a local level. Considerable success is often achieved in mentoring programs that target socially and educationally disadvantaged students and partnering them with business or community leaders.
31. The nature of part time and casual employment often means that the employee may work a variety of hours over consecutive weeks, being over the threshold for income support one week, under it the next. Students will often work increased hours during peak holiday times such as Christmas and Easter but only receive a few hours a week during the slower months of the year. Income support for students must be flexible enough to allow students to accommodate for shortfalls in earnings over the yearly cycle and ensure a regular income stream that allows for the peaks and troughs of earnings that characterise casual and part time employment.

The potential impact on educational attainment (including the prospects for post-compulsory qualifications and workforce productivity)

32. Completing high school is an important milestone in an individual's life. Obtaining a high school certificate is likely to influence a youth's future pathways since it is generally considered to be a minimal requirement for access to the labour market. Students who have engaged with the workforce before the completion of their studies will approach post school employment with realistic expectation of the rigours of the workplace as well as well developed and defined technical and employability skills.
33. Research from the NCVET paper *School students' learning from their paid and unpaid work*⁴ examined the responses of students as to how hard they found it to fit time in for schoolwork as well as their job. Most students (62.2 per cent) said they did not find it hard, 28.4 per cent said it was quite hard, and 9.3 per cent said it was very hard.
34. Research into the impact of part time and casual employment amongst students on their retention rates in higher education is not definitive. LSAY Research has shown that statistically, participation in part-time work does increase the odds of dropping out of tertiary study
35. Working 20 hours per week or more increases the odds of dropping out of tertiary study, compared with those who do not work at all;
36. For those in University study, working 20 hours per week or more increases the odds of dropping out by 160 to 200 per cent, compared with those who do not work.
37. But the research also suggests that students not in the workforce and receiving Youth Allowance are more likely to drop out of Tertiary Study than those who do not receive Youth Allowance. This would seem to indicate that the employment status of the student has little to do with the dropout rate from tertiary studies.
38. There is insufficient research into the educational and employment pathways of Australian students and the impact that engagement in part time work, community activities, voluntary work and sports may have on the quality of the educational outcome. Further studies, possibly as part of the LSAY research, need to be undertaken to examine student pathways and the impact of employment whilst students are still at school.

⁴ Green & Smith, NCVET 2001

The effectiveness of school-based training pathways and their impact on successful transitions, including opportunities for improvement (particularly in relation to pathways to employment for disadvantaged young people).

39. Successful transitions from school to the world of work and beyond are of critical importance for Australia's youth and society in general. NCVER research shows that School VET programs have a particularly positive effect on the transition to successful post-school activities for early school leavers. An understanding of the rigours of the workplace through access to quality vocationally specific education and training whilst at school will actively contribute towards achieving successful school to work transitions for young people.
40. Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) has been successfully integrated into the senior schools program across all states and territories. Both schools and business and industry in Australia recognise the value of VETiS in delivering vocationally specific training to students and exposing them to the world of work. Most students who participate in VETiS programs make successful transitions from school to higher education or to the workforce.

Conclusion

41. To further foster productivity and economic growth, Australian industry needs a skilled, flexible and motivated workforce. A secondary school system that actively contributes to the provision of job ready school leavers through the provision of vocationally specific technical skills and underpinning employability skills is essential in meeting the workforce requirements of Australian industry. The development of skills within an industry context provides valuable experience for students as they transition from education into the workforce. It is also of real benefit to the students concerned and to the broader community.

ACCI Recommends

1. The development of a Student Portfolio or Skills Passport that can be used to record activities in the workplace to enable schools to record activities undertaken in the workplace and map them against the subjects undertaken at school.
2. The integration of flexible learning options that recognise the value of employment and community activities as contributors towards achievement of a secondary school leaving certificate or Australian Certificate of Education.
3. That schools develop mentor programs that would give students access to a recently completed university graduate or recently qualified tradesperson who has experience of the same competing demands and constraints on time faced by the students and who could assist in providing advice and support for the students and increase the likelihood of a successful educational outcome.
4. That income support for students must be flexible enough to allow students to accommodate for shortfalls in earnings over the yearly cycle and ensure a regular income stream that allows for the peaks and troughs of earnings that characterise casual and part time employment.
5. That further studies, possibly as part of the LSAY research, be undertaken to examine student pathways and the impact of employment whilst students are still at school.

ACCI MEMBERS

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