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Submission on behalf of Career Education Association of Victoria to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training's *Inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions.*

Submitted by CEAV Director, Ms Bernadette Gigliotti on behalf of the association.

The Career Education Association of Victoria is a not for profit association that represents school-based careers practitioners and related professionals. It is a member of the Career Industry Council of Australia Victorian Council (CICA). Our membership is currently approximately 650. This includes school staff involved the delivery of careers and pathways advice, specifically in Victoria, and agencies that support their work, including LCPs and tertiary institutions. The prime role of the association is to support the professional development of members. This occurs via workshops and seminars, conferences, special projects, email information distribution, phone and email advice, a journal and other activities and publications.

The CEAV recognizes that young people have been combining school and part-time or casual work for many years. Members have expressed both support and concerns for the students undertaking this dual pathway.

The Victorian education system offers a number of opportunities for students to link their school qualifications and part-time or casual work. The VCAL program does provide for the recognition of skills gained in their part-time or casual work. The flexible nature of the program allows the space for students to include their part-time or casual work in their daily timetable rather than as an additional obligation. While a number of students take this opportunity the sectors in which young people find part-time or casual employment are often not in their future pathway area; this leads to the work becoming the add-on, despite the employability skills they may be gaining. Despite this the VCAL certificate is gaining support across the education sectors and initial data is demonstrating some success in encouraging young people to complete Year 12 or its equivalent.

School-based apprenticeships in the retail and fast food industry, the most common employment areas, have been available to students in Years 10 to 12 and they have been able to contribute their on-the-job training to both their VCE and VCAL certificate. While this has had benefits for some students the contribution to the VCE has not been integrated within any of the subjects they study and is a stand alone contribution. This disconnect with their academic program and often with their chosen pathway means that it has not been highly valued by the school community. There has also been issues around the nature of the relationship of the school and the employer or company in terms of notification of completion of formal training, cessation of employment and other areas of concern including, duty of care.

The experiences of our members in assisting young people to plan and manage their career pathway reflects that successful completion of Year 12 or its equivalent has been enhanced when there is either a definite link between their school program and the young person's future plans. For young people who do not have these links, it becomes vital that they can manage the education and workplace demands. For those who are experiencing difficulties at school these challenges can increase the decision to leave



school early, particularly if significant hours are being worked. The LSAY Research Report Number 2 *School Students and Part-time Work* suggests that there is some evidence to support this view.

Also, our members have some significant concern at the low completion rates students in regional and remote regions experience. For these young people there are often limitations on being able to participate in part-time or casual work which can or could contribute to their post-compulsory qualification and the variety of part-time and casual work available.

The quality and strength of the partnership between the school and the employer is important to the success of providing opportunities for young people. The provision of sufficient time and resources to develop and maintain these relationships both for employers and schools is vital to produce positive outcomes. Also, there is a need to ensure that school based staff have the knowledge and skills to support young people in planning to achieve their future pathways, particularly how to take advantage of opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills for employment and further education and training. Students engaged in part-time or casual work is not the only factor that strengthens the desire for young people to complete their education, extensive research suggests that the school climate, teacher student relationships, parental expectations and life experiences maybe stronger contributors than involvement in a workplace. The ability for students to use this experience as part of their qualification has merit, but it needs to be integral to the senior school qualification and it must have a link to the pathway plans of the young person. The relationship between the school and the workplace needs to be strong and well supported by both parties.