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# Input into Co-Design of the National Careers Institute

November 2019



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Chamber of Commerce  
and Industry

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## Executive Summary

The National Careers Institute is a welcome initiative. An effective and coordinated national approach to careers development will more effectively serve students and job seekers with better information and advice throughout their life. A well-informed careers market will also improve the chances of skill needs being met, and that the investment made in education and training is more effective.

ACCI sees one of the key opportunities of the National Careers Institute would be to create a 'clearance house' where information is deposited, exchanged and accessed (essentially a wholesale shop for careers advisers) between industry and career practitioners and other key stakeholders such as schools. Particularly within a federated environment, maintaining direct links between industry, schools, careers advisers, employment services and other key sources of career information is practically impossible without some platform for exchange..

In establishing the National Careers Institute, it is also useful to clearly delineate its role at the outset, commencing with ensuring that the definition of career is succinct in a way that focuses on work and learning. The NCI then needs to operate with proper advice, particularly from industry, and within a structure that connects it to its key stakeholders including all governments, industry, schools and career sector stakeholders.

This submission provides the following recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1: Define Career and Career Development more succinctly**

Simplify the definition of career and career development to focus on a lifelong concept that involves work and learning and ensure that the National Careers Institute does not stray from this focus.

### **Recommendation 2: Create a Careers Clearance House to facilitate information sharing**

As part the overall goal of improving the Commonwealth's digital careers platform, the National Careers Institute should develop a clearance house, which will provide an opportunity for those that have careers related information, such as industry bodies, to reach those career stakeholders who would find that information beneficial.

**Recommendation 3: Promotion of Vocational Education and Training should embrace all relevant occupations not just traditional trades**

In marketing and raising the status of Vocational Education and Training (VET), it is important that all relevant pathways and occupations are embraced to reflect the diversity of occupations and industries that VET serves.

**Recommendation 4: NCI should promote continuous professional development**

Given the importance of lifelong learning to Australia's economic future, one of the roles of the NCI should be to promote continuous professional development.

**Recommendation 5: The National Careers Institute should report to the National Skills Commission, which in turn should report to the COAG Skills Council**

In recognition of the importance of coordinated action of all jurisdictions and industry on skills and career development, the National Careers Institute should report to the National Skills Commission, which in turn should report to the COAG Skills Council.

**Recommendation 6: An Advisory Committee to the National Careers Institute should be established.**

At least for the implementation phase, the National Careers Institute should be assisted by an advisory committee comprising of state/territory representatives, industry, school sector and career peaks.

**Recommendation 7: Rename the National Careers Institute as National Careers Bureau**

To better align the name of the organisation with its purpose, the National Careers Institute would more appropriately be named as the National Careers Bureau.

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# 1 Introduction

Achieving national leadership in careers development has been an important policy goal of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Australian Chamber) for many years. We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the establishment of the National Careers Institute (NCI), an initiative we welcome, recognising the ability for the NCI to provide national leadership and effective action in the important area of creating an informed careers market. Improved careers information and advice will result in better job matching and a more efficient and effective spend on education and training.

## 2 What is a career?

Before consideration of the NCI and its purpose, it is useful to discuss basic terminology that is critical in helping define its role.

The background paper and consultation sessions have included concerning definitions of a career and a job, and have drawn a distinction between a 'career' and a 'job'. These may lead to an inappropriate focus for the NCI.

The key concerns are:

- Setting up an unnecessary distinction between a job and a career<sup>1</sup>. It is not necessary to do so. A job, or series of jobs, form part of a career. People seeking advice about a job they are considering are absolutely tapping into career development support.
- Defining a job as 'work a person does to earn money' implies that a 'job' is inferior to a career. Common usage of the term job is very much inclusive of people who describe their job in positive ways that go beyond the earning of money.
- Defining a career as a "lifestyle concept that involves work, learning and leisure activities across the lifespan and inclusive of paid and unpaid work, and personal life roles" is far too broad and potentially could detract from the focus of the NCI. Although sport and other personal activities can improve employability skills and expand networks that can be beneficial for a career, participants would not seek career advice on their leisure activities and personal life as ends in themselves. If career advice in these areas is given, it is with the perspective that such things may enhance their opportunities for current and future paid work.
- the suggested term of 'careeree', or worse still, 'pre-careeree'. These are made-up terms that are unnecessary. Stick to participant or career seeker, or people.
- The definition of Career Development used in the paper is too broad – "the process of managing life, learning, work, leisure and transitions across the lifespan in order to move towards a personally determined future". This would describe a life coach or a personal mentor and is far too broad to be focusing on careers and work.

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<sup>1</sup> NCI Background paper (page 7) "The Institute is drawing on several definitions to distinguish a 'job' from a 'career'."

The definition of career should be much simpler, closer to everyday usage, embrace jobs and not create false distinctions. The Oxford Learner Dictionary defines the term as “the series of jobs that a person has in a particular area of work, usually involving more responsibility as time passes”. This is a useful starting point. Alternatively, the CICA definition could be simplified to focus on work, eg. “A lifelong concept that involves work and learning. Careers are dynamic and unique.”

In the 2017 Career Education Strategy discussions, the definition of Career Education was agreed amongst stakeholders as being:

*The development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences in education and training settings which will assist students to make informed decisions about their study and/or work options and enable effective participation in working life.<sup>2</sup>*

Setting aside the focus on school students, and noting that career education is a subset of career development, the phrase of providing assistance to make informed decisions about study and/or work options and enable effective participation in working life is a useful one. The language used on the Career Development Association of Australia site is also relevant:

*Work-related needs and preferences evolve and change continuously throughout life. At the same time, the world of work is continuously evolving and adapting to economic, political and social changes.*

*Career development focuses on enabling people to understand and develop their skills and preferences to manage these challenges, make good decisions about their working lives, and maximise their contribution to the communities in which they live and work.<sup>3</sup>*

Although it still includes decisions about “life”, the definition of career development in the 2012 National Strategy provides more focus than the one used in the 2019 paper:

*Career development describes the ongoing process of a person managing their life, learning and work over their lifespan. It involves developing the skills and knowledge that enable individuals to plan and make informed decisions about education, training and career choices.*

The important ingredients in these alternatives is that they focus on the development of skills and knowledge that help people make decisions about work and learning. This is an important starting point for any discussion about the role of the NCI.

### **Recommendation 1: Define Career and Career Development more succinctly**

Simplify the definition of career and career development to focus on a lifelong concept that involves work and learning and ensure that the NCI does not stray from this focus.

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<sup>2</sup> Dept of Education and Training, NCES Working Group (2017) *Improving career education for school students in Australia: initial advice and recommendations for Australian Government consideration*, 8 November 2017 quoted from *Preparing Secondary Students for Work*

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdaa.org.au/about-career-development>

## 3 Aim and Goals of a Career Development System

The NCI will hold a leadership position in a career development system which has the career seeker at the centre, interacting with influencers such as parents and friends, as well as other key parts of the system including schools, tertiary education providers, careers advisors, employment services, industry bodies and employers.

In the co-design workshop for the NCI, participants were encouraged to identify an aim of the Career Development system and what its key goals would be. Our suggested aim for a properly functioning career development system would be:

To create a well-informed career market that enables participants throughout their life to engage, identify options and confidently choose a career path.

The goals for the system need to focus on three broad areas: informed market, supporting the participant and the careers sector. Three suggested goals that may achieve this are:

1. Provide and facilitate connections to reliable, updated labour market data and career information from a diverse range of sources.
2. Support the career sector to develop confident, resilient and capable career participants.
3. Build capacity and capability of the careers sector.

Experience in the workshop reviewing the draft career development “systems” diagram would indicate that, while it is important to identify all of the many parts of the system and how they connect, the benefits of attempting to map it in a true “systems diagram” may not outweigh the time and effort spent doing so. Therefore, we do not share the view that one of the early priorities of the NCI is to map the career development system.

## 4 Purpose and priorities of the NCI

The background paper states that the NCI has been “established to simplify and strengthen Australia’s career development system so Australians can get the career support they need.” In addition, the paper sets out the key issues for the NCI to address as outlined in the Joyce Review. The following represent those issues that the Australian Chamber recommend are the key priorities.

### 4.1 A more informed market

The Australian Chamber, given its long held policy of achieving a more informed career market, strongly supports a number of activities highlighted in the background paper including:

- Consolidating existing Commonwealth data, and improving linkages between administrative data sets;
- Providing accurate information on incomes flowing from different qualifications, using actual income data;



- Producing an improved suite of communications products about careers, the labour market and education and training in Australia;
- Aggregating existing data, information and resources to deliver an evidence-based coordinated careers system and more informed decision-making.

Careers information needs to embrace all industries, occupations and the pathways to access these jobs, regardless of education sector, thereby embracing careers development involving both VET and higher education pathways. That said, to correct an existing market bias, the Australian Chamber supports the NCI in its special brief to raise the profile and status of VET and the jobs that require a VET pathway.

This task of better informing the careers market needs to be performed in close cooperation with the National Skills Commission (NSC) given its intended role of labour market analysis and forecasting. The NCI will also need to work closely with State and Territory Governments as well as industry.

## 4.2 Digital platform

One of the immediate priorities identified in the background paper is the design and delivery of a digital platform. Although there is no doubt that the presentation of jobs information, labour market analysis and links to useful career information will be a critically important role for the NCI, whether this is a new digital platform or an adaptation of one of the plethora of Government owned, career-related website is an open question.

The first step will be to do an audit of all careers related digital sites that the Commonwealth owns, as well as a review of the useful (but unlikely to be exhaustive) list of key State government, industry or private sector owned sites. This initial review will help to clarify whether or not a new digital platform is required. Once this scan of the existing sites has been completed (including an evaluation of current usage and ease of navigation), a key role of the development or updating of the digital platform would be to provide effective links to useful sites. There are many good industry-managed careers sites and jobs boards which should be incorporated into the platform navigation so that the site can be increasingly promoted as a digital one-stop-shop for careers information.

A key consideration in reviewing the most appropriate path to develop or adapt a digital platform will be to consider how the approach will integrate with the updating of the employment services digital platform which is being developed within the same Department. Although it is understood that there has been some communication between the NCI and employment services teams, this needs to go much further. Already, with the employment services platform, important career assistance elements such as videos on interview techniques and CV writing guidance have been incorporated. There is a great opportunity with the integration of careers into the employment and skills portfolio for there to be a common platform that meets all of the needs, increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

In the same way that the NCI platform needs to be connected to industry information and advice, the employment services digital platform needs to connect to the existing jobs market to maximise the engagement of employers with the publicly funded employment services system. This further

reinforces the advantages that may arise if the two systems were being developed and updated as the one integrated system.

### 4.3 Clearance House

As a complement to, and potentially part of the digital platform, the Australian Chamber recommends that the NCI be tasked with setting up a “clearance house” of career related information where approved bodies such as industry organisations can deposit information in order for it to be available to career stakeholders such as schools, careers advisers and employment services. This could include industry research, upcoming industry job expos, advice on training pathways or local presentations that may be of interest to students and job seekers.

The clearance house should be appropriately curated so that it is presented in an accessible, logical way. It would:

- enable industry to communicate with career stakeholders and schools in a managed way that fills a gap created through the impracticality of each industry body having a database of career advisers
- encourage career practitioners and other stakeholders to register to receive and otherwise access information that is relevant to their needs, including that which relates to career activities in their region.

Although some of the information may be usefully posted in the public domain, the primary role of the clearance house is that it is a “wholesale” platform – information made available for others to use in the advice they provide, or the information they present to their target audience.

#### **Recommendation 2: Create a Careers Clearance House to facilitate information sharing**

As part the overall goal of improving the Commonwealth’s digital careers platform, NCI should develop a Clearance House which will provide an opportunity for those that have careers related information, such as industry bodies, to reach those career stakeholders who would find the information of benefit.

### 4.4 On-ground delivery

Although the most important value add of the NCI will be in the consolidation and enhancement of information and digital interfaces, one of the most important delivery methods for career development is face-to-face. The NCI digital platforms should aim to maximise the awareness of opportunities for participants to participate in face-to-face advice.

In addition, the NCI is encouraged to review the benefits delivered in the first decade of this century with Regional Industry Careers Advisers and National Industry Careers Advisors (RICAs and NICs). These were nationally funded direct industry interfaces that delivered on ground industry informed careers advice, as well as coordinated national approaches to career activities.

## 4.5 Promotion and the Careers Ambassador

The proposed role of the NCI to create awareness of education and career pathways, establish a navigation framework to help participants in their exploration of options and raise the status of VET is one of its most important functions.

The Australian Chamber notes the appointment of Scott Cam as the first Careers Ambassador. The public profile of this Ambassador is irrefutable and it is to be hoped that he will contribute most positively to the public perception of VET-related occupations. That said, it is important that in promoting VET pathways and connected careers that stereotypes VET as only about trades are not reinforced, and that the marketing reflects the diversity of occupations connected to VET. One way to achieve a balance in the message would be to appoint a second ambassador – not from the trades, but potentially from the service sector.

The background paper refers to an immediate priority of the NCI is that the Careers Ambassador promotes the work of the NCI. We do not see this as a priority as it is the promotion of VET and related occupations that is the priority. Once the digital platform has been developed, the promotion of it will also be a priority.

There is an opportunity with the NCI and an effective career development system to also promote lifelong learning, including continuous professional development within professions and occupations that encourage it. This is an important message worthy of reinforcement by NCI and other stakeholders as it will enhance productivity in the Australian economy and better ensure that the workforce remains agile to the demands of future workplaces.

### **Recommendation 3: Promotion of VET should embrace all relevant occupations not just traditional trades**

In marketing and raising the status of VET, it is important that all relevant pathways and occupations be embraced to reflect the diversity of occupations and industries that VET serves.

### **Recommendation 4: NCI should promote continuous professional development**

Given the importance of lifelong learning to Australia's economic future, one of the roles of the NCI should be to promote continuous professional development.

## 5 Governance and Structure

The critical importance of the NCI's connections with the National Skills Commission (NSC), Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, industry and career sector stakeholders suggests the need for the following:

- Subject to the final role and governance arrangements for the National Skills Commission, it is recommended that the NCI reports to the NCS. This presumes that the NSC will report to COAG and also have a skills analysis role that is broader than VET related occupations, and that it will have a strategic role in workforce development for the economy overall.
- That the NCI be supported by an advisory committee that at the very least should cover the implementation of the key deliverables. Membership of this committee should include State and Territory representatives, industry, school sector and peak career bodies.

Effective outcomes in career development can only be achieved if all jurisdictions and industry are at the same table. This reinforces the importance of NCI coming within the COAG orbit, and the vital role that the advisory committee will play in reinforcing the need for national leadership and coordinated action. A diagram of the recommended structure is at Appendix A.

### **Recommendation 5: The NCI should report to the National Skills Commission, which in turn should report to the COAG Skills Council**

In recognition of the importance of coordinated action of all jurisdictions and industry on skills and career development, the NCI should report to the NSC, which in turn should report to the COAG Skills Council.

### **Recommendation 6: An Advisory Committee to the NCI should be established**

At least for the implementation phase, the NCI should be assisted by an advisory committee comprising of state/territory representatives, industry, school sector and career peaks.

## 6 Connection with Skills Organisations

The final role and governance of the proposed Skills Organisations are as yet unclear, and may not be clear until well into the pilot arrangements. Given the proposed role of both the NCS and the NCI, it is highly likely that any new Skills Organisations that are established will play an important role in the network around the NCI. Skills Organisations will hopefully be an important source of industry intelligence on the future skill needs for their sector, and provide highly relevant advice on the careers available, pathways and opportunities.

## 7 National Careers Institute – is this the right name?

Although there are higher priority issues than the proposed name, the term “institute” does not seem entirely suitable to the role the body is intended to perform. To the layperson, the term most likely implies some bricks and mortar educational or accreditation purpose. There are three alternatives that may be worthy of consideration:

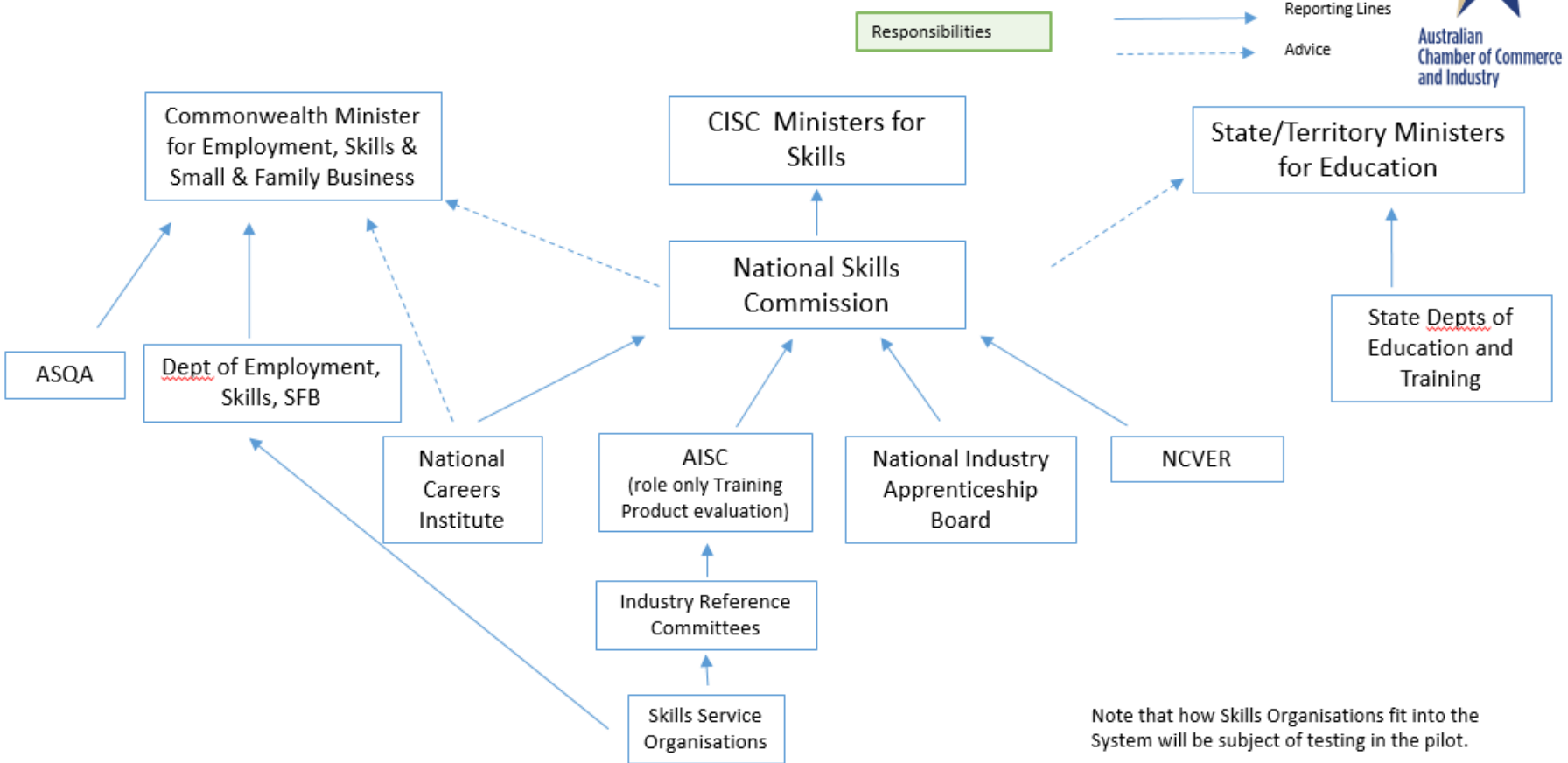
- National (or Australian) Careers Bureau: The term Bureau (think Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, or the ABS) implies a reliable source of information and evidence widely available to stakeholders and the general public. The term could comfortably fit regardless of whether the NCI is an independent body, or one that sits within a departmental or broader structure.
- National (or Australian) Careers Agency: The term agency more readily implies an independent body, but it also would sit comfortably with broader functions than information dissemination.
- National (or Australian) Careers Authority: Like the term agency, this term implies an independent body. It may be less suitable due to it often being used for a regulator.

We note that the background paper does not imply that the name of the initiative is “on the table”. However, in a true co-design process, the name of the organisation that will be at the heart of national career development strategy and activity is something that is worthy of reconsideration.

### **Recommendation 7: Rename the NCI as National Careers Bureau**

To better align the name of the organisation with its purpose, the National Careers Institute would more appropriately be named as the National Careers Bureau.

## Recommended Skills Government Entity Structure



## 8 About the Australian Chamber

The Australian Chamber represents hundreds of thousands of businesses in every state and territory and across all industries. Ranging from small and medium enterprises to the largest companies, our network employs millions of people.

The Australian Chamber strives to make Australia the best place in the world to do business – so that Australians have the jobs, living standards and opportunities to which they aspire.

We seek to create an environment in which businesspeople, employees and independent contractors can achieve their potential as part of a dynamic private sector. We encourage entrepreneurship and innovation to achieve prosperity, economic growth and jobs.

We focus on issues that impact on business, including economics, trade, workplace relations, work health and safety, and employment, education and training.

We advocate for Australian business in public debate and to policy decision-makers, including ministers, shadow ministers, other members of parliament, ministerial policy advisors, public servants, regulators and other national agencies. We represent Australian business in international forums.

We represent the broad interests of the private sector rather than individual clients or a narrow sectional interest.

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