

20 July 2017

Robert Little

Business
Council of
Australia



Inquiry into school to work transition

Dear Robert

Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Education and Employment's inquiry into school to work transition.

Improving the effectiveness of school to work transitions has been a longstanding priority for the Business Council. We have undertaken policy work that directly relates to the inquiry's second term of reference:

'Opportunities to better inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training, including use of employment outcomes of students who undertake school-based vocational education or post-school tertiary pathways.'

Specifically, the Business Council has developed a guide that defines what work readiness means from a business perspective. We have also advocated for an increase in the range and quality of market information available to support student choice about post-school qualifications and careers.

Further detail is outlined briefly below.

Tertiary education market information

The lack of market information is hampering student choice about post-school tertiary pathways.

The Business Council has repeatedly argued that insufficient market information is one of the biggest weaknesses of the national vocational education and training (VET) system.

The VET entitlement gives consumers full power to determine what type of training or which provider is likely to create the best post-school opportunities for them. However, the capacity of students to make good training decisions is dependent on them having access to a wide range of labour market information and course-level data.

The information currently available does not provide the detail or breadth of information required. Students are unable to get a true indication of the value of training or compare courses or providers on price, training quality and labour market outcomes.

This has limited the market power of the entitlement, and therefore the market power of the learner and business. It has also enabled poor-quality providers to flourish, which has threatened the reputation and viability of the VET sector as a whole.

Governments have a key role to play in improving the available market information. In the Business Council's 2017-18 budget submission, we recommended that as a condition of access to government funding, the government should require VET providers to publish

course-level data on price, training quality and labour market outcomes so there is clear and transparent market information across tertiary education.

As a starting point, we believe the following information should be published on the *My Skills* website.

1. Course-level market information
 - Funding information
 - Average length of time a course takes to complete
 - Careers the course leads to
 - Average graduate pay and longer-term potential earnings
 - Employment/unemployment rate and job vacancy rate by field
2. Course-level provider information
 - Course eligibility for VET Student Loans
 - Course duration
 - Delivery mode
 - Number of students in the course
 - Module completion rates
 - Course completion rates
 - Employment outcome rate for the course
 - Number of students at the provider
 - Provider's overall completion rate.

Being Work Ready guide

The work readiness of graduates entering the labour market has been an ongoing concern for our members. However, when the Business Council spoke with educational institutions, career counsellors and educators they indicated there was a lack of consensus about what 'work readiness' involves.

In response, the Business Council developed *Being Work Ready: A Guide to What Employers Want* (Attachment 1). The guide, which was developed by a working group of representatives from 12 member companies, has two components:

1. A table that outlines the minimum expectations a business has of an individual's work readiness when they apply for a job. These expectations are classified as values, behaviours or skills.
2. A table summarising the views of business about the responsibilities different groups – business, education system, family, government or individuals – have for developing work readiness values, behaviours and skills.

Being Work Ready was launched in May 2016. A copy was sent to every high school in Australia, career counsellor and school sector peak bodies. It was also sent to the Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers, with the objective of having the schools sector use it as a starting point for any discussions or programs aimed at preparing students for their transition into the labour market.

To complement the mail out and make the guide's content more accessible to a student audience, a new website was created for the guide (www.beingworkready.com.au).

The Business Council Secretariat has received a large amount of positive feedback on the guide, particularly from the schools and VET sectors.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer A. Westacott
Chief Executive

BEING

WORK READY

A GUIDE TO WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE AND HOW SHOULD IT BE USED?

The guide can be used in a variety of ways. It can be used by:

individuals to help them assess whether they are work ready
and to identify areas of weakness and areas of strength

.....

students who are looking to get a better understanding of employer
expectations and the types of values, behaviours and skills an employer
will want them to demonstrate in a job application, during a job
interview and on the job

.....

people who are returning to work after an extended period of leave and
would like to refresh their understanding of workplace expectations

.....

career counsellors, teachers and families to start a conversation
about 'work readiness'

.....

teachers and careers counsellors to help ensure they are teaching
the behaviours and skills required by business.

WHAT 'WORK READY' MEANS TO BUSINESS

Today, many employers are looking for potential employees to have more than a qualification. Many want them to have specific attributes before they will consider them suitable for a job. This guide defines what those attributes are.

WORK READINESS IS A MIXTURE OF THREE FACTORS



Values and behaviours can have different meanings to different people. The values and behaviours business are looking for in potential employees have been defined for a work setting.

The level of skill needed, particularly around literacy and numeracy will vary according to the skill level of the job. However, businesses have a minimum expectation of the values and behaviours an individual will bring to an organisation regardless of their age, previous work experience, or the job they are applying for. At the same time, employers also understand that an employee will learn on-the-job and build behaviours and skills over time with the help of training and development, and support from their supervisors.

THIS TABLE IS THE
MINIMUM EXPECTATION
BUSINESS HAS OF
AN INDIVIDUAL'S
WORK READINESS
WHEN THEY APPLY
FOR A JOB OR WILL
EXPECT AN INDIVIDUAL
TO DEVELOP AND
DEMONSTRATE SOON
AFTER THEY HAVE
STARTED THE JOB.



VALUES

Accountability ⇒ accepts responsibility for actions, and their impact on the business and others.

Continuous improvement ⇒ has high standards and consistently tries to improve own performance, and the performance of the business.

Honesty ⇒ straightforward behaviour with no deceit and cheating. Is trustworthy, fair and sincere.

Knowledge ⇒ develops understanding, skills, and expertise. Is committed to growth and learning.

Respect ⇒ takes into account other people's feelings, wishes, or rights.

Tolerance ⇒ willingness to recognise and respect difference and the beliefs, habits and practices of others.

Work ethic ⇒ diligent and committed to the business.

BEHAVIOURS

Adaptable ⇒ is open to new ideas and concepts, and pro-actively changes the way they work to stay effective in new work settings.

Authentic ⇒ is true to own personality and values, while still working within the business's expectations.

Business-minded ⇒ understands all employees are responsible for business success, and therefore looks for opportunities to make the business better.

Collaborative ⇒ shares knowledge and learning, works cooperatively with others, and works to build agreement to achieve an outcome for the business or client.

Customer focused ⇒ understands who the customer is, what their needs are, and actively works to improve their experience.

Flexible ⇒ effectively handles unexpected situations or last-minute changes.

Globally aware ⇒ has an awareness and understanding of global interactions and is open to working with other nationalities and cultures.

Self-aware ⇒ knows own strengths, talents and passions. Recognises areas for learning and development and learns from their mistakes. Has a good understanding of their role in the business.

Resilient ⇒ bounces back when things don't go as planned. Doesn't dwell on failures, learns from them or their own mistakes and moves forward.

SKILLS

Business literacy ⇒ ability to apply knowledge of the business environment and work processes/tasks to manage situations and achieve good outcomes.

Critical analysis ⇒ can evaluate a situation/proposal, identify possible outcomes, assess pros and cons, and determine the right approach based on desired outcome.

Data analysis ⇒ collect and review data to identify trends, answer questions and test assumptions.

Digital technology ⇒ ability to use information and communication technology.

Literacy ⇒ ability to learn, read, write and communicate verbally.

Numeracy ⇒ ability to reason and apply numerical concepts, and calculate numbers or amounts.

Problem solving ⇒ ability to find solutions to simple through to complex issues.

Technical skills ⇒ specific to the job and gained through formal education.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING PEOPLE ARE **WORK READY**?

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This table summarises the views of business about who is responsible for ensuring people are work ready and what the different responsibilities of each group are.

Work readiness applies to people starting a career, including young people transitioning from education into work; workers moving between organisations or industries; and people returning to work after extended time off.

Developing work readiness is a joint responsibility between the individual applying for work, their family, the education system, business and government. It is important, however, to have a common understanding and agreement about what role each group plays in developing work readiness. Ultimately, graduates have to take responsibility for ensuring they have the required values and that they have (or will soon) develop the behaviours and skills needed to be work ready.

It is acknowledged some individuals have families that will not teach or role model work values and behaviours. For this reason, it is crucial the other groups fulfil their responsibilities to ensure all young people have opportunities to be exposed to the required values and behaviours.

| PARTY | VALUES | BEHAVIOURS | SKILLS |
|--|--|---|--|
| Individuals | <p>Develop an understanding of the values business expects.</p> <p>Demonstrates to future employers how they meet the values.</p> | <p>Develop an understanding of the behaviours business expects.</p> <p>Demonstrates to future employers how they will behave in their organisation.</p> | <p>Develop the skills required through engagement in education and training.</p> <p>Gain work experience through part-time work while studying.</p> |
| Family | <p>Teach and role model values, including work values.</p> | <p>Teach and role model work behaviours.</p> | <p>Provide educational and work opportunities.</p> |
| Business | <p>Specify the required values.</p> <p>Educate new employees about how the values work in the business's setting.</p> <p>Provide feedback to new employees on how they are going, and if needed, provide support and/or training and development opportunities to build the required values.</p> | <p>Specify the required behaviours.</p> <p>Educate new employees about how the organisation expects the employees will demonstrate the behaviours.</p> <p>Provide feedback to new employees on how they are going, and if needed, provide support and/or training and development opportunities to build the required behaviours.</p> | <p>Specify the required skills.</p> <p>Specify the skill levels required for each role and the expected technical skills.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for students to gain exposure to work, part-time work opportunities, meaningful work placements and mentorship for students.</p> <p>Train new employees in the systems, processes and skills specific to the organisation.</p> <p>Provide feedback to new employees on how they are going, and if needed, provide support and/or training and development opportunities to build the required skills.</p> |
| Schools | <p>Reinforce the values employers are looking for in a work setting.</p> | <p>Include expected work behaviours in learning, social and sport environments.</p> | <p>Ensure students meet standards outlined in school curriculum and teaching frameworks.</p> <p>Ensure all graduates develop the required skills.</p> |
| Vocational education and training (VET) providers | <p>Reinforce the values employers are looking for in a work setting.</p> | <p>Include expected work behaviours in learning, social and sport environments.</p> | <p>Ensure students achieve competencies as outlined in VET training packages and, if relevant, meet the standards set by professional associations.</p> <p>Ensure all graduates develop the required skills.</p> |
| Higher education providers | <p>Reinforce the values employers are looking for in a work setting.</p> | <p>Include expected work behaviours in learning, social and sport environments.</p> | <p>Ensure students meet the standards outlined in higher education teaching frameworks and, if relevant, meet the standards set by professional associations.</p> <p>Ensure all graduates develop the required skills.</p> |
| Government | <p>Require the education system to reinforce work values.</p> | <p>Require the education system to include work behaviours in learning, social and sport environments.</p> | <p>Set standards for the quality of the education system.</p> |

You can download an electronic version of
this guide at www.beingworkready.com.au

About this publication

The Business Council of Australia brings together the chief executives of Australia's largest companies to promote economic growth for the benefit of the nation.

Business Council of Australia

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