



# RAPID REVIEW ON CAREER ADVISER RESOURCING IN NSW SCHOOLS

Commissioned by Regional Development  
Australia Mid North Coast.

Author: Ben Archer (PCDAA)

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
Literature Review .....	3
Survey Findings .....	5
Respondent Demographics and Survey Integrity .....	5
Time Allowance .....	6
Key Performance Indicators.....	7
Measuring Success .....	8
Positive Outcomes for Students .....	9
Support within Schools.....	10
Recommendations.....	12
Bibliography .....	13

## Executive Summary

This rapid review surveyed 47 Career Advisers across both urban and regional, remote and rural communities in NSW. It identifies a correlation between school-based Career Advisers and educational attainment, and between educational attainment and economic activity in regional, remote and rural areas. Three predominant barriers to success have been identified by survey respondents:

- 1) School Executive teams not having an understanding of the importance of Career Advisers to student outcomes
- 2) Additional tasks that are irrelevant to the role of Career Advisers being added to the workload of Career Advisers
- 3) Inadequate financial budgets for Career Advisers in Regional, Remote and Rural schools

It is recommended that Principals and School Executive teams are made more aware of the potential impact that a well-resourced and focussed Career Adviser can have on a school and the broader community.

## Literature Review

School-based Career Advisers play a vital role in helping young people transition out of high school into further education or employment<sup>1</sup>. These activities involve developing career action plans with students, arranging industry and provider visits, coordinating student experiences and pastoral care/counselling services<sup>2</sup>. Students identify that being able to access a Career Adviser and discuss their needs on a one-to-one basis is highly beneficial. Specifically, students report that this process can help to enhance academic performance as well as ease anxiety with the transition process<sup>3</sup>.

Within NSW, 67% of schools have in place a process to assist students in choosing subjects and pathways based on their strengths and aptitudes<sup>4</sup>. However, 96% of schools do not provide adequate time for thorough career counselling of students in this process<sup>5</sup>. This can result in students choosing subjects in Years 11 & 12 that are not aligned with their skills and strengths, or students ruling out post-school pathway options. This is despite students reporting that interviews with Career Advisers are the most helpful in-school activity for providing clarity with subject selections and post-school outcomes<sup>6</sup>.

There has been significant research undertaken internationally into the impact that Career Advisers have on broader student outcomes. As secondary schools provide the basis for the community workforce<sup>7</sup>, there is an inherent link that can be established between the quality of the advice given to students and the broader economic development of the community.

High school students in regional, remote and rural parts of Australia are more likely to experience socio-economic disadvantage resulting in higher unemployment<sup>8</sup> and higher levels of mental illness<sup>9</sup> than high school students in urban communities. Students report

---

<sup>1</sup> Gabrielle Bowen and Eliza Kidd, "Career Guidance: The Missing Link in School to Work Transitions," Youth Action Series (Woolloomooloo, Australia: Youth Action, July 2017), [https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017-07-18\\_\\_Career\\_paper\\_\\_formatted\\_\\_FINAL\\_\\_RS.pdf](https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017-07-18__Career_paper__formatted__FINAL__RS.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia, *What's Happening in Our Schools? Insights into Our School Based Career Practitioners*, 2017, Infographic, 255.8 mm x 930 mm, 2017, <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/CICA-Infographic-2017-Final-Part-2.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Susan D. Phillips et al., "Preparation for the School-to-Work Transition: The Views of High School Students," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 61, no. 2 (October 1, 2002): 202-16, <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1853>.

<sup>4</sup> Career Adviser Association of NSW & ACT, *Landscape of Career Education in NSW Schools*, 2019, Infographic, 20.98cm x 29.8cm, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Career Adviser Association of NSW & ACT.

<sup>6</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia, *What's Happening in Our Schools? Insights into Our School Based Career Practitioners*.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Corbett and Jennifer Tinkham, "Small Schools in a Big World: Thinking About a Wicked Problem," *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 60, no. 4 (2014): 691-707.

<sup>8</sup> John Halsey and Department of Education and Training (DET), *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education: Final Report.*, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Ernest Hunter, "Disadvantage and Discontent: A Review of Issues Relevant to the Mental Health of Rural and Remote Indigenous Australians," *Australian Journal of Rural Health* 15, no. 2 (2007): 88-93, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1584.2007.00869.x>.

an increased self-concept after engaging with a Career Adviser in school<sup>10</sup>, which can lead to higher levels of acceptance and success at university<sup>11 12 13</sup>.

The connection between in-school Career Adviser activities and broader economic success has not yet been explicitly made. However, there is a strong correlation between the levels of educational achievement of a community and its economic activity<sup>14</sup>. It follows that if Career Advisers have a positive impact on high school graduate outcomes, and higher levels of educational attainment are linked with economic activity, then Career Advisers can have a positive impact on the economic development of a community.

Despite this, Career Advisers note a downward trend in their levels of resourcing. Compared to similar positions within a school environment, Career Advisers are three times more likely to have a reduction to their time allowance when the schools are required to reduce staffing levels<sup>15</sup>. In addition to this, Career Advisers also report that they are more likely to juggle multiple positions of responsibility, as well as teach subjects that they are not trained for<sup>16</sup>. Subsequently, the potential impacts of under-resourcing of Career Advisers in schools are not only impacting the students and the school, but also the broader community.

---

<sup>10</sup> Carmen Mills, "Opportunity and Resignation within Marginalised Students: Towards a Theorisation of the Reproductive and Transformative Habitus," *Critical Studies in Education* 49, no. 2 (September 1, 2008): 99-111, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508480802040191>.

<sup>11</sup> Joel Ontiveros, "Connecting Rural Students to Higher Education," *Vermont Connection* 41 (January 2020): 56-66.

<sup>12</sup> Kristen Seward and Amy H. Gaesser, "Career Decision-Making With Gifted Rural Students: Considerations for School Counselors and Teachers," *Gifted Child Today* 41, no. 4 (October 2018): 217-25.

<sup>13</sup> Felicia F. Tian and Lin Chen, "Unequal at the College Door," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 38, no. 11/12 (January 1, 2018): 1041-56, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-03-2018-0050>.

<sup>14</sup> Stephanie A. Pink-Harper, "Educational Attainment: An Examination of Its Impact on Regional Economic Growth," *Economic Development Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (May 2015): 167-79.

<sup>15</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia, *What's Happening in Our Schools? Insights into Our School Based Career Practitioners*.

<sup>16</sup> Career Adviser Association of NSW & ACT, *Landscape of Career Education in NSW Schools*.

## Survey Findings

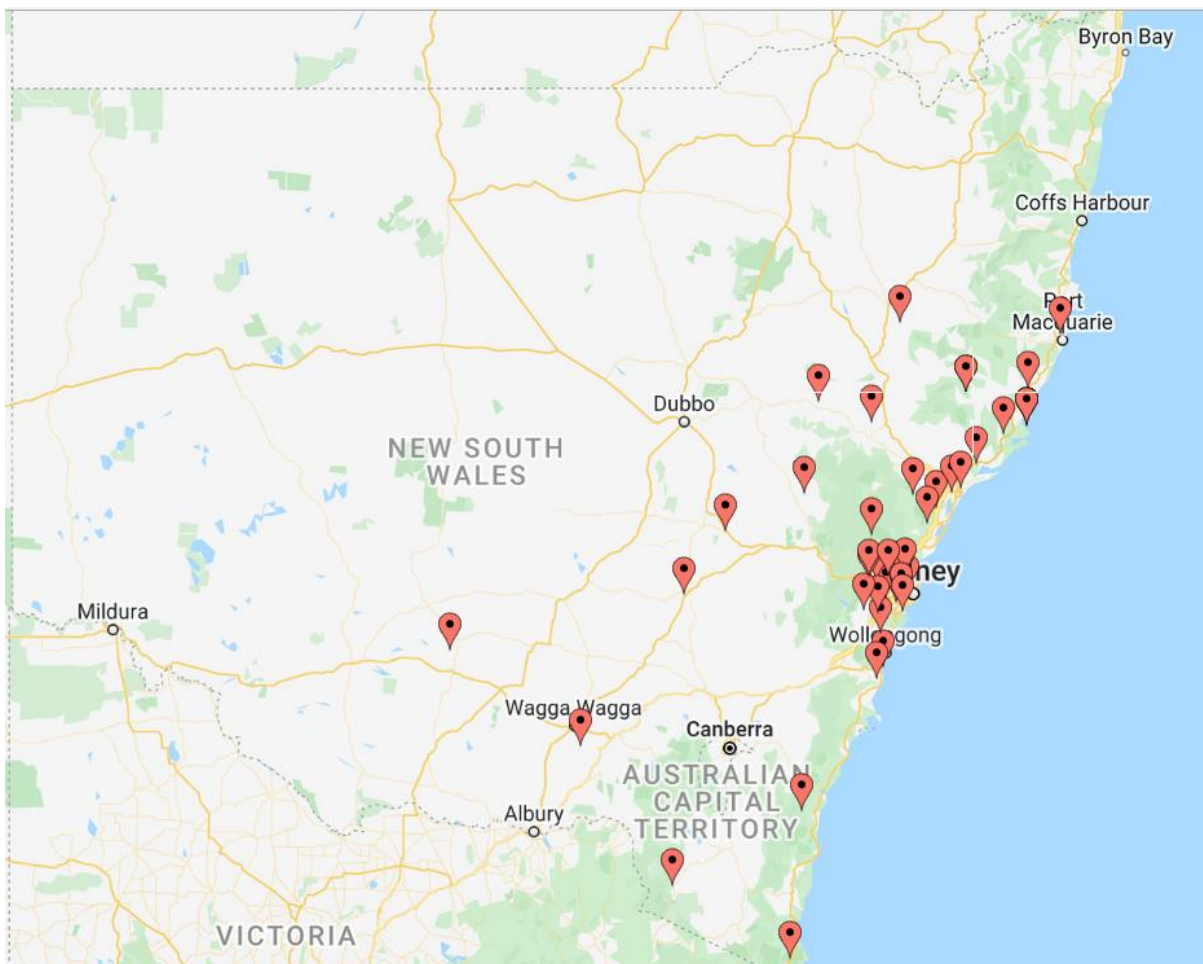
### Respondent Demographics and Survey Integrity

A 10-question survey was provided to Careers Advisers in NSW schools, distributed via social media channels and with the assistance of the Career Adviser Association of NSW. Questions were asked with regards to geographical location, time allowance, support from school executive and financial resourcing. There were 48 respondents to the survey, with 1 respondent withdrawing consent to participate during the survey, resulting in 47 valid responses to the survey.

Respondents to the survey were in geographically diverse areas, with only two postcodes receiving multiple responses (2428, n=2 & 2422, n=2). Survey integrity was maintained using Cookies which prevented users from accessing the survey twice through the same browser, or through the same Microsoft Account if they were logged in.

Respondents were not asked to disclose the sector of their school (Public, Catholic or Independent) in order to ensure anonymity in responses.

**Figure 1:** Respondent Location by Postcode

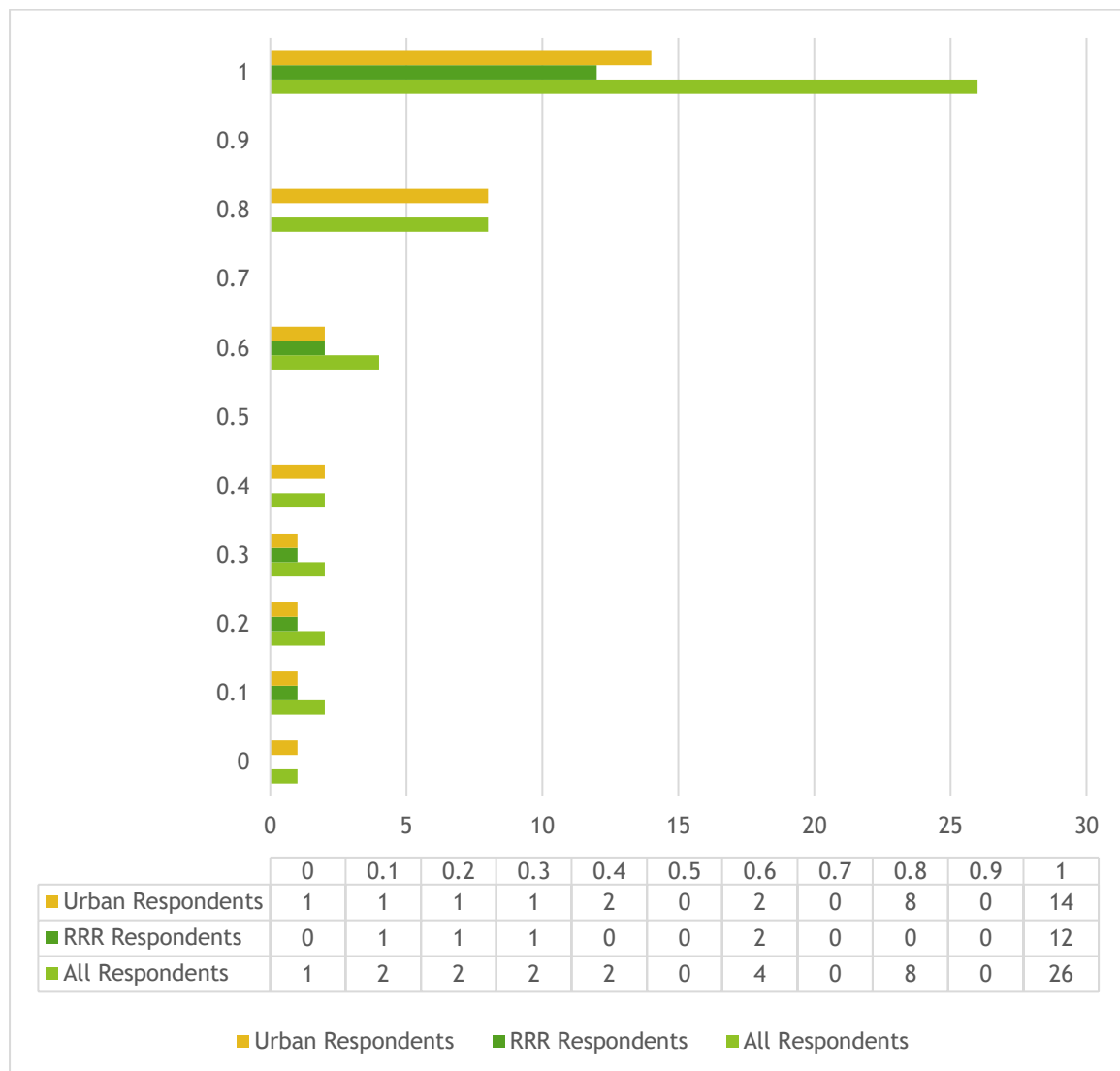


## Time Allowance

Respondents were asked to nominate their time allocation as an FTE of their total employment within the school. The average time allocation across all respondents was 0.8FTE dedicated to careers. However, responses ranged from 0.0 as a voluntary position to 1.0FTE.

Using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard definition of urban areas, responses were divided into 'Urban' or 'Regional, Remote and Rural' categories based on postcode. No significant difference exists between time allocations for Career Advisers in either area. Figure 2 provides an overview of the time allocations provided.

**Figure 2:** Time Allocations for Career Adviser Duties



## Key Performance Indicators

Respondents were asked to disclose if they had any explicit Key Performance Indicators in their positions. Only 7 respondents disclosed that they had been provided with explicit KPI's related to their role, with 24 stating they did not have any explicit allocations and 16 stating that they were unaware if they had KPI's.

Of the respondents who had KPI's, one respondent disclosed that they were not at liberty to state their KPI due to potentially identifying information. The remaining six provided responses that centred on the following themes:

- 1) Interviewing all current Year 12 students prior to graduation (3 responses)
- 2) Maintaining compliance for the Vocational Education and Training program of the school (2 responses)
- 3) Creating feeder partnerships with external training organisations (1 response)

Only one respondent from a RRR postcode was recorded. This response was particularly negative, stating that their KPI's had changed and no explicit mention of pathways for students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage existed in the new measures.



## Measuring Success

Respondents who did not have explicit KPI's (n=40) were asked to describe what measures they used to determine success in their position.

The majority of respondents (n=33) referred to student and parental feedback as their primary measures of success. This data was captured either through student destination surveys (n=10), or direct contact with students post-graduation (n=6). The remaining responses (n=17) did not disclose how they were notified about student outcomes.

Three respondents explicitly mentioned the benchmarking material provided by the Career Industry Council of Australia as their own personal KPI's but did not disclose whether these were reviewed by their school Executive.

Two respondents stated that the only measure of success they had were whether they were offered employment again in the following year. This indicates that their employment situations are insecure which could be an impediment to development of the career program of the school.

One respondent identified that their only current measure of success is when they receive a discount on a trade because it was conducted by a former student.

A general comment that was recorded in several responses was that it was challenging to quantify success in a careers role because it is not measurable on a graph or table. One respondent noted that success in their role was having students "drop out" in Year 10 or Year 11 to pursue a trade, which obviously would not reflect positively on school retention data. Conversely, this would have a net positive impact on the school's HSC results as lower achieving students would depart prior to sitting the examination.

## Positive Outcomes for Students

Most of the respondents referred to employment in their description of what constituted a 'good outcome' came from respondents in urban areas (n=20). Employment was consistently used in relation to full-time employment that is achieved either upon completion or just prior to completion of the students schooling journey.

Areas or industries of employment were not noted by most respondents. Some references (n=8) were made to employment in relation to apprenticeships and traineeships across both RRR and urban respondents. No significant difference was noted between location of respondents in this respect.

All respondents noted that students achieving employment constituted a good outcome. One respondent noted that this had broader implications for society, as they believed the role of school was to create a 'happy, healthy taxpayers' and that with each employed student there was 'one more happy, healthy taxpayer contributing positively to society'.

University entrance was another theme that was identified within the responses of a good outcome (n=17). Interestingly, more respondents in RRR postcodes (n=11) referred to university as a positive outcome for students as opposed to urban postcodes (n=6). There were stark differences noted in the language used in relation to university entrance between RRR and urban respondents. Respondents in RRR areas used the word 'transition' at twice the frequency of urban respondents whereas urban respondents used the word 'achieve' at twice the frequency of RRR respondents.

While it is clear that entrance into university is a positive outcome for students, student achievement of personal goals was another theme that was consistently raised when addressing this question. Respondents noted that students achieving personal goals, whether they are employment or university entrance was a good outcome. This was reflected equally between RRR and urban respondents.

## Support within Schools

The majority of respondents felt that they were well supported by their school's Executive team (n=24), while only four respondents felt they were not supported at all. 19 respondents felt that the support they received was good but needed enhancement.

Areas that respondents felt supported in included not having irrelevant jobs added to their workload (n=16) and being listened to in respect to requests for support (n=5). Respondents in RRR postcodes all identified a high level of support from their executive team.

Areas for improvement with regards to Executive support predominantly relate to having unrelated or irrelevant work added to their roles (n=15) or having arbitrary restrictions added to their Professional Development plans (n=4). Five respondents noted that their current school was not following Career Industry Council of Australia or Career Advisers Association of NSW/ACT guidelines with regards to student ratios, and as such a further Career Adviser was needed to assist them in their role.

Seven respondents noted that the expectations of their school Executive were mismatched with the reason for the position. One respondent noted:

*They sometimes think it is our job to get the most disengaged students, employment, rather than skills and opportunities for employment. (RRR respondent)*

Another noted:

*They could have a clearer understanding of the role of career education. I am constantly being asked to do things which are administrative and not related to careers because they dont (sic) know who else to give it to (Urban respondent)*

Respondents from urban areas were more likely to identify significant areas for improvement with regards to executive support. All four respondents who identified that they did not feel supported from their school executive highlighted significant problems within their school, such as:

- Unqualified and unregistered staff employed in Career Adviser positions ahead of qualified and professionally registered personnel.
- Unstable employment conditions (ie: being placed on rolling temporary contracts)
- Being prevented from attending meetings relevant to the position (e.g. curriculum and pastoral leader meetings)
- Being prevented from attending enough professional development to maintain professional registration

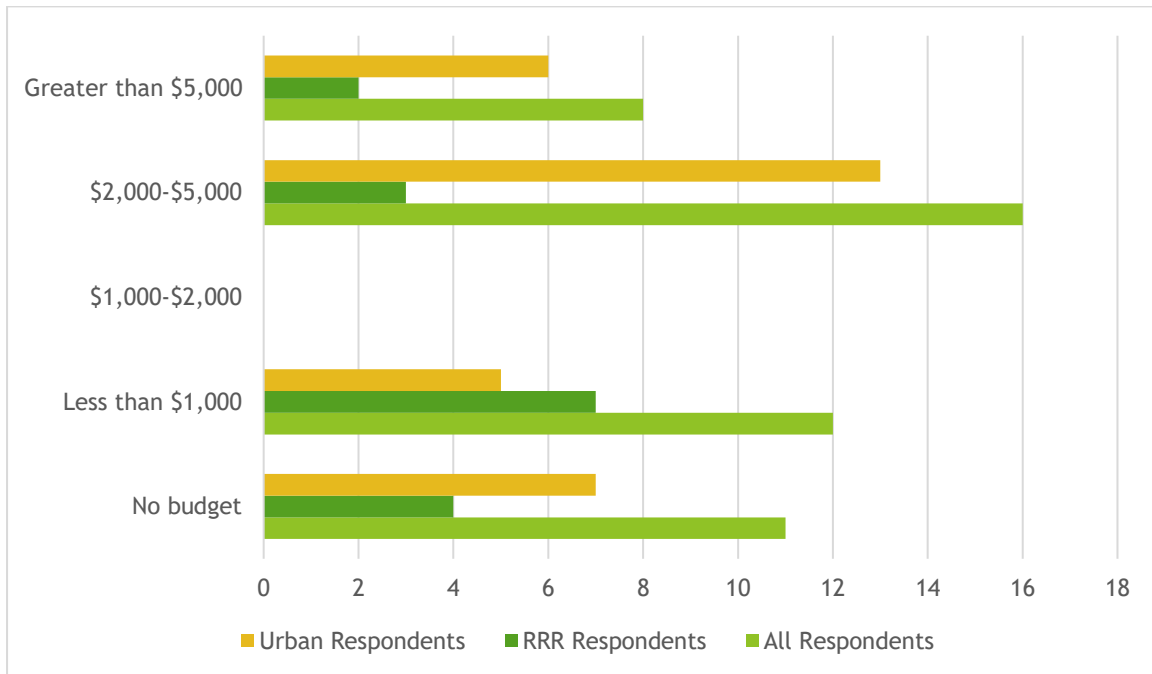
These issues would broadly fall into internal school processes and procedures and do not bare a true reflection on the status of Career Advisers in schools.

Another area addressed within the survey was financial budgets. The majority of respondents felt that they did not have an adequate budget to complete their role effectively (n=24). All respondents in RRR postcodes reported their budget as being inadequate.

Respondents were asked to provide an approximate budget range that they had been allocated. Career adviser budgets are often spent on resources for students such as subscriptions to websites, purchasing of university guides and excursions to career fairs

and tertiary providers. Figure 3 provides an overview of the budget ranges and the respondents locations. One RRR respondent noted that for a 1.0FTE career position in their region that a car and separate mobile phone would be of significant benefit due to the large distances they often need to travel large distances to attend worksites or to meet prospective employers.

**Figure 3: Career Adviser Resourcing Budgets**



## Recommendations

The impact Career Advisers have in schools is a positive one. Students clearly value the influence of Career Advisers in their decision-making processes. However, there are numerous factors that are inhibiting the effectiveness of Career Advisers in achieving success in their positions and subsequently negatively impacting the economic development of the communities in which they are based.

Across all contexts and jurisdictions, career advisers report additional workloads and expectations irrelevant to their positions are impacting on the time they have in working with students. As students identify one-on-one meetings with career advisers as the most significant school-based factor in their transition out of school<sup>17</sup>, this is an area of priority. To address this, it is recommended that Principals and Executives be made more aware of the potential impact that a well-resourced Career Adviser can have, not just on their school, but also in their communities.

Additional financial resourcing is particularly important for Career Adviser success in Regional, Remote and Rural communities. Budgets allocated for career resourcing are largely inadequate, and in RRR contexts, would prove inhibitive for running excursions to tertiary education providers that are located out of the school's immediate area.

Career Advisers play a key role in helping students in RRR communities overcome barriers to further education and employment. As there are correlations between educational achievement and economic development in non-urban areas, the school-based Career Adviser is uniquely placed to have a positive impact on the communities in which they reside.

---

<sup>17</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia, *What's Happening in Our Schools? Insights into Our School Based Career Practitioners*.

## Bibliography

- Bowen, Gabrielle, and Eliza Kidd. "Career Guidance: The Missing Link in School to Work Transitions." Youth Action Series. Woolloomooloo, Australia: Youth Action, July 2017. [https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017-07-18\\_\\_Career\\_paper\\_\\_formatted\\_\\_FINAL\\_\\_RS.pdf](https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017-07-18__Career_paper__formatted__FINAL__RS.pdf).
- Career Adviser Association of NSW & ACT. *Landscape of Career Education in NSW Schools*. 2019. Infographic, 20.98cm x 29.8cm.
- Career Industry Council of Australia. *What's Happening in Our Schools? Insights into Our School Based Career Practitioners*. 2017. Infographic, 255.8 mm x 930 mm. <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/CICA-Infographic-2017-Final-Part-2.pdf>.
- Corbett, Michael, and Jennifer Tinkham. "Small Schools in a Big World: Thinking About a Wicked Problem." *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* 60, no. 4 (2014): 691-707.
- Halsey, John and Department of Education and Training (DET). *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education: Final Report.*, 2018.
- Hunter, Ernest. "Disadvantage and Discontent: A Review of Issues Relevant to the Mental Health of Rural and Remote Indigenous Australians." *Australian Journal of Rural Health* 15, no. 2 (2007): 88-93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1584.2007.00869.x>.
- Mills, Carmen. "Opportunity and Resignation within Marginalised Students: Towards a Theorisation of the Reproductive and Transformative Habitus." *Critical Studies in Education* 49, no. 2 (September 1, 2008): 99-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17508480802040191>.
- Ontiveros, Joel. "Connecting Rural Students to Higher Education." *Vermont Connection* 41 (January 2020): 56-66.
- Phillips, Susan D., David L. Blustein, Kevin Jobin-Davis, and Sarah Finkelberg White. "Preparation for the School-to-Work Transition: The Views of High School Students." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 61, no. 2 (October 1, 2002): 202-16. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1853>.
- Pink-Harper, Stephanie A. "Educational Attainment: An Examination of Its Impact on Regional Economic Growth." *Economic Development Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (May 2015): 167-79.
- Seward, Kristen, and Amy H. Gaesser. "Career Decision-Making With Gifted Rural Students: Considerations for School Counselors and Teachers." *Gifted Child Today* 41, no. 4 (October 2018): 217-25.
- Tian, Felicia F., and Lin Chen. "Unequal at the College Door." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 38, no. 11/12 (January 1, 2018): 1041-56. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-03-2018-0050>.