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## **Consultation Feedback to Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)**

### **Work Studies, Years 9-10 Draft Curriculum**

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**The Smith Family**  
**Work Studies, Years 9-10 – Consultation Feedback**  
**December 2013**

The *Draft Australian Curriculum: Work Studies, Years 9 – 10* describes Work Studies in two strands: skills for learning and work, and career and life design, delivered 'through an integrated approach that incorporates applied learning and **work exposure**'<sup>1</sup>.

The Smith Family's feedback on the Draft Work Studies Year 9-10 Curriculum is to present the case for **a new model of work experience known as Work Inspiration, to underpin the work exposure component of the new curriculum.**

Work Inspiration is a campaign to encourage employers and their industry associations or networks to be proactive and creative in re-imagining work experience for Years 9 and 10 students. It invites employers to **take the lead** and become more strategic in their collaboration with schools to generate:

- More successful transitions from school to work by young people
- Additional career development opportunities for students and recent school leavers
- Stronger and more strategic partnerships between employers and schools, leading to vocational learning and positive pathways for young people.

Work Inspiration is based on a flexible program framework of career development, work based learning and employability skills development for and by young people. The essential core of the framework is the Three Work Inspiration Insights:

1. **All About Me:** Discovering the young person's passions and interests as the starting point to provide an inspiring first experience of the world of work.
2. **Look Behind the Scenes:** Introducing young people to the wide variety and scope of different jobs and roles in any business or organisation.
3. **Careers Happen:** Bringing alive for young people how careers unfold, and how their first job can be the start of their journey.

The flexibility of the framework enables employers to work with a concept of career development, and yet, utilise their own expertise and creativity to design hands-on

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<sup>1</sup> *Draft Australian Curriculum: Work Studies, Years 9 – 10*, p5.

experiences and career conversations activity between their employees and staff and young people who are studying or seeking work.

## **Background**

Work Inspiration was established in September 2009 in the UK as a national employer-led campaign to make work experience more meaningful, relevant and inspiring. The campaign was launched by Sir Stuart Rose, Chairman of Business in The Community (BiTC), a not-for-profit organisation and a business led charity in the UK committed to building resilient communities, diverse workplaces and a more sustainable future.

The idea for BiTC and its member companies to transform work experience into Work Inspiration came into being during a Big Conversation; a pre-program planning exercise at which staff are asked to generate creative ideas for hands-on experiences and career conversations for young people. At this event young people told BiTC business leaders that work experience in their own companies was time out of school (which they thought was good!), but often boring, and did not directly motivate them to work for that company. Their motivation to restructure work experience for the better was intensified, and Work Inspiration was developed.

The UK campaign has now successfully engaged 700 employers in providing nearly 200,000 young people with Work Inspiration opportunities (2009 – 2013). These opportunities are generated by employers leading their own program of activity which delivers the Three Insights, through a mix of hands-on tasks and conversations between employers and students.

## **Work Inspiration in Australia<sup>2</sup>**

Work Inspiration was introduced to Australia by members of the National Partnership Broker<sup>3</sup> Network in 2011. Keen interest was generated and early in 2013 the Foundation for Young Australians and The Smith Family negotiated the rights from Business in the Community for Work Inspiration to begin in Australia. The National Australia Bank became the founding corporate partner of Work Inspiration in March 2013.

The report on the Work Inspiration pilots<sup>4</sup> noted that many 15 – 18 year old students who remain at school seek a mixture of learning and work experiences. As the school

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on Work Inspiration in Australia go to [www.workinspiration.com.au](http://www.workinspiration.com.au)

<sup>3</sup> <http://transitions.youth.gov.au/Sites/transitions>

<sup>4</sup> *Work Inspiration: Findings and lessons from the Australian pilots August 2013*, page 7  
<http://www.workinspiration.com.au/casestudies/>

leaving age increases and the teenage labour market collapses, students are increasingly searching for relevance between their school based learning and their career aspirations. They want to get out of the classroom and try out the world of work. Schools and websites can inform leavers about work and study options, however, the validity of information due to frequently changing industry standards and workplaces, and the need for real world connections between study and practice, emphasises the demand for stronger connections between their learning at school and the expectations and opportunities of the labour market.

For nearly 40 years, schools have been heavily dependent upon the traditional work experience placement in Year 10 as a means of making the world of work familiar to their students. The competition to find and keep a quality placement has become more intense, both between schools, and between various sectors of education and training. This is particularly acute in rural and regional areas where a small pool of willing businesses is approached for work experience, work placement, TAFE delivered HSC VET Course places and University placements.

Many secondary schools across Australia are currently re-assessing the priority they place on all year 10 students undertaking a work experience placement. Health and safety issues and the base-entry nature of most placements due to factors such as privacy, duty of care, the up-skilling of work roles, and technological change, are all impacting upon the availability of inspiring traditional work experience places. Despite these challenges, schools remain keen to encourage students in career development activity and offer valuable courses such as Work Studies, which enable students to make connections between their classroom-based learning and career aspirations.

Work Inspiration, rather than work experience, challenges employers to take the lead and provides further options for all those young people who want to experience the world of work. Its flexible structure enables employers who feel that they cannot offer a traditional placement to get involved. This is beneficial particularly in regional and rural areas where clusters of small business can develop their own Work Inspiration model. The Smith Family's experience through the pilots has shown that Work Inspiration increases the number of businesses and industry sectors willing to host students in this type of activity.

Work Inspiration is a timely innovation in the current Australian policy context. The recently released National Career Development Strategy<sup>5</sup> and the current drive to develop national curriculum through Work Studies and a National Trade Cadetship initiative, are both relevant for the initiative.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://education.gov.au/national-career-development-strategy>

The table below<sup>6</sup> highlights the need to adopt Work Inspiration as the more ‘modern’ and relevant approach to work exposure. Work Inspiration, rather than work experience, challenges employers to take the lead and provides further options for all those young people who want to experience the world of work. Its flexible structure enables employers who feel that they cannot offer a traditional placement to get involved.

A comparison of the features of work experience compared to Work Inspiration is:

<b>Work Experience</b>	<b>Work Inspiration</b>
Test out a job/workplace	Research multiple jobs/careers
Undertaking base entry work tasks	Career conversations and hands-on activities
Concentrates on the ‘now’ and being kept busy on tasks	Emphasises motivation and encourages thinking and planning for the future
Placement based with a supervisor	Project orientated and coached by employees
Individual student located in a workplace	Pairs, small teams working/learning across various sites
Individual journal/workbook to capture learning	Student team reflections and presentations

**A Work Studies curriculum based on a model of work exposure which reinforces an ‘old culture’ of traditional work experience and is not employer led does not align well to the world of work for the future.**

### **Findings from the Work Inspiration pilots**

The findings from the Work Inspiration Pilots Report provides strong evidence from students, employers and schools of the value of Work Inspiration. It highlighted the value students and teachers place on students talking to employees about careers from a workplace perspective. Throughout the pilots students were consistently inspired by what they learnt about the range of career options available and were motivated by what Work Inspiration provided for them.

The report can be found at <http://www.workinspiration.com.au/casestudies/>

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<sup>6</sup> *Work Inspiration: Findings and lessons from the Australian pilots* August 2013 Table 1 Page 9