REPORT ON THE CAREERS ADVISORY SERVICE

DECEMBER 2007 – JANUARY 2008

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INTRODUCTION

Careers advisers are based in all NSW government secondary schools to assist students to explore and plan their career and transition planning throughout their school years.

School-based initiatives such as the implementation of the School to Work Program and activities involving the Employment Related Skills Logbook also equip students to independently explore the range of opportunities available to them on leaving school.

During the Christmas vacation when schools are closed, the Department continues to support students through the Department’s annual Careers Advisory Service (CAS). This free service provides students with up to date information and impartial advice about careers and study options following the release of the Higher School Certificate results.

The service complements other advisory services provided by the NSW Board of Studies, the Universities Admissions Centre, TAFE NSW and universities.

Although the Careers Advisory Service targets recent school leavers, it is also accessed by parents and carers and on occasion, by mature aged students.

The CAS website (www.cas.det.nsw.edu.au) developed by the Vocational Education in Schools Directorate provides details of the Careers Advisory Service phone and e-mail service, a range of online resources, and links to a range of educational institutes.

OVERVIEW OF 2007-2008 CAREERS ADVISORY SERVICE

The December 2007/January 2008 Careers Advisory Service operated as a state-wide phone and email advisory service from Wednesday 19 December 2007 (to coincide with the release of the HSC results by the NSW Board of Studies) until Friday 18 January 2008. The Careers Advisory Service was located at the Vocational Education in Schools Directorate at 1 Oxford Street Darlinghurst.

A pool of 18 qualified and experienced school based careers advisers, selected through an expression of interest process, worked on the Careers Advisory Service. They responded to all e-mail and phone enquiries from clients.

The service operated daily from 9:00 am until 5 pm. Clients were also able to leave an after hours enquiry which was answered by an adviser from the Careers Advisory Service the following day.

PROMOTION OF THE SERVICE

Prior to commencement, the Careers Advisory Service (CAS) was promoted in the following ways:

- the state wide distribution of brochures and posters for Year 12 students enrolled in government and non-government schools
- the Directorate-developed Careers Advisory Service support resource for CAS staff was also distributed to all careers advisers in government schools
- information provided to the P&C Journal, Local Community Partnership networks and DET regional offices
- information on the Directorate’s CAS website (www.cas.det.nsw.edu.au)
- the NSW Board of Studies website hosted a link to the Careers Advisory Service
- inclusion of information about the service in three press releases relating to the release of HSC results ie from the NSW Department of Education and Training, from the NSW Minister for Education and Training, and from the NSW Government
• contact details for the Careers Advisory Service were included on HSC result notifications, and
• private services such as the Careers Central network used extensively by government secondary schools also promoted the Careers Advisory Service.

USERS OF THE CAREERS ADVISORY SERVICE

This year the Careers Advisory Service responded to 609 enquiries from across the state. Year 12 students who had recently received their HSC and UAI results comprised the largest group of clients making up 58 percent (354) of enquiries.

Parents (and carers) at 20 percent (122) of enquiries, were the second largest client group and students in Year 11 with 13 percent of enquiries (80) were the third largest client group.

The Careers Advisory Service received 432 phone enquiries and 177 e-mail enquiries. E-mail enquiries usually involved a number of responses as clients asked additional questions or sought further advice on alternate options to those they had originally enquired about.
DEMAND FOR THE CAREERS ADVISORY SERVICE

The Careers Advisory Service experienced most demand in the first three weeks of operation. As the first three weeks of the service coincided with the Christmas and New Year public holidays the service was effectively operating for only three days per week during this period.

During this period of time, three careers advisers were available each day to answer phone enquiries and respond to e-mails.

Demand for the careers advice fell away markedly in the last two weeks of the service.

PROFILE OF SERVICE USERS

Students from both government and non-government schools accessed the Careers Advisory Service.

Data collected by service staff identified at least 325 enquiries from students who attended Government schools and 180 enquiries from students who attended non government schools.

From the 609 enquiries to the Careers Advisory Service, 87 percent could be identified by gender. 53 percent of these clients were female and 47 percent were male.

RANGE OF ENQUIRIES

Clients sought advice on a range of topics including university preference changes, course information and study at TAFE NSW Institutes and private providers.

Careers Advisory Service staff also provided students and their parents with information about the connection between HSC results and the UAI, as well as detailed information about post school study options and career pathways.
Mature age clients were generally interested in career change options and accessing university or TAFE NSW courses.

Admission information about universities, preference changes and information about TAFE NSW or private education providers accounted for 77 percent of the enquiries among clients accessing the Careers Advisory Service.

Enquiries about employment (8 percent) and other enquiries e.g. course choices in Year 12, assistance in explaining the UAI (15 percent) accounted for the remainder of enquiries.

**KNOWLEDGE OF CAREERS ADVISORY SERVICE**

Clients reported that they had heard about the Careers Advisory Service from a variety of information sources.

The promotional brochure provided to Year 12 School leavers by the NSW Department of Education and Training had the highest impact with 253 clients indicating this had been their main source of information about the Careers Advisory Service.

The ‘other source’ category which rated second highest with 235 clients included contact information about the Careers Advisory Service contained on the HSC results notification. This information listed
the free call number and web address for the Careers Advisory Service. Information obtained from the internet and word of mouth was also included in the ‘other source’ category.

The Careers Advisory Service Website attracted nearly 2700 visits during this period. The majority of these visits were to access information and links from the site. Clients who required additional assistance used the e-mail facility to seek further advice.

**COMPARISON WITH 2006-2007 SERVICE**

Following a review in early 2007 the Careers Advisory Service was funded to operate solely as a phone and email service. In person services located throughout DET regions in NSW were discontinued.

DET Regions were given the opportunity to host a career awareness event to coincide with the official Careers Advisory Service. The Illawarra & South Coast Region hosted a local career awareness event in late December and early January.

The Dec 2007-Jan 08 Careers Advisory Service received 432 phone enquiries (compared with 681 enquiries in 2006-07) and 177 e-mail enquiries (compared to 370 enquiries).

There was also a 30 percent decline in the number of visitors accessing the Careers Advisory Service website as illustrated below.

The Careers Advisory Service supported students, and their families, at a significant time of transition from school to work, further education or training. Greatest demand for the service occurred within the first weeks of operation.

While there continues to be a demand for careers advice as evidenced by the volume of visits to the CAS website and calls to Advisory Service staff, it is also clear that the number of clients accessing the service has declined across all client groups. This represents a continuation of declining demand for the Careers Advisory Service in recent years which culminated in the review of the 2006-07 service.

Reasons for the decline in enquiries include:
• ready availability of information from other sources such as HSC Online, TAFE NSW and universities and private colleges

• university Open Days coinciding with the last two weeks of the service
• wide-spread use and access to web based information by young people eg myfuture, University Admissions Centre
• the combined effects of School to Work and career education and planning activities in schools throughout the year which have better prepared students prior to the HSC
• the ready availability of school based career advisers for three days before the close of Term 4 also reduced the volume of student enquiries to the Careers Advisory Service.

While there were no difficulties in staffing the 2007/08 Careers Advisory Service, it is noted that the careers advisers who worked on the service did so during their Christmas vacation period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made with regard to the 2008/2009 Careers Advisory Service:

• the Careers Advisory Service continues to operate as a web-based, phone and email service in 2008/09
• given the reduction in enquiries in the last two weeks of operation it is recommended that the Careers Advisory Service operates over a four week period (rather than the current five weeks) in 2008/09
• it is also recommended that the service commence on Thursday 18 December 2008, the day after the release of HSC results. The majority of enquiries on the first day of this year’s service were from students who wanted to access their HSC results and were unable to access the HSC Examination Inquiry Centre help line
• if demand continues to decline this year, a further review of the Careers Advisory Service should be conducted.

AVAILABILITY OF CAS RESOURCES THROUGHOUT 2008


The excellent resources and links on the Careers Advisory Service website are available throughout 2008 at www.cas.det.nsw.edu.au