Executive Summary

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Victorian Chamber) supports the aim of Australia's National Skills Passport: to promote qualifications and connect skilled workers with businesses.

The primary goal - assisting workers in showcasing their qualifications and aiding businesses in locating skilled employees – is an ambition that we share.

The Victorian Chamber proposes 9 recommendations to shape the future of the Passport. The passport could help foster a culture of lifelong learning and expedite skills development. With users and industry as key partners in the design and implementation of the passport, we can create a system that empowers individuals and businesses alike.

Our recommendations relate to several critical aspects outlined in the consultation paper, including the Passport's value, design and implementation, as well as usage and behavior modification.

Summary of recommendations:

1. Ensure the Passport is easy to use, trusted and accessible, enabling the offered gains in time saved and productivity.
2. The Passport must clearly articulate the skills associated with courses and qualifications.
3. The Passport should clearly and succinctly outline what skills are associated with courses and qualifications.
4. Ensure the Passport facilitates recognition of prior learning across institutions and jurisdictions.
5. Design the Passport with HR professionals, hiring managers, educators and learners to be functional.
6. Roll the Passport out in a phased manner, ensuring it is high quality while continuously improving and expanding functions.
7. Implement the Passport alongside a targeted digital inclusion strategy.
8. Design the Passport with learnings from current platforms - both private and public and from Australia and abroad.
9. Roll the Passport out alongside programs that support modern hiring and learning practices, such as job redesign and modern human capital management techniques to ensure its use is optimised for labour market and skills development outcomes.

Opening remarks

The Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Victorian Chamber) welcomes the consultation on the National Skills Passport.

The Victorian Chamber agrees with the key aim of the Passport: to help workers promote their qualifications and businesses find skilled workers, and to help achieve a dynamic and inclusive labour market, as well as enabling a culture of lifelong learning.

There is broad support for such a passport and the concept was captured within the Victoria Summit process, which the Victorian Chamber ran in 2022. Action 36 of the Victorian Chamber's Victoria Summit Playbook is 'Embrace a culture of lifelong learning to encourage continuous skills

development', noting that this aim can be achieved by 'creating Skills Passports to keep an official digital record of all qualifications, skills-related training and experiences.'[1]

An ideal model of a skills passport has it acting as a digital CV with functionality that offers career and skill development information. This is a long-term goal however, which can only be achieved through a successful, staged approach. It is crucial to get the fundamentals right from the beginning and build on positive feedback to grow the Passport's functionality and capability over time.

Taking inspiration from successful international models like Europass in the European Union and mySkillsFuture in Singapore, the platform should not only serve as a repository for skills and qualifications. The European Union created Europass, a digital platform which allows the user to create a profile and add work experiences, learning experiences, different kinds of skills, publications, awards, licenses, memberships, volunteering and international experiences and even create new sections where additional information, images, files and links to media that are relevant. The Europass also provides guidelines for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Design of the passport must occur with users and behaviour change front of mind, alongside the desired outcomes of lifelong learning and skills matching and development for learners, workers and employers. It will need to be integrated and interoperable, trusted and reliable.

The Victorian Chamber understands that this consultation is the beginning of a process of design and discussion. We keep our comments broad in line with this,and address some key areas in the consultation paper relating to the value of a passport, design and roll out, and use and behaviour change.

The value of a Skills Passport

The value of a passport is multifaceted. Overall however, a significant value is the savings in time and productivity for all users. Learners, educators, institutions and employers would save significant administration time through a trusted, validated source of skills and qualifications.

Economy and labour market wide, a passport ensures that learners and providers have clear understanding of the skills and knowledge each individual and each course have. This clear articulation of value, as it would need to be simply and clearly put on the Passport, makes it easier for people to identify and articulate the skills they have, skills gaps and opportunities to fill those skills gaps. This will enable education providers to be clear on the value proposition, and what skills are being delivered/ what skills gaps are being met in education and training options.

The Passport would and should enable easier recognition of prior learning and permeability between vocational education and training (VET) and university education, as well as all institutions. For example, it could show the skills gained by an apprentice in their first year of an apprenticeship, and be utilised when they change between trades. The portability and transference of skills would be another key saving in time and gain in productivity for people moving between institutions, regardless of state or territory that institution is in. This function further reinforces the need for the Passport to clearly articulate what each course and qualification offers in terms of skills and skill development.

Recommendations:

[1] Victoria Summit. (2021). *Playbook.*

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4. Ensure the Passport facilitates recognition of prior learning across institutions and jurisdictions.

Design, implementation and roll out

Through consultation with stakeholders, it's been made clear that the functionality of the Passport must be designed properly and thoroughly. It should be designed in partnership with the users including HR professionals, students, hiring managers and education institutions.

Ideally, the passport will act as a validated and easily accessible digital CV. Stakeholders have made it clear that the passport should be phased in, with the functionality of the Passport tested with accredited qualifications, then expanded to include non-accredited qualifications, on-the-job learning and skill development, licenses, industry training and other skills-related items.

Digital access and inclusion is critical to the future uptake and high utilisation of a skills passport. Access to the internet and appropriate devices is pivotal for the success of the skills passport. The Passport will need to be implemented alongside a strategy to increase the 'digital divide' and ensure it does not widen, with a current Australia-wide digital inclusion rate of 73.2 per cent.[2]

Usage and uptake of providers and learners to a digital platform should be utilised from existing platforms, such as *Myequals,* a provide provider. It's broadly understood that education providers who use this and other platforms have different approaches to how they use the platform and how they enter student data.

It goes without saying that the Passport will need strong privacy, security and fraud protection features to ensure all users engaging with it are secure it is a trustworthy digital service.

Recommendations:

5. Design the Passport with HR professionals, hiring managers, educators and learners to be functional.
6. Roll the Passport out in a phased manner, ensuring it is high quality while continuously improving and expanding functions.
7. Implement the Passport alongside a targeted digital inclusion strategy.
8. Design the Passport with learnings from current platforms - both private and public and from Australia and abroad.

Use and behaviour change

The existence of a passport itself is not meaningful without its wide uptake and use. A key function of the Passport is making it easier to identify skills and skills gaps for learning and employment purposes.

[2] Australian Digital Inclusion Index. (2023). https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ADII-2023-Summary_FINAL-Remediated.pdf

Hiring managers, learners and educators are therefore the key clients and users of the Passport. It needs to be easy for these people to utilise and the behaviour change required to result in high uptake and usage must be considered in the design and roll out. How hiring methods, recruitment processes and decisions, and applications for jobs and learning are done might be

There would most likely be a significant increase in data collected, frequency of collection and data pathways. These would be significant changes to the sector and would most likely involve costly changes to the different software all institutions use, smaller providers in particular would be most affected. There should be financial provisions to assist providers to make the necessary changes.

Recommendations:

9. Roll the Passport out alongside programs that support modern hiring and learning practices, such as job redesign and modern human capital management techniques to ensure its use is optimised for labour market and skills development outcomes.

Concluding remarks

The Victorian Chamber puts forward nine recommendations for the future of Australia's National Skills Passport.

We look forward to working together to continue building a culture of lifelong learning and quicker, more efficient skills development.