

## ★ The National Forum for Lifelong Career Development: A Big Conversation

The Forum's goal is to shift policy perspectives and reposition lifelong career development at the centre of workforce development policy. Val O'Reilly outlines the background, direction and drivers for this work.



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Repositioning lifelong career development with policy makers is vital. The ICCDPP 2015 Symposium and the New Zealand Country Paper presented at this international conference both identified the need for life long career development to sit at the centre of workforce development policy.

Prior to the ICCDPP Symposium CDANZ Exec had initiated a policy discussion group in Auckland hosted by AUT University Work Research Institute. Following the Symposium, CDANZ and Careers New Zealand responded by establishing the group's second meeting as a National Forum comprising representatives from Careers New Zealand, CATE, CDANZ, Chamber of Commerce, COMET Auckland, Ministry of Education, private career development practitioners, The Warehouse, the Work Research Institute, and Tertiary Career Development Services. Others who were not able to attend will come on board at a later date. The Forum's goal is to shift policy perspectives and reposition Lifelong Career Development. The background, direction and drivers for this work are outlined below.

In New Zealand, like other developed countries, there are a significant number of players in workforce development. Government departments, crown agencies, schools, tertiary providers, employers and several professional associations all contribute to workforce development. Each has its own agenda, perspectives of need, knowledge base, products and services and performance measures.

With this plethora of provision interestingly there is little overarching co-ordination and consideration of Lifelong Career Development needs. Rather, there is a focus on 'parts of life' rather than the 'whole of life'. This is not unique to New Zealand, as the ICCDPP Symposium identified; many countries have fragmented and uncoordinated systems.

There is a policy opportunity here - but there are challenges! Our body of theory and practice of Lifelong Career Development can contribute to the efficiency of the current system by providing an overarching perspective of the users of career and career related services. So why isn't Lifelong Career Development at the centre of workforce development policy? Policy is driven by dynamic forces. Political cycles, government strategy, economic turbulence, public opinion and limited country resources all shape policy, and they push career development understandings of life span to the edge of policy thought and discussion.

The National Forum is working towards a changing this current position. This is a big job! Part of the solution is articulating a vision of Lifelong Career Development in New Zealand and the benefits it would bring. A vision's credibility is reliant on the need for evidence that Lifelong Career Development will bring economic benefits. The other is setting up a national forum structure that cooperates, co-ordinates and articulates that vision with clarity and conviction. Next step is to write a National Forum strategy document that will focus and shape how the National Forum will work together and articulate its value add to policy makers.

Lifelong Career Development is missing in workforce development policy. The establishment of a National Forum is the first step in addressing this shortfall. A central belief of this group is that that a Lifelong Career Development policy perspective will bring economic efficiency, social equity and a system that is more human centred in its design. The National Forum is now developing a strategy that is working towards this end. Watch this space!

★ Val O'Reilly – CDANZ Vice-President, Professional Member, Life-Story Director

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