

Careers in Everyday Industries: ‘At a glance’ advice leaflets for five stakeholder groups

Compendium brochure



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Research project funded by the National Careers Institute

<https://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers>

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Introduction

This document is a compendium of five leaflets produced as a result of the research project 'Careers in everyday industries.' The project was funded by the National Careers Institute, part of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, and the research team was Erica Smith (Project Manager), Victor Callan, Richard Robinson, Andy Smith and Darryn Snell. The project web site is at: <https://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers>

The project set out to examine retail and hospitality careers and to see how perceptions of the low status of these careers might be changed, to benefit people looking for work and those who advise them, existing workers in the industries, the retail and hospitality industries, and the economy and society in general. A short video about the project, produced by the National Careers Institute, can be seen at <https://www.dewr.gov.au/nci/partnership-grants-program/case-study-videos>

One of the aims of the project was to produce documents that would assist five groups of people for whom this topic would be of interest, and who might change practices as a result. These groups were:

- Career seekers: People of all ages looking for work or for a change of job.
- Career practitioners: Professionals who work with school students or adult clients to help people make career choices.
- Family, community and other influencers: Parents, relatives and friends and others who influence people's career decision-making in informal settings.
- Retail and hospitality businesses; Managers and business owners who look for staff for their businesses at all levels of their organisations.
- Policy makers: Officials in Commonwealth and State governments and others who make and influence policy in this area.

The stated aim of this process was to provide the following types of evidence for each group:

- People at all stages of their careers - information will be available about careers in workplaces that are accessible to all, have large workforces, and with which they may already have experience as customers or in prior part-time work.
- Career practitioners - will be provided with more insight into careers in these major employing industries, and a way of explaining careers that is more comprehensible to more young people and adults. Advisors at schools and universities will be more easily able to harness the part-time working experience of their students, placing it in the contexts of participation in major national and international industries.
- Career influencers - will be able to provide more accurate advice to people looking for careers, in industries which may not otherwise be considered as offering long-term careers. The two industries are readily accessible yet often overlooked by key influencers.
- Employers - will share in the findings, which will assist them to find and develop good employees, including, but not only, through the retention of part-time workers. Participation of employers and their representatives during the research will increase ownership of the findings.
- Policy makers - will have evidence to assist more people into accessible and satisfying careers, and potentially reduce unemployment and underemployment. They will have new insights about how to attract and support young people and others who, as high quality recruits, will drive the continued rise of service industries such as retail, tourism and hospitality, and in their rebuilding following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The multi-stage research project produced a great deal of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as undertaking new analysis of existing statistical data sets and data from earlier projects by the researchers. These findings were all considered to be of interest to each of the five stakeholder groups.

The short, targeted leaflets each have three main components

1. **Background section**, setting out the research problem and summarising the research method
2. **Key messages** about what the research project found, under six headings:
 - A. Occupational opportunities in the industries
 - B. Career paths
 - C. Qualifications
 - D. What companies are doing
 - E. What career practitioners and other career influencers think
 - F. What the general public thinks

3. **'What next' section** with recommended actions for the particular target group.

The first two sections are similar for each of the five leaflets, but with some customisation for some of the groups. The third section of each leaflet was specifically targeted for the group in question.

The five separate leaflets, all included in this brochure, are also provided separately on the project web site <https://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers> . They may each be utilised and customised as required, by any interested individuals and groups. They are not copyrighted, but we ask, if appropriate, and particularly if the resulting documents are publicly available, that the project is referenced, and that the project team is informed via the project leader, Professor Erica Smith, at e.smith@federation.edu.au

Enhancing and promoting careers in retail and hospitality:

'At a glance' information for career seekers

Background to the research project

The research project Careers in Everyday Industries, funded by the National Careers Institute, set out to examine retail and hospitality careers and to see how perceptions of low status might be changed. This leaflet provides information of relevance to career seekers – people looking for work or a change of job.

Retail and hospitality industries employ up to 20 per cent of the Australian workforce, and operate throughout Australia, yet the industries have long suffered from low prestige. This discourages people from imagining worthwhile careers in those sectors, contributes to poor self-image for those working in the industries, and to people leaving the industries. Yet the COVID-19 crisis showed just how vital both sectors are for the Australian public and for the national economy.

Five researchers, from Federation University, the University of Queensland and RMIT University, were involved, supported by the national organisation, SkillsIQ. The research, carried out in 2021 and 2022, was comprehensive and methodologically rigorous. As well as analysing national statistical data, we undertook extensive research with industry stakeholders, career professionals and the general public. We undertook in-depth case studies, in seven retail and hospitality companies, interviewing workers and managers, and also compared the Australian situation to two European countries which qualify many more young people in the industries. Our findings were validated by a high-level reference group and a group of expert 'critical friends'. In total, 264 people were involved in our research.

Research project web site and contact details: <https://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers>

Key messages: what we found

A. About the industries: occupational opportunities

- Retail and hospitality are large industry sectors. Around 1.3 million people work in retail (nearly 10% of the Australian workforce) and 700,000 in hospitality (5% of the workforce). In many geographic locations, retail is the main employer. Over 550,000 people work as sales assistants – the most popular job in Australia.
- Retail and hospitality employment is growing steadily. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of jobs in retail grew by 6% and in hospitality by 9%. COVID has created new job roles in both industries.
- There are multiple and diverse job roles in both retail and hospitality. The industries offer front-line, 'back of house' and specialised roles in stores and restaurants, and professional and executive roles at the corporate level. There are also 'generic' roles in regional and head offices, at both entry level and higher level, for example in finance, human resources and marketing.
- Large companies in the industries offer structured, fast-track career development programs that enable young workers (in their 20s) to achieve well-paid senior management positions very quickly, but often employees in retail and hospitality are not aware of the variety of job roles and the pathways to achieve them.
- Retail and hospitality are industries where the vast majority of young people in Australia get their first experience of work, and learn significant transferable skills such as communication, customer service skills, personal organisation, teamworking, and leadership.

B. About the industries: career paths

- Many senior executives in retail and hospitality, and also in other industries and sectors, started out in entry-level roles and worked their way up well-defined career paths into highly desirable and well-remunerated positions.
- Large companies in retail and hospitality offer significant geographical mobility and variety within Australia, and many offer international experience and career paths.
- They offer extensive staff development programs at all levels. It is not necessary to have a qualification to enter the industry.
- There are specialist and supervisory paths in operational sites, and roles in regional and head offices. Some companies offer assistance to employees to purchase franchises. The range of career paths in retail and hospitality is not well-understood by most people outside the industries.
- Many people enter the retail and hospitality workforces as young people, but do not stay to create a career. This high labour turnover can be a significant career advantage for those that do stay, opening up promotion roles.
- There are a large number of management and senior roles in both industries. For example, ABS census data show that 20% of all retail workers are retail managers.
- The ease with which young people gain jobs in retail and hospitality can create a negative impression, as the jobs in these industries are seen as something a person does until they find a “proper job”.

C. About qualifications

- Qualifications are regarded more highly in the hospitality industry than the retail industry; 31 per 100 workers in hospitality are enrolled in qualifications and skill sets, compared with just 5 per 100 workers in retail.
- In hospitality, chef and kitchenhand are the main qualified jobs whereas the Cert III in retail is the dominant qualification in retail.
- Qualifications in both industries tend to be concentrated in specific trade occupations (e.g. chef) and some professional occupations (e.g. accountant, HR manager, etc.).
- Changes to training subsidies for retail and hospitality traineeships contributed to a significant decline in qualifications in the industries, but recently ‘free TAFE’-type initiatives in different states have been made available for some occupations (e.g. cookery).
- Companies in both industries have moved towards the use of in-house, on-line, customised staff development programs that do not result in employees obtaining nationally recognised qualifications.
- The low uptake of nationally recognised qualifications in the industries contributes to the following issues:
 - The general view that these are ‘unskilled’ industries lacking meaningful career opportunities.
 - People working in these industries are unable to formally demonstrate acquired skills to other prospective employers.
 - When recruiting new employees, companies must rely on their understanding of in-house training of other companies to make judgements about skills acquisition of applicants.

D. What companies are doing

- Companies seek people-focused, geographically mobile, and flexibly-minded career seekers, offering fast track career development and competitive remuneration packages for those interested in long term careers.
- Companies acknowledge the diversity of their workforces as a point of difference, attracting talented individuals from many different cultures, different ages, personal histories and genders. This may be particularly appealing to youth seeking inclusiveness, sustainability, and involvement with projects in the broader community.
- Companies promote their career paths that exist beyond frontline roles, through improved internal marketing, cadetships, in-house training, succession planning and school outreach programs. They could do better
- Companies fully understand that their audience of future employees is typically very youthful, being individuals who want to work for companies that promote a modern, contemporary outlook through their branding, marketing and social media.
- Companies can do better to promote its diverse career pathways to those working at entry level within, and outside, the industry.
- Both industries operate outside the normal 9 to 5 hours, with many contingent jobs, at times promoting young people into demanding roles without the required levels of support and experience and at other times contributing to a poor reputation for the industries by engaging in poor employment practices.

E. What career practitioners think

- In our survey of career practitioners who worked in schools and in services for adults,
 - Three quarters of career practitioners have worked in retail and a little over half in hospitality, usually as young people;
 - But over three-fifths underestimate the salary of a supermarket manager and a restaurant manager;
 - Some career practitioners have a good understanding of retail and hospitality and can provide examples of ‘good news’ stories.
- Career discussions between career practitioners and their students or clients rarely include discussion of careers in retail and hospitality. The practitioners are generally not aware of the diversity of available roles.
- Career practitioners tend to view retail and hospitality as “low prestige” industries, perhaps because of their own experiences as young people in the industries at junior level.
- Many parents view retail and hospitality as a poor choice for careers for their children. Young people often report significant family resistance to them choosing a career in these industries.
- The government web sites and resources which career practitioners use give inadequate representations of careers in retail and hospitality.
- However, career practitioners generally have a high level of contact with local employers – placing them in a strong position to communicate the positive aspects of working in retail and hospitality.

F. What the general public thinks

- The retail and hospitality industries are essential to the well-being of the general public by supplying essential goods and services without which society would falter.

- Jobs in these industries promote transferable employability skills for young people while in school and tertiary education that open opportunities for jobs in many industries, besides retail and hospitality.
- Working in these industries is primarily seen as a suitable option for those without university qualifications, due to a limited understanding of the diversity of career opportunities in the industries.
- The general public believes that these industries offer entry-level low status, unskilled and short-term work and this discourages young people from imagining meaningful long-term career opportunities.
- The general public does not understand the plethora of professional job opportunities provided by retail and hospitality companies, both at the customer interface and behind the scenes.
- COVID has adversely affected the general public's perceptions of the ability of these industries to provide secure, sustainable and suitable careers.

What next for career seekers?

Whether you are at school, a recent school or tertiary education graduate, or of mature-age, these actions will guide your thinking about careers in the retail and hospitality industries:

1. Remember that **a wide variety of jobs are available in retail and hospitality**, from casual and part-time front-line work to suit your timetable and other commitments, to fulfilling careers in management and in professional jobs.
2. **Talk to senior people** in the industry, who often started out in entry-level roles before working their way up into highly regarded and well-paid positions.
3. Enquire about the **career development opportunities and career pathways** in your business if you are already working in hospitality or retail.
4. Realise **the value of nationally accredited training or university qualifications**, which are available, especially in hospitality, which can develop and recognise skills and enhance employability with larger national and international companies.
5. Investigate the **diversity of roles, and career options**, that can provide opportunities across Australia and internationally.
6. Look into **opportunities, especially in larger companies, for professional positions** in departments such as I.T., social media, marketing, sales, finance and human resources. These can be entered 'sideways' from outside the industry as well as upwards through working in companies.
7. Look into opportunities in both industries to **run your own business or become a franchisee** of a bigger company.
8. Consider that **rewarding and flexible opportunities** are available not just for young people but also for people changing jobs as mature workers and people approaching retirement.
9. Value the **significant transferable skills developed** in early work in the industries, such as communication, customer service skills, teamwork and leadership, which will help you in accessing higher paying jobs in these and other industries across your lifetime.
10. Remember that the pay and working conditions in junior roles do not apply to higher-level roles; and make sure that you are aware of your employment rights as a new entrant, with the relevant trade union and Fair Work Commission being key sources of advice and support.

Enhancing and promoting careers in retail and hospitality:

'At a glance' information for career practitioners

Background to the research project

This research project, Careers in Everyday Industries, funded by the National Careers Institute set out to examine retail and hospitality careers and to see how perceptions of low status might be changed. This leaflet provides information of relevance to career practitioners.

Retail and hospitality industries employ up to 20 per cent of the Australian workforce, and operate throughout Australia, yet the industries have long suffered from low prestige. This discourages people from imagining worthwhile careers in those sectors, contributes to poor self-image for those working in the industries, and to people leaving the industries. Yet the COVID-19 crisis showed just how vital both of these sectors are for the Australian public and for the national economy.

Five researchers, from Federation University, the University of Queensland and RMIT University, were involved, supported by the national organisation SkillsIQ. The research, carried out in 2021 and 2022, was comprehensive and methodologically rigorous. As well as analysing national statistical data, we undertook extensive research with industry stakeholders, career professionals and the general public. We undertook in-depth case studies, in seven retail and hospitality companies, interviewing workers and managers, and also compared the Australian situation to two European countries which qualify many more young people in the industries. Our findings were validated by a high-level reference group and a group of expert 'critical friends'. In total, 264 people were involved in our research.

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Key messages: what we found

C. About the industries: Occupational opportunities

- Retail and hospitality are large industry sectors. Around 1.3 million people work in retail (nearly 10% of the Australian workforce) and 700,000 in hospitality (5% of the workforce). In many geographic locations, retail is the main employer. Over 550,000 people work as sales assistants – the most popular job in Australia.
- Retail and hospitality employment is growing steadily. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of jobs in retail grew by 6% and in hospitality by 9%. COVID has created new job roles in both industries.
- There are multiple and diverse job roles in both retail and hospitality. The industries offer front-line, 'back of house' and specialised roles in stores and restaurants, and professional and executive roles at the corporate level. There are also 'generic' roles in regional and head offices, at both entry level and higher level, for example in finance, human resources and marketing.
- Large companies in the industries offer structured, fast-track career development programs that enable young workers (in their 20s) to achieve well-paid senior management positions very quickly, but often employees in retail and hospitality are not aware of the variety of job roles and the pathways to achieve them.
- Retail and hospitality are industries where the vast majority of young people in Australia get their first experience of work, and learn significant transferable skills such as communication, customer service skills, personal organisation, teamworking, and leadership.

D. About the industries: Career paths

- Many senior executives in retail and hospitality, and also in other industries and sectors, started out in entry-level roles and worked their way up well-defined career paths into highly desirable and well-remunerated positions.
- Large companies in retail and hospitality offer significant geographical mobility and variety within Australia, and many offer international experience and career paths.
- They offer extensive staff development programs at all levels. It is not necessary to have a qualification to enter the industry.
- There are specialist and supervisory paths in operational sites, and roles in regional and head offices. Some companies offer assistance to employees to purchase franchises. The range of career paths in retail and hospitality is not well-understood by most people outside the industries.
- Many people enter the retail and hospitality workforces as young people, but do not stay to create a career. This high labour turnover can be a significant career advantage for those that do stay, as they open up promotion roles.
- There are a large number of management and senior roles in both industries. For example, ABS census data show that 20% of all retail workers are retail managers. `
- The ease with which young people gain jobs in retail and hospitality can create a negative impression, as the jobs in these industries are seen as something a person does until they find a “proper job”.

C. About qualifications

- Qualifications are regarded more highly in the hospitality industry than the retail industry; 31 per 100 workers in hospitality are enrolled in qualifications and skill sets, compared with just 5 per 100 workers in retail.
- In hospitality, chef and kitchenhand are the main qualified jobs, whereas the Cert III in retail is the dominant qualification in retail.
- Qualifications in both industries tend to be concentrated in specific trade occupations (e.g. chef) and some professional occupations (e.g. accountant, HR manager, etc.).
- Changes to training subsidies for retail and hospitality traineeships contributed to a significant decline in qualifications in the industries, but recently ‘free TAFE’-type initiatives in different states have been made available for some occupations (e.g. cookery).
- Companies in both industries have moved towards the use of in-house, on-line, customised staff development programs that do not result in employees obtaining nationally recognised qualifications.
- The low uptake of nationally recognised qualifications in the industries contributes to the following issues:
 - The general view that these are ‘unskilled’ industries lacking meaningful career opportunities.
 - People working in these industries are unable to formally demonstrate acquired skills to other prospective employers.
 - When recruiting new employees, companies must rely on their understanding of in-house training of other companies to make judgements about skills acquisition of applicants.

D. What companies are doing

- Companies seek people-focused, geographically mobile, and flexibly-minded career seekers , offering fast track career development and competitive remuneration packages for those interested in long term careers.
- Companies acknowledge the diversity of their workforces as a point of difference, attracting talented individuals from many different cultures, ages, personal histories and genders. This may appeal to young people seeking inclusiveness, sustainability, & community involvement.
- Companies can work more effectively to better promote their career paths that exist beyond frontline roles, through improved internal marketing, cadetships, in-house bespoke training, succession planning and school outreach programs.
- Companies fully understand that their audience of future employees is typically very youthful, being individuals who want to work for companies that promote a modern, contemporary outlook through their branding, marketing and social media.
- Companies can do better to promote diverse career pathways to those working at entry level within, and outside, the industry.
- Both industries operate outside the normal 9 to 5 hours, which may be an advantage or a disadvantage for career seekers. At times companies promote young people into demanding roles without the required levels of support and experience, or contribute to a poor reputation for the industries by engaging in poor employment practices.

F. What career practitioners think

- Based on the results of our survey, which covered those who worked in schools and in services for adults,
 - Three quarters of career practitioners have worked in retail and a little over half in hospitality, usually as young people, but on the whole they do not demonstrate detailed knowledge of careers in the industries. Over three-fifths underestimate the salary of a supermarket manager and a restaurant manager;
 - Some career practitioners have a good understanding of retail and hospitality and can provide examples of ‘good news’ stories.
- Career discussions between career practitioners and their students or clients rarely include discussion of careers in retail and hospitality. The practitioners are generally not aware of the diversity of available roles.
- Career practitioners (80% in our survey) tend to view retail and hospitality as “low prestige” industries, perhaps as a result of their own experiences in the industries at junior level.
- Many parents view retail and hospitality as poor career choices for their children. Young people report significant family resistance to them choosing a career in these industries.
- The government web sites and resources which career practitioners use give inadequate representations of careers in retail and hospitality.
- However, career practitioners generally have a high level of contact with local employers – placing them in a strong position to communicate the positive aspects of working in retail and hospitality.

F. What the general public thinks

- The retail and hospitality industries are essential to the well-being of the general public by supplying essential goods and services without which society would falter.
- Jobs in these industries promote transferable employability skills for young people while in school and tertiary education that open opportunities for jobs in many industries, besides retail and hospitality.

- Working in these industries is primarily seen as a suitable option for those without university qualifications, due to a limited understanding of the diversity of career opportunities in the industries.
- The general public believes that these industries offer entry-level low status, unskilled and short-term work and this discourages young people from imagining meaningful long-term career opportunities.
- The general public does not understand the plethora of professional job opportunities provided by retail and hospitality companies, both at the customer interface and behind the scenes.
- COVID has adversely affected the general public's perceptions of the ability of these industries to provide secure, sustainable and suitable careers.

What next for career practitioners?

Career practitioners should consider:

1. Career seekers need to know that entry-level opportunities in these industries abound in all geographic locations, and that attitude, demeanour, work ethic and experience are highly rewarded in these industries,
2. It would help clients to know that that entry-level jobs in shops or restaurants can be 'front of house' and 'back of house', to suit different temperaments. There is also a need to remind clients of the development of multiple transferable skills. But also, young people should be reminded of their employment rights, to avoid any issues which may harm them and/or damage their perceptions of the industries.
3. There is a need to educate students and clients that these industries offer the same professional and 'head office' careers as those in any other industries, accessed via university qualifications, but also that high-level careers in the industries can be, and are, accessed via entry-level jobs.
4. Career practitioners need to build close relationships with the retail and hospitality industries, including but not limited to local employers, in order to better understand the businesses and the career opportunities they afford. This will extend their knowledge of the retail and hospitality industries beyond the often-inadequate information on the industries found in web-based career tools and the careers literature more broadly.
5. If you have worked in these industries, share with those discussing career ideas the value of the employability and other skills you developed in the longer term.
6. More of your career discussions with students and other clients should include examinations of careers in retail and hospitality, as they are amongst the largest employers of people in this country. Challenge your own and others' perceptions about the reported negative aspects of working in the industries, knowing that many companies are very professional and focused upon training and skill development to retain and recruit the best talent for longer term careers.
7. Give feedback to those managing government web sites and related resources about their inadequate representations of careers in these (and other) industries.
8. Use stories of those who have experienced successful careers in the retail and hospitality industries, especially those of your own former clients and students – these are very powerful with career seekers.
9. Remind clients of the excitement potential of the industries - that both industries can provide geographical mobility and work opportunities in varied surroundings, from everyday to high class outlets, as well as the opportunity to run their own business or franchise. They also offer the chance to use new forms of technology and service delivery.

Enhancing and promoting careers in retail and hospitality:

'At a glance' information for family, community and other career influencers

Background to the research project

The research project 'Careers in Everyday Industries', funded by the National Careers Institute, set out to examine retail and hospitality careers and to see how perceptions of low status might be changed. This leaflet provides information of relevance to family, community and other people who may influence people's career choices, in informal settings.

Retail and hospitality industries employ up to 20 per cent of the Australian workforce, and operate throughout Australia, yet the industries have long suffered from low prestige. This discourages people from imagining worthwhile careers in those sectors, contributes to poor self-image for those working in the industries, and to people leaving the industries. Yet the COVID-19 crisis showed just how vital both of these sectors are for the Australian public and for the national economy.

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- Retail and hospitality are industries where the vast majority of young people in Australia get their first experience of work, and learn significant transferable skills such as communication, customer service skills, personal organisation, teamworking, and leadership.

B. About the industries: career paths

- Many senior executives in retail and hospitality, and also in other industries and sectors, started out in entry-level roles and worked their way up well-defined career paths into highly desirable and well-remunerated positions.
- Large companies in retail and hospitality offer significant geographical mobility and variety within Australia, and many offer international experience and career paths.
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- There are specialist and supervisory paths in operational sites, and roles in regional and head offices. Some companies offer assistance to employees to purchase franchises. The range of career paths in retail and hospitality is not well-understood by most people outside the industries.
- Many people enter the retail and hospitality workforces as young people, but do not stay to create a career. This high labour turnover can be a significant career advantage for those that do stay, opening up promotion roles.
- There are a large number of management and senior roles in both industries. For example, ABS census data show that 20% of all retail workers are retail managers. `
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- Qualifications in both industries tend to be concentrated in specific trade occupations (e.g. chef) and some professional occupations (e.g. accountant, HR manager, etc.).
- Companies in both industries have moved towards the use of in-house, on-line, customised staff development programs that do not result in employees obtaining nationally recognised qualifications.
- The low uptake of nationally recognised qualifications in the industries contributes to the following issues:
 - The general view that these are ‘unskilled’ industries lacking meaningful career opportunities.
 - People working in these industries are unable to formally demonstrate acquired skills to other prospective employers.
 - When recruiting new employees, companies must rely on their understanding of in-house training of other companies to make judgements about skills acquisition of applicants.

D. What companies are doing

- Companies seek people-focused, geographically mobile, and flexibly-minded career seekers , offering fast track career development and competitive remuneration packages for those interested in long term careers.
- Companies acknowledge the diversity of their workforces as a point of difference, attracting talented individuals from many different cultures, different ages, personal histories and

genders. This may be particularly appealing to youth seeking inclusiveness, sustainability, and involvement with projects in the broader community.

- Companies fully understand that their audience of future employees is typically very youthful, being individuals who want to work for companies that promote a modern, contemporary outlook through their branding, marketing and social media.
- Both industries operate outside the normal 9 to 5 hours, with many contingent jobs, at times promoting young people into demanding roles without the required levels of support and experience and at other times contributing to a poor reputation for the industries by engaging in poor employment practices.

E. What career practitioners and other careers influencers think.

- Career discussions between career practitioners and their students or clients rarely include discussion of careers in retail and hospitality. The practitioners are generally not aware of the diversity of available roles.
- Career practitioners (80% in our survey) tend to view retail and hospitality as 'low prestige' industries, perhaps as a result of their own experiences as young people in the industries at junior level.
- Many parents view retail and hospitality as a poor choice for careers for their children. Young people often report significant family resistance to them choosing a career in these industries.
- The government web site and resources which career practitioners use give inadequate representations of careers in retail and hospitality.
- Career practitioners generally have a high level of contact with local employers – placing them in a strong position to communicate the positive aspects of working in retail and hospitality.

F. What the general public thinks

- The retail and hospitality industries are essential to the well-being of the general public by supplying essential goods and services without which society would falter.
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- Working in these industries is primarily seen as a suitable option for those without university qualifications, due to a limited understanding of the diversity of career opportunities in the industries.
- The general public believes that these industries offer entry-level low status, unskilled and short-term work and this discourages young people from imagining meaningful long-term career opportunities.
- The general public does not understand the plethora of professional job opportunities provided by retail and hospitality companies, both at the customer interface and behind the scenes.
- COVID has adversely affected the general public's perceptions of the ability of these industries to provide secure, sustainable and suitable careers.

What next for family, community and other career influencers?

People make decisions about the careers they pursue often through the advice, recommendations and guidance they receive from a range of influencers including parents, family, friends and other community members. These career influencers should consider:

1. Their own positive experiences they have had through either working in these industries in the past and/or as a recent retail or hospitality customer engaging with friendly and informed staff. These experiences can be drawn upon to assist those seeking advice about career opportunities.
2. Acknowledging and appreciating the value these industries have for young people, and also adults, in a range of areas:
 - a. making new friends;
 - b. building their social network,
 - c. developing self-confidence
 - d. acquiring employability skills
 - e. fostering a good work ethic.
3. Gaining a greater appreciation of the depth and breadth of job and career opportunities offered by these industries, both at the customer interface and behind the scenes. These include:
 - a. Store/restaurant/hotel management
 - b. Merchandising
 - c. Operations management,
 - d. Marketing, Finance, Human Resource Management, Procurement, IT services
 - e. Executive leadership
4. Acquiring an improved understanding of the diversity of transferable and technical skills these industries, nurture and how these skills can be widely applied within and outside these industries to advance one's career.
5. Talking to young people about the importance of these industries for employment and career opportunities, including fast-track promotions and entrepreneurial opportunities, as they supply essential services for our society and our economy.
6. Helping young people to explore career opportunities in these industries and to investigate the types of education and training programs which might assist them in career advancements.
7. Changing the nature of their conversations and advice, away from stories that may be negative, to how these industries provide a range of opportunities from flexible entry level with limited entry barriers to mid-management, senior and executive roles that are well-remunerated, offer the opportunity to live in exotic destinations and international mobility, and support enviable lifestyles.

Enhancing and promoting careers in retail and hospitality: **'At a glance' information for retail and hospitality businesses**

Background to the research project

The research project 'Careers in Everyday Industries', funded by the National Careers Institute, set out to examine retail and hospitality careers and to see how perceptions of low status might be changed. This leaflet provides information of relevance to retail and hospitality businesses.

Retail and hospitality industries employ up to 20 per cent of the Australian workforce, and operate throughout Australia, yet the industries have long suffered from low prestige. This discourages people from imagining worthwhile careers in those sectors, contributes to poor self-image for those working in the industries, and to people leaving the industries. Yet the COVID-19 crisis showed just how vital both of these sectors are for the Australian public and for the national economy.

Five researchers, from Federation University, the University of Queensland and RMIT University, were involved, supported by the national organisation SkillsIQ. The research, carried out in 2021 and 2022, was comprehensive and methodologically rigorous. As well as analysing national statistical data, we undertook extensive research with industry stakeholders, career professionals and the general public. We undertook in-depth case studies, in seven retail and hospitality companies, interviewing workers and managers, and also compared the Australian situation to two European countries which qualify many more young people in the industries. Our findings were validated by a high-level reference group and a group of expert 'critical friends'. In total, 264 people were involved in our research.

Research project web site and contact details: <https://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers>

Key messages: what we found

C. About the industries: occupational opportunities

- Retail and hospitality are large industry sectors. Around 1.3 million people work in retail (nearly 10% of the Australian workforce) and 700,000 in hospitality (5% of the workforce). In many geographic locations, retail is the main employer. Over 550,000 people work as sales assistants – the most popular job in Australia.
- Retail and hospitality employment is growing steadily. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of jobs in retail grew by 6% and in hospitality by 9%. COVID has created new job roles in both industries.
- There are multiple and diverse job roles in both retail and hospitality. The industries offer front-line, 'back of house' and specialised roles in stores and restaurants, and professional and executive roles at the corporate level. There are also 'generic' roles in regional and head offices, at both entry level and higher level, for example in finance, human resources and marketing.
- Large companies in the industries offer structured, fast-track career development programs that enable young workers (in their 20s) to achieve well-paid senior management positions very quickly, but often employees in retail and hospitality are not aware of the variety of job roles and the pathways to achieve them.
- Retail and hospitality are industries where the vast majority of young people in Australia get their first experience of work, and learn significant transferable skills such as communication, customer service skills, personal organisation, teamworking, and leadership.

D. About the industries: career paths

- Many senior executives in retail and hospitality, and also in other industries and sectors, started out in entry-level roles and worked their way up well-defined career paths into highly desirable and well-remunerated positions.
- Large companies in retail and hospitality offer significant geographical mobility and variety within Australia, and many offer international experience and career paths.
- They offer extensive staff development programs at all levels. It is not necessary to have a qualification to enter the industry.
- There are specialist and supervisory paths in operational sites, and roles in regional and head offices. Some companies offer assistance to employees to purchase franchises. The range of career paths in retail and hospitality is not well-understood by most people outside the industries.
- Many people enter the retail and hospitality workforces as young people, but do not stay to create a career. This high labour turnover can be a significant career advantage for those that do stay, opening up promotion roles.
- There are a large number of management and senior roles in both industries. For example, ABS census data show that 20% of all retail workers are retail managers.
- The ease with which young people gain jobs in retail and hospitality can create a negative impression, as the jobs in these industries are seen as something a person does until they find a “proper job”.

C. About qualifications

- Qualifications are regarded more highly in the hospitality industry than the retail industry; 31 per 100 workers in hospitality are enrolled in qualifications and skill sets, compared with just 5 per 100 workers in retail.
- In hospitality, chef and kitchenhand are the main qualified jobs whereas the Cert III in retail is the dominant qualification in retail.
- Qualifications in both industries tend to be concentrated in specific trade occupations (e.g. chef) and some professional occupations (e.g. accountant, HR manager, etc.).
- Changes to training subsidies for retail and hospitality traineeships contributed to a significant decline in qualifications in the industries, but recently ‘free TAFE’-type initiatives in different states have been made available for some occupations (e.g. cookery).
- Companies in both industries have moved towards the use of in-house, on-line, customised staff development programs that do not result in employees obtaining nationally recognised qualifications.
- The low uptake of nationally recognised qualifications in the industries contributes to the following issues:
 - The general view that these are ‘unskilled’ industries lacking meaningful career opportunities.
 - People working in these industries are unable to formally demonstrate acquired skills to other prospective employers.
 - When recruiting new employees, companies must rely on their understanding of in-house training of other companies to make judgements about skills acquisition of applicants.

D. What companies are doing

- Companies seek people-focused, geographically mobile, and flexibly-minded career seekers, offering fast track career development and competitive remuneration packages for those interested in long term careers.

- Companies acknowledge the diversity of their workforces as a point of difference, attracting talented individuals from many different cultures, different ages, personal histories and genders. This may be particularly appealing to youth seeking inclusiveness, sustainability, and involvement with projects in the broader community.
- Companies can work more effectively to better promote their career paths that exist beyond frontline roles, through improved internal marketing, cadetships, in-house bespoke training, succession planning and school outreach programs.
- Companies fully understand that their audience of future employees is typically very youthful, being individuals who want to work for companies that promote a modern, contemporary outlook through their branding, marketing and social media.
- Companies can do better to promote its diverse career pathways to those working at entry level within, and outside, the industry.
- Both industries operate outside the normal 9 to 5 hours, with many contingent jobs, at times promoting young people into demanding roles without the required levels of support and experience and at other times contributing to a poor reputation for the industries by engaging in poor employment practices.

F. What career practitioners and other careers influencers think.

- Based on the results of our survey, which covered those who worked in schools and in services for adults,
 - Three quarters of career practitioners have worked in retail and a little over half in hospitality, usually as young people;
 - But over three-fifths underestimate the salary of a supermarket manager and a restaurant manager;
 - Some career practitioners have a good understanding of retail and hospitality and can provide examples of 'good news' stories.
- Career discussions between career practitioners and their students or clients rarely include discussion of careers in retail and hospitality. The practitioners are generally not aware of the diversity of available roles.
- Career practitioners (80% in our survey) tend to view retail and hospitality as "low prestige" industries, perhaps as a result of their own experiences as young people in the industries at junior level.
- Many parents view retail and hospitality as a poor choice for careers for their children. Young people often report significant family resistance to them choosing a career in these industries.
- The government web sites and resources which career practitioners use give inadequate representations of careers in retail and hospitality.
- However, career practitioners generally have a high level of contact with local employers – placing them in a strong position to communicate the positive aspects of working in retail and hospitality.

F. What the general public thinks

- The retail and hospitality industries are essential to the well-being of the general public by supplying essential goods and services without which society would falter.
- Jobs in these industries promote transferable employability skills for young people while in school and tertiary education that open opportunities for jobs in many industries, besides retail and hospitality.
- Working in these industries is primarily seen as a suitable option for those without university qualifications, due to a limited understanding of the diversity of career opportunities in the industries.

- The general public believes that these industries offer entry-level low status, unskilled and short-term work and this discourages young people from imagining meaningful long-term career opportunities.
- The general public does not understand the plethora of professional job opportunities provided by retail and hospitality companies, both at the customer interface and behind the scenes.
- COVID has adversely affected the general public's perceptions of the ability of these industries to provide secure, sustainable and suitable careers.

What next for retail and hospitality businesses?

Businesses should consider the following:

1. **Businesses need to find new ways of marketing for recruitment.** A marketing campaign emphasising the “essential” nature of retail and hospitality, similar to similar campaigns for industries in the health, defence and police sectors could be effective.
2. **Businesses need to promote and market the diversity of careers available.** Many staff working in the industries as well as those outside the industries are not aware of the multiplicity of career paths in stores/restaurants and also of more specialised roles in corporate centres.
3. **Businesses should explain the significant opportunities for development and promotion** for young people into senior positions with good pay and extensive responsibility more quickly and at a younger age than in other industry sectors.
4. **Businesses need to acknowledge and address industry practices which may be contributing to ‘image problems’.** There is a common perception that working in retail and hospitality is badly paid and subject to poor working conditions.
5. **Businesses need to increase their use of nationally recognised training** leading to formal qualifications, and to lobby governments for more training funding to be allocated for these industries. The lack of qualifications leads to a perception of low prestige.
6. **Businesses must promote a modern and contemporary outlook** aimed at young people through their branding, marketing and social media.
7. **Businesses need to work much more closely with schools and career practitioners** on developing promotional materials to promote awareness of the industries and the career possibilities that are on offer.
8. **Businesses need to work with universities** to develop suitable degree qualifications for those seeking a long term career in the industries. Many people do not see retail and hospitality as sectors employing people with university qualifications.
9. **Businesses should highlight the opportunities for working more closely with people** in the industries. Many people are attracted to working in retail and hospitality because they enjoy the close interaction with people and helping people.

Enhancing and promoting careers in retail and hospitality

'At a glance' information for policy makers

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What next for policy makers?

Policy makers must consider the following ideas and actions to support and guide the future growth of both industries as among our major employers in Australia:

1. **Policy makers must work more closely with the retail and hospitality industries** to improve public perceptions about the industries and market the industries more effectively for employment prospects. A taskforce should be formed with retail and hospitality leaders, and leaders in careers practice, to focus on better ways to highlight careers in these industries to careers practitioners and others in schools and the tertiary sector.
2. **Public perceptions continue to be negatively influenced by persistent cultural and structural issues in both industries.** In particular, perceptions of the long-term and often prestigious careers in these industries are poorly understood by many people who consider the waiter and shop assistant as archetypical industry roles. These must be consciously countered.
3. **Governments must support appropriate actions taken by the industries** to recover from the closures and major job losses during the COVID 19 pandemic.
4. **Policy makers should consider highlighting the benefits of working in the retail and hospitality sectors,** such as long-term career paths and rewards via websites and in careers literature. The 'Australian Jobs' publication is particularly deficient, with an impoverished representation of the industries. These industries should not have to counter reinforcement of negative stereotypes provided by government publications.
5. In pronouncements and publicity about jobs and training. **Governments should use depictions of, and stories from, retail and hospitality.** These industries are rarely featured. Stories could highlight technological innovation and also people interactions
6. **Policy makers in the jobs, skills and training fields need to inform themselves about the industries;** most have little knowledge, or only memories of working in the industries as young people.
7. **There is a need for review of the formal training and education arrangements (VET & HE) for these industries.** Currently the industries are under-serviced by qualifications.
8. **Commonwealth and state governments should restore appropriate funding for retail and hospitality qualifications,** so that training providers can resume offering these qualifications, include more jobs from the industries in 'free VET' course lists, and consider new apprenticeship arrangements in the industries.
9. **Classifications on ANZSCO need improving** to better recognise job roles within these industries.
10. **Steps are required by Government to support these industries to develop better workforce strategies.** There is a need for more promotion, and greater enforcement, of good employment practices in these industries to ensure that Award and Enterprise Agreement conditions are upheld. Robust action would help to combat public distrust.