

Tasmanian Hospitality Association

Submission

Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy

The Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission regarding the Tasmanian Government's Youth Jobs Strategy discussion paper.

The THA is the peak body representing the accommodation sector, hotels, pubs, restaurants, cafes and community and sporting clubs across Tasmania. With over 2,500 venues and 24,500 employees, Tasmania's hospitality industry is the state's third largest employing industry and will play a major role in progressing the objectives of the Youth Jobs Strategy.

We believe there are some fundamental matters that the paper does not adequately address, and these will be critical if the strategy is to deliver the key objectives for our youth in providing them with practical and effective pathways to employment.

The Current Systems and Services

In order to develop an effective strategy, there needs to be a clear understanding of the current systems and services in place. Importantly, there is a need to articulate the current programs and services that are delivering valuable results and outcomes, where there are deficiencies, issues or barriers, and any new initiatives that will be implemented as part the strategy to achieve the objectives being set.

However, the discussion paper does not provide a detailed review of the current programs and services, many of which are industry based or delivered by private service providers, and the resultant strategy may run the risk of duplication of effort, or not addressing ways in which the current systems and services can be improved and built upon.

The THA therefore strongly recommends more in-depth engagement with the industry-based program managers and private service providers in developing the strategy, to ensure it will deliver the employment outcomes our young people need as they look to enter the workforce.

Jobs Ready

The discussion paper establishes a key objective of ensuring young people are "jobs ready". The issue here is that there is a disconnect between industry and the education sector as to what this actually means. Critically this has a direct effect on the allocation of funding for education and training and needs to be addressed if the strategy is to be successful in developing the employment pathways for our young people.

Being "jobs ready" is not just holding a certificate or qualification, but also having the personal and practical skills and abilities to be productive in the workplace. Without a focus on these personal and practical skills, we are setting our young people up to fail, by not having the confidence and capabilities they need.

It is also important to recognise that different industries and different employers require differing skills and abilities, and for this reason a one size fits all approach in preparing young people for the workplace will not be successful.

For these reasons the THA strongly believes there needs to be a much greater emphasis on these personal and practical skills, and that funding for non-accredited training through organisations such as Visitor Experience Training (VXT), and personal skills development through organisations such as the Beacon Foundation, needs to be commensurate with ensuring our young people have the ability to enter the workforce with confidence.

The Strategy

The discussion paper does not outline a specific strategy as such, but instead, sets out a range of desired objectives. It is very difficult therefore to provide specific feedback without this detail.

That said, a major concern is that the purpose of the Strategy is stated on page 11 as being a joint exercise between the Department of State Growth and the Department of Education, Children and Young People with, “input from other areas and levels of government and the community and business sectors”.

This tends to indicate that this is primarily an internal departmental strategy, driven by departmental objectives.

The THA strongly believes the strategy needs to be fully collaborative with industry and the private sector service providers if it is to have any chance of success and be of value for the young people it purports to be supporting into the workplace.

Importantly this should involve government, industry and the service providers reaching agreement on the key objectives, agreement on what works, what the barriers are, what the priorities are, and the most effective means of working together towards the agreed objectives.

Without this as the initial critical step the Youth Jobs Strategy is at risk of simply becoming an administrative strategy, and not one focused on supporting young people into jobs.

It is also interesting to note that, on the bottom of page 14 of the discussion paper it states that,

“The Youth Jobs Strategy will also look to Tasmanian businesses and industry to create more entry-level opportunities that provide young Tasmanians with a chance to build their confidence and skills in a supportive and welcoming workplace.”

And

“In return, the Strategy will commit to helping employers develop the strategies, skills and confidence to provide more opportunities and support for younger workers”.

This, essentially, misses the point. There is no shortage of entry level positions available in the hospitality industry. In fact, the industry is crying out for workers across the state and it is clear that creating new entry level positions is not the answer.

The issue is the lack of practical skills, and the personal attributes that are needed to secure and maintain a job in the industry. This is why the THA has been a strong advocate of non-accredited training, and personal development and support programs such as those developed and delivered by the Beacon Foundation. These programs have proven to be successful and need to be a major focus of the Youth Jobs Strategy.

The THA is ready to work and collaborate with the government and the other key stakeholders to achieve the outcomes needed, to develop practical and effective pathways for our youth to develop the skills and abilities they need to enter the workforce.

Careers Fairs

The discussion paper states, in relation to careers fairs that, “This happens in a range of ad-hoc and uncoordinated ways by industry peak bodies and employers. Better coordination of engagement with schools and communities on these types of activities has been identified as a priority by a range of stakeholders. Critically, young people want to know ‘what’s next’ after career expos and industry exposure activities – and to continue the engagement.”

This tends to give a negative impression of the work that has been done to reach out to the students across Tasmania through careers fairs and expos, when this is not the case. Organisations such as the THA and the Beacon Foundation have been very successful with the work they have undertaken over many years in schools across the state, so that students are aware of the career and employment opportunities that exist in the hospitality industry, and indeed in other industry sectors.

It is agreed however that there is a need for further follow up and engagement with the students after the career fairs and expos. This will be particularly important where the student has made a decision about the employment or career opportunity they wish to pursue.

The THA believes that this would best be undertaken in a coordinated manner, a single service that the young people can approach for advice and direction. This could take the form of a centralised careers advisory service that would not only include a repository of careers information, it could also provide assistance to those students looking to navigate their way through the training and further skills development services, they may need to secure the employment role they are interested in.

Work Placement

Work placement is essential in supporting students as they look to their futures and the careers or employment opportunities they wish to pursue. Not only does it provide them with some insights into their preferred career choice, it provides them with important experience of the workplace, which in many cases will be a vastly different environment to their classroom settings.

Obviously, the safety of the children participating in work placement programs is paramount, and all necessary steps, procedures and safeguards must be in place. However, the THA is very much aware that the current procedures and red tape are presenting a significant barrier to some hospitality employers in participating in work placement programs.

The THA is very much of the view that, to encourage more potential employers to participate in work placement programs, the current work placement procedures should be reviewed with a view to reducing the complexity of the process, at the same time as maintaining the important measures that are needed to ensure the young person’s safety.

Roundtable

The THA is strongly of the view that a roundtable with all key stakeholders is the best way forward to enable the government, industry and the service providers to work together in developing and delivering an effective Youth Jobs Strategy, and the important outcomes this represents for our youth as they look to make their way into the workforce.

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