

25 October 2023

Jobs Tasmania
YouthJobsStrategy@jobstasmania.tas.gov.au

Dear Jobs Tasmania,

Hydro Tasmania response to Tasmania's Youth Jobs Strategy

Hydro Tasmania supports the Tasmania Government's ambition to create a Youth Jobs Strategy (the strategy). We understand that the objectives of the strategy are to better support young Tasmanians into work, and improve youth engagement in employment, further education and training.

Hydro Tasmania is a Government Business Enterprise that operates state-wide, in many regional areas of Tasmania. We are a significant employer of Tasmanians (over 900) offering many career pathways including electrical and mechanical trades, engineering, human resources, accounting, communications, strategy, energy trading, risk analysis, customer service and many others.

These roles include positions that would typically be attractive to young people including apprentices, trainee maintenance assistants, university graduates and business trainees. We also host vacation and internship students and have recently piloted a work experience program to help expose young people to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) career opportunities at Hydro Tasmania. Hydro Tasmania also actively participates in career fairs and has established 'Girls In Power' - a free three-day career exposure program designed to demystify the power industry for young Tasmanian women. We have also partnered with the Beacon Foundation to deliver programs that help young people transition from education into meaningful employment, particularly in those regional areas in which we operate. Programs like this help to bridge a gap between students and industry, and we feel there is more room to build on these opportunities for students and industry state-wide. Hydro Tasmania also offers entry careers in Customer Service through our Momentum Energy business and has great examples of career progression from these entry level roles.

Since 2017, we've been offering a suite of lesson plans, class talks, power station tours and career talks for Tasmania primary and high school students and teachers (we offer these opportunities all over the state). This has given schools and communities exposure to Hydro Tasmania opportunities from an education and career pathway perspective, while also giving Hydro Tasmania exposure to some of the challenges young people in our regions face in terms of engagement in employment, education and training that can be factored into our continuous improvement approach.

Hydro Tasmania recognises that some of the difficulty associated with getting youth engaged in the workforce can come from challenges experienced in education (potentially throughout childhood) and how these can lead to potential challenges in the transition to work. While there are many factors at play in respect to matters such as this, we see through the Youth Jobs Strategy process specific opportunities to improve base level STEM literacy and interest in STEM careers (particularly for girls and young women). We also see opportunity to improve career readiness and investment in capability and capacity building for services to support our young people to build career awareness, and look forward to the ongoing positive evolution of this work.

We have provided answers to the consultation questions in Attachment A in the context of Hydro Tasmania's experience in the Tasmanian community (as an employer and through our education program). A key challenge for our business is enthusing and engaging young people, some of the challenges this Strategy is aiming to address. We welcome the focus on this space. If you have any questions or require further clarification on any aspect of our submission, please contact Jessica Nixon, Head of People and Capability at Jessica.Nixon@hydro.com.au or 03 6240 2269.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Johnson
Acting Executive General Manager People, Culture and Engagement

Attachment A

Principles of the Youth Jobs Strategy

For detail on the principles refer to page 9 of the Discussion Paper.

Are these principles right or are there other best-practice principles that we should consider in our approach to this Strategy?

Hydro Tasmania sees these principles as being in the right areas. We agree with the first principle being “youth centred”, this is very important. We do think there could be a principle that highlights the importance of role models (you can’t be what you can’t see).

Wellbeing and safety of the young person is fundamental to successful engagement with continued education and work exposure. Children are enduring a range of circumstances within the home environment which may prevent them from participating in programs (trauma, intergenerational poverty, lack of value of education and work by parents). We hope that the adoption of the strategy will result in the ability to secure the appropriate services that support the wellbeing of children, whether they are within urban areas or our most remote locations.

Effective Youth Pathways Practice

Refer to Discussion Paper pages 14 and 15 for more detail

Do the common elements and phases in the table make sense? Are any one or two more important than others?

The common elements and phases make sense, however, potentially more emphasis could be placed on parents and caregivers (who are the child's biggest influencers) receiving the support they need to value education and understand the role it can play in their child's future. Teachers, industry, peers, coaches, youth services providers etc are all important but unless parents are engaged with the education value proposition early in their child's life, this can often result in students demonstrating apathy and lack of aspiration for work exposure and career choices. The early learning programs the State Government has introduced for three-year olds that involves parents, is an important first step in the education value chain.

How can government, community, business, schools and industry support better connection and continuity of support across these elements?

There is opportunity to have clearer areas of responsibility and accountability between the different institutions. Also ensuring there is enough capacity across the institutions to take on each stage of the phases and elements.

Better connection and continuity can be supported by establishing processes that articulate clear goals, areas of accountability, evaluation, and program adjustments. Bringing all parties together as part of a Working Group after the adoption of the strategy should assist in finding ways to achieve better outcomes. This may require schools adjusting their curriculum to accommodate an improved program. Pivotal to this is also communication with long lead times. Industry needs to be able to plan well in advance to allocate staff and develop work exposure programs. In Hydro Tasmania’s experience, schools tend to provide short notice when career exposure opportunities and support are required.

The pathway from school to ‘whatever comes next’ looks different for everyone – we need a system that recognises and supports diverse experience and need.

What is the one thing that you believe could have the most positive impact on a young person's transition pathway from school to further study, training or employment?

A major element of ensuring the most positive impact on a young person's transition pathway from school to further study, training or employment is ensuring there are a range of experiences on offer. There could be consideration given towards moving away from traditional streaming models (University or VET) and working with industry to provide a range of pathway models. This could include gap year work programs (for example, in agriculture, viticulture, hospitality) which would help develop soft skills and provide exposure to preferences around career choices, and also potentially fill employment gaps for employers. Teachers should be supported to explore broader experiences with secondary students, this could occur by engaging a career adviser contractor who provides end to end service for students and teachers. This could include resume writing, through to work exposure, including interview and understanding employment contracts and employer expectations.

Hydro Tasmania's more recent experience has been that candidates to entry level positions (apprentices, administration, traineeships, customer service) tend to lack experience in job application writing and interview skills, particularly in our regional areas. This is a gap that we feel could be addressed through the above suggestion. We are concerned that potential employers may be missing out on suitable candidates (young people), simply based on the applications they put in. As an employer, we will continue to strive to create more inclusive and innovative recruitment and selection processes so that young people can have the greatest changes of success.

Young people in our regions don't always have access to the same support, services and options as their metropolitan peers.

How can we improve access to services and support for young people in our regions?

What type of support do our young people outside larger metro areas need to succeed?

Another way to improve access to services and support is to bring industry together in regional areas to create bespoke programs for students in that region. Instead of one industry providing a work exposure program, collaborate to provide a range of experiences over several days or, one day a week over a month. Ensuring a group of students participate instead of just one student will also make this worthwhile. Consideration could also be given to associating that work exposure with the opportunity to secure a qualification such as first aid, responsible service of alcohol, construction industry white card, etc.

In terms of supporting those outside larger metro areas to succeed, there needs to be recognition that some students have additional challenges, such as becoming young parents or having other caring responsibilities. Creating programs that accommodate their parenting or caring obligations can help these people succeed. These programs need to be inclusive and safe, ensure adequate childcare provision and reconnect them with education. Industry can also demonstrate that they have family friendly policies and can accommodate mothers.

The barriers for young people are complex and can't be resolved in isolation.

How can the service systems better connect and respond to the complex needs of young people?

It is key that all stakeholders work together and should the strategy be adopted, help co-design and deliver individualised programs. These programs need to have real links to career opportunities.

Some young people, such as those with disability or with caring responsibilities, need additional, targeted support to participate in the workforce.

What would unlock the ability for young Tasmanians with different needs to participate in work, education and training?

Unlocking the ability for young Tasmanian's with different needs to participate could include having respite provision and adequate childcare options available for those with caring responsibilities. Industry needs to be across inclusive hiring practise, this includes allowing for the provision of interview questions in advance of interviews and ensuring that any specific needs or requirements for those with a disability can be met to make the interview accessible.

Hydro Tasmania is currently participating in RecruitAble, a two-year pilot program aiming to create a successful model for inclusive recruitment in Australia. The program will allow us to review our current recruitment models and provide training for our recruitment team to address the employment gap for people with a disability.

How do young people get into work or training if they can't get to work or training?

What are some innovative approaches to address transport issues for young people that keep safety as the highest priority?

Hydro Tasmania utilises commuter vehicles for those that work out on-site, in the regions we operate in around the state. This enables staff to 'carpool' together to site and is particularly of benefit to those who might still be working towards their driver's license. It also addresses fatigue management for our people when there are travel times required.

Young people don't know what they don't know or what they should know.

Where do young people currently get information from to support them to make decisions or connect to employment and training opportunities?

What does it take to be 'job-ready'?

What can employers do to help build those work-readiness skills? Can you share any examples of best practice?

We believe a key part of ensuring young people are 'job ready' is ensuring they get exposure to work opportunities and work experience programs.

Hydro Tasmania has recently piloted a work-experience program, aimed at students in years 10-12. This program includes a chance to understand the business and meet a variety of people who work in the business (engineers, trades, apprentices, analyst, scientists etc). We provide students with the opportunity to learn some soft skills including listening, asking questions, and other basic interview skills. Students also get an opportunity to visit one of our power stations in person and meet the people that work on these sites.

Overall, the program was well-received. The students reported the 'career speed dating' to be the highlight of their week. They enjoyed getting to hear from so many different people, about different career paths and roles within the business. Following a successful pilot, we have plans to run the program again.

Try before you buy

What do (or should) quality work exposure activities look like for young people? What are some examples of this being done well?

An example of a work exposure activity is the VETStream Online Event. It is a similar approach to speed careering except technology is used to connect students to a range of people on industry sites. The employee provides commentary about their job, while they are on the job. It is short and sharp, and shared via video link. We have been involved in this program through employees sharing their job on VETStream.

A first job might only be the first step – young people need ongoing support and opportunities for continuous learning and development to maintain decent, meaningful work.

How do we balance and support work and learning for young people?

One way of balancing and supporting work and learning for young people can be by increasing the capability for education institutions to create alternative learning environments that enable all students to participate. This includes, through broadening the competency-based model, increasing classroom accessibility models (video link) and accessibility to teachers.

Industry and employers want young people to be part of their workforce – but they need help to make the connection.

How could your business or industry be better supported to provide opportunities for young people?

What information or resources are needed to make Tasmania’s training system more accessible and streamlined?

Hydro Tasmania sees opportunity for the development of entry level traineeships, cadetships or trade assistant models as pilots and a pathway to further education and career development.

We think there is opportunity to create a one stop online training hub for VET, University and other training programs. This could be the first stage of engaging and exploring training. Ensuring industry is engaged with the training hub so they can also provide updates on skills requirements, skills deficiencies, and opportunities. Students and teachers need to be able to understand where the career vacancies exist – for example, the ability to predict the construction boom through the renewable energy sector.

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

In our industry, particularly for our electrical and mechanical apprentices, we find that those under the age of 18 (which is typically the end of year 12) are quite limited in what they can do in terms of high-risk work licences. Those who can complete high-risk work licences are able to contribute to the team considerably more than those who are unable to yet obtain such a licence due to their age. We see this as quite a barrier for young people. Encouraging the completion of years 11 and 12 and expanding year 12 education in regional areas could provide an important pathway for pursuing higher education or VET education.