

Submission in Response to the
Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper

Tasmanian Youth Employment Alliance

October 2023

About Us

The Youth Employment Alliance is a unique collaboration of experienced youth focused services, that work collectively to elevate the voices of young Tasmanians 15-25 years in addressing barriers to economic participation and further education and training in Tasmania.

We seek to influence systemic change by advocating for evidence-based approaches that respond to identified employment, education and training barriers for young Tasmanians to improve employment participation rates, and access to sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities for young people in our State.

Members of the Alliance are drawn from organisations delivering state, federal and philanthropic-funded employment services to young Tasmanians aged 15-25 including Beacon Foundation, City Mission Launceston, Colony 47, Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania, Workskills Tasmania, Yourtown, Youth, Family and Community Connections Inc. and the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT).



This Submission is also supported by YNOT members Hamlet and Carers Tasmania.



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Key Recommendations

Federal policy and programs: advocate for change.

- The Tasmanian Government must exert its political will to shape and leverage the youth employment policies and programs implemented by the Federal Government to better support Tasmania's youth.

Leverage current market conditions.

- The Tasmanian Government must adequately invest in the implementation and evaluation of the Youth Jobs Strategy to leverage current labour conditions. Appropriate investment is required to move young people from entrenched disadvantage and prevent others from falling into disadvantage; in order to build Tasmania's future labour force.

Establish a clear vision.

- Further consultation with young people, government and community sectors, and industry is required to develop a unifying vision for the Youth Jobs Strategy and articulate the aspirations of young Tasmanians.

Articulate the duration of the Strategy and age range.

- The proposed duration of the Strategy needs to be defined and communicated to elicit meaningful and targeted feedback from stakeholders. This will be important in the identification of short, medium and long term actions and focus areas for government.
- The Strategy needs to explicitly include the age range, which must extend to 25 years.

Strengthen Best-Practice Principles.

- Broaden the principles to include government and industry and add a whole of government systemic approach to youth employment as a principle to guide decision making.

Strengthen effective Youth Pathways Practice.

- Phase 1: increase the emphasis on career awareness and fund professional career guidance staff in secondary schools.
- Phase 2: remove the term 'soft' in essential employability skills, recognise psychological work readiness and involve young people in the design and dissemination of information.
- Phase 3: include school-based career intermediaries to support the pathway from school to work and training, provide a targeted response to work placements for 18-25 year old's, consider regulatory barrier to work placement such as the Child and Youth Safe Organisation legislation, and consider the role of volunteering in job-readiness.
- Phase 4: provision of coaches that support employers and employees in the first 3-6 months of employment, recognise that young people are likely to move through this phase of the employment multiple times and require support.
- Connection and continuity: career intermediaries are required to support young people to understand career opportunities and industries/employers to in-reach into schools.

Recognise and imbed the following elements in the Strategy:

- The role of the community services industry in supporting the capacity and capability of young people with complex needs to engage in education, training and employment.
- The impact of intersectionality on the complexity of supporting young people to engage in education, training and employment.
- Greater acknowledgement of and investment in the social and structural barriers that prevent many young people, including those from a migrant background, young people living with disability, young people experiencing mental ill health and young carers, from accessing meaningful employment.
- Transport disadvantage and investment directed toward expanding driver mentor programs, particularly in rural and remote areas, community-based solutions to transporting young people to and from education and employment, strong incentives and subsidies to support young people to access public and private transport, and a stronger voice for young people in transport related policies.
- Recognition of the importance of social capital in supporting pathways and options to work and supporting the creation of this social capital for young people that do not have intrinsic access to it.
- Support for employers to redesign opportunities for young people to enter their workplaces using initiatives such as the SVA 'rebuilding the career ladder' program.
- Utilising volunteering as an analogue to work-like experiences and placements.
- Lobby the Federal Government through their reform agenda to ensure there is adequate income support for young people to undertake further study and training, this may include greater subsidies for employers.
- Support training providers to have a more streamlined approach to micro-credentialling and packaging of micro-credentials to a larger qualification.

Other considerations.

- Employers and government can support young people with industrial relations/workplace conditions that support flexibility but close loopholes that continue to exploit and disadvantage young people.
- Greater education must be provided to both employers and young people about their workplace rights and responsibilities and potentially increased monitoring to ensure young people are supported in safe workplaces.

Introduction

The Youth Employment Alliance ('the Alliance') welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department of State Growth (Jobs Tasmania) and the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) Discussion Paper, 'Youth Jobs Strategy.'

Our response to the Discussion Paper has been informed by key stakeholders working with and for Alliance member organisations, YNOT members and young Tasmanians. The views of young people reflected in our response are based on previous YNOT consultations related to the topic and young people accessing employment services in Tasmania. This includes YNOT's *Summary of Youth Feedback on Employment (January 2023)*¹ that informed the Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion paper.

The Tasmanian Government should be commended for investing in the development of a Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy to support the economic participation of young people in our State. Despite recent improvements in the youth unemployment rate, young Tasmanians still have the lowest participation rates in employment, education, and training in the nation². We fully support a whole of government, community and industry approach in responding to the complex needs of all stakeholders and are pleased to see recognition of the need to align this Strategy with other government reform agendas for young people.

Federal policy and programs: advocating for change

In its 'Working Future White Paper'³ released in September 2023 the Australian government highlighted 10 key Action areas to support a dynamic and inclusive labour market. Within these Action areas the Federal Government highlights policies/programs/initiatives that it has implemented, are underway or are future reform directions. This is a comprehensive compendium – much of which could be invaluable to Tasmania's workforce.

Although the White paper compellingly highlights the issues and structural challenges for young people, unfortunately, within all the listed actions there is not one mention of young people and the targeted initiatives and policy positions required to specifically support our future workforce.

This is the time for Tasmania to lead the nation. By establishing a Youth Jobs Strategy led by the voices of young people and supported by government, employers and community to mobilise the potential of our much-needed future labour force. But Tasmania does not have the resources to do this work alone and must expend political will to leverage Federal Government policies and future directions to better support youth employment.

Leveraging current market conditions

Current market conditions are almost unprecedented in Australian history. The national unemployment rate is at a near-record low, below 3.6% unemployment, with 4.2% in Tasmania⁴. Labour demand is outstripping supply, with structural skills shortages that must be addressed⁵. With a Labour Market Entry Exit (LMEE) already below 1⁶, Tasmania must pay particular attention to building the skills and capability of its entire population including those with complex needs such as low functional literacy and numeracy and low digital access and literacy. Tasmania's unique labour force, pressures of an aging population and a population that experiences consistently greater disadvantage across all age ranges, means that we must pay particular attention to how to best support and retain our young people to be the workforce of our future.

The investment required to successfully implement this Youths Jobs Strategy cannot be understated, net migration into the state cannot make up for the entire projected shortfall in our future labour force. The need for this investment is evident in Tasmania having the lowest participation rate for young people (15-24 years) in the nation⁷. If we can support all our young people in this time of high employment and possibility for participation, then as a State we can avoid them staying in or sinking into entrenched disadvantage. Young people who are working, in training or education are building their human [and social] capital. Young people who are not engaged in education or training (NEET) are conversely at risk of not developing the skills needed to gain employment, and risk becoming socially excluded⁸.

Overarching comments

The Alliance applauds the Government's commitment to building youth voice into the development of the Strategy as this will be integral to its success. However, ongoing engagement of young Tasmanians in the implementation and evaluation of the Strategy will be critical in achieving desired outcomes and needs to be articulated in the Strategy.

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be a unifying vision for the Youth Jobs Strategy. This discussion paper would have been the ideal opportunity to have received input on a vision. It is recommended that further consultation is undertaken to develop the long-term employment education and training aspirations of young Tasmanians.

There is also a lack of clarity with respect to the duration of the Strategy and the age range of young people. We understand that the Strategy will initially focus on supporting young Tasmanians aged 15-24 years, and whilst there is not the intention to exclude young people under 25 years, there is the potential for this to occur if not clearly articulated. We recommend that the Government extend the age range to 25 years to align with existing youth strategies and to avoid ambiguity.

So, how are we going to do this?

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

The Alliance fully support the overarching statement and approach underpinning the Strategy and agree that ‘*collaboration and connectivity*’ is critical to its success however, we would like to see the key principles strengthened and refined to guide decision making under the Strategy.

Currently, the principles focus on young people however, they need to extend to include industry and employers. We welcome the focus on youth participation, ensuring the safety and well-being of young people, place-based initiatives and adopting best practice and strengths-based approaches. However, consideration needs to be given to the role of industry with respect to workplace culture, standards and quality assurance (for organisations and employees), professional development and collaboration and coordination across sectors to enhance policy, service delivery and outcomes.

We would also like to see the principle relating to Vocational Education and Training (VET) strengthened to include other education and training pathways for young people such as the University of Tasmania. It’s unclear why VET has been identified as a pathway for young people, and not others.

A whole of government systemic response could also be articulated as a principle underlying the Strategy.

Effective Youth Pathways Practice

Do the common elements and phases listed above make sense? Are there one or two more important than others?

The phases and elements outlined in the discussion paper are relevant and largely align with key elements outlined in the Australian Blueprint for Career Development⁹. Young people are likely to move through each phase at different times based on their career development, learning and support needs, as well as their personal attributes; therefore no one phase is more important than the other. Each phase plays an integral role in supporting young people to explore career possibilities and become job ready. However, the Alliance would like to see each phase strengthened to support effective career development pathways for young Tasmanians.

Phase 1 – Guidance and Exploration needs to include greater emphasis on awareness and exploration of career possibilities, particularly in secondary school. Introducing young people to the world of work and exploring different industries and employment opportunities, both locally, nationally, and internationally, is an important element in this phase and needs to be explicitly recognised and strengthened. Career awareness needs to be offered to young people at an earlier age in secondary school and to be delivered by professional career intermediaries with appropriate skills and knowledge and networks.¹⁰ Young people have told us that this needs to occur in years seven and eight.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do in grade 12. No one in my family went to university, except for maybe some distant cousins who I didn't talk to so. So, it was sort of, I didn't know where I was going to go...how can you pursue something if you don't know what it is?"

Tasmanian Youth Story (24, South)

The discussion paper recognises that many employers feel ill-equipped to communicate with young people entering the workforce and experience a generational divide. Dedicated mediation of this relationship is required to support both the employer and the young person to retain employment in the first 3-6 months of employment. There are already employment brokers within Tasmania that provide this supported connection within workplaces in Tasmania. This needs to be expanded and promoted to support employers and supervisors to build their confidence and skills in communicating effectively and appropriately with young people.

Phase 2 – Work Preparation refers briefly to career readiness and work readiness however, greater delineation between the two would strengthen this phase.

There is an opportunity in this Strategy to utilise contemporary language that abolishes the notion that 'essential interpersonal employability skills' such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork are 'soft' skills. Validating and developing a shared understanding of the importance of these skills across schools, employers and young people is also a key to supporting greater career readiness.

Essential interpersonal employability skills should also recognise psychological work readiness to support young people to become job ready¹¹.

"But when it comes to... I guess... leaving school and stuff, I don't really leave prepared. You just kind of get thrown in the deep end when you finish school."

Tasmanian Youth Story (21, North)

The Alliance strongly support the provision of access to information to help young people make informed vocational decisions however, the communication platform, channels and format of information needs to be determined by young people to be effective.

Phase 3 – Workplace Opportunities could be strengthened to recognise the important role intermediaries and third parties play in facilitating practical, relevant work-based experiences for young people and connecting them with industry and employers. Career intermediaries could complement existing vocational, education and training programs delivered in some secondary schools.

"I would've loved to have entry level opportunities to at least try different industries and jobs. I chat with some friends about what it would be like for year 12 for example, or a year 13 where you can do 3 months of work in hospo, then 3 months in agribusiness, 3 in healthcare (even if it's just watching or helping with admin) and 3 in retail... that way you come out of school with 1 year experience in pretty much every industry looking to employ people right away. That would be awesome!" Pathways to Adulthood (24, South)

Workplace opportunities however also need to extend to young people up to 25 years of age, especially those experiencing long term unemployment. The barriers to workplace opportunities for young people 18-25 years are unique; such as insurance issues for employers. These issues require a targeted response.

Importantly, consideration needs to be given to legislative and regulatory frameworks pertaining to Child and Youth Safe Organisations and the impact this may have on employers, particularly small business owners. There is a risk that employers may not have the resources or desire to comply with child and youth safe standards and may refrain from offering work placement opportunities to young people under 18 years.

Consideration also needs to be given to the role of volunteering in providing work-like opportunities for young people. Volunteering is an important mechanism for young people to experience some of the same conditions as they do in a workplace and build skills such as timeliness, reliability, teamwork, and communication. There are opportunities to explore career pathways and to gain coaching and mentoring from supervisors and other volunteers. Many employers recognise volunteering on CVs in the same way they would view paid employment for young people. Ongoing investment needs to be provided for initiatives that support and encourage young people to engage in volunteering.

Phase 4 – Post Placement Support needs to recognise the role of employers in post placement support and clarify the time frame and expected level of support.

Alliance members have noticed a widening gap between employer expectations and the reality for young people in the workforce. This often results in high turn-over of staff and tension in the workplace. Workplace intermediaries can play a pivotal role in bridging this gap, supporting communication, training and on-boarding as well as working through any required adjustments. The Youth Jobs Strategy provides a good opportunity to strengthen the support and training available to employers as they look to retain young people.

Whilst it is good to see the Strategy articulate that young people will have access to post-placement support for ‘as long needed’, it is also important to set clear expectations and boundaries for the provision of this essential support. Ongoing, open-ended support can be of real benefit, particularly for young people with the confidence to reach out and access this support over time. It is, however, critical to note that the initial 3-6 months of employment require more intensive support with regular and structured touch points to ensure that issues are addressed quickly and pro-actively. A tiered approach to post-placement support, starting with a higher level and reducing over time, is likely to have the best outcomes.

“How people are trained, it can be scary and intimidating especially with the people that train you. There should be like a designated training person and it's treated like a course instead of being loosely taught.” Tasmanian Youth Forum (16, North)

The acknowledgement that a person’s journey to employment is unique and not simple or linear, is an important distinction and is welcome. This should be reflected in the Strategy and needs to recognise that young people will move between the phases at various times in their employment journey.

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

Intermediaries and third parties are well placed to connect young people with community, business and industry and provide continuity of support across these elements. Young people have consistently told us that the transition from education to work can be a difficult one, and that career pathways planning is inadequate in most Tasmanian schools particularly in regional areas. With limited supports to explore and plan employment pathways and industries, many young people find it difficult to get a good understanding of career possibilities¹².

“Independent pathways planners - more support for young people figuring out where they're going and what they're doing - not affiliated with Uni/TAFE etc. as they will inform through the lens of their organisation” Pathways to Adulthood (anonymous, North-West)

Career intermediaries can play a pivotal role in supporting a young person to explore their career interests and aspirations, career pathways and relevant industries and bridge the gap between the education system, industry and employers. Currently, there is a disconnect between the education system and industry that makes it challenging for a young person to navigate employment, or further education and training post year 12.

Employers/industry and training providers also find it difficult to access schools and potential young employees. A career intermediary or third party can support employers and other training providers in-reach directly to provide opportunities for young people.

It is not reasonable to require teachers to provide specialised career support and guidance to their students, they are not best placed from a training and specialist background, and they already have considerable pressures in meeting the education and curriculum requirements of the schools and students. The role of career support and guidance must be done by intermediaries and specialised career professionals, with relevant and contemporary skills and knowledge. Adequate investment in both will support career readiness and work-based learning and foster better connection between stakeholders, ultimately resulting in better outcomes for young people.

Many young people leave school without a defined profession or career pathway and for some young people, particularly those living in disadvantage, they may not have the natural support to guide them to connect with employment, further education or training. This can lead to young people rapidly disengaging from education and employment. There is enormous potential to better engage parents in discussions to guide and support their young people to explore education, training and employment pathways. However, these skills and tools need to be provided either through schools or community organisations and not be at the expense of quality career guidance and support.

What we've heard already

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

The one thing that would positively impact a young person's transition pathway is an increased awareness of how to navigate the service system, or access relevant community support, post year 12. For this to occur, young people need to be aware of the pathway from school to whatever comes next for them prior to leaving school.

Career intermediaries can provide support to young people to bridge the gap between school and employers or further training and education. They can support work placements, and tasters, the exploration of strengths, skills and attributes to support a young person in their decision-making and supporting the young person to have aspirations and goals post-school. These intermediaries can also support the young person's social capital through their own natural supports and networks or through supporting the young person to develop other networks, bridging the gap. This support for the young person may also involve connection with broader social and community-based services as required.

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

"It's hard to do a job search or apply online here.] Internet isn't reliable in rural areas. Everything is digital these days and many don't have stable internet at home or a computer to access it." Pathways to Adulthood (anonymous, North-East)

There are several key principles that can be incorporated into the Strategy to improve access to services and support for young people in our regions. These include:

- **Equity of access:** all young people in Tasmania deserve access to employment/education support programs that cover regional and remote regions, particularly isolated communities West Coast/King Island/Flinders Island that currently have young people with some of the greatest need of support and the least access to this support. Services need to be provided at low or no cost to allow young people to access the services available. Services need to be available at times and in formats that young people can access these (e.g.: outside of school hours).
- **Specialist school-based support:** ensure that dedicated staff are available in high schools and colleges to better connect young people with the community and employment/training supports already available. It is also important to identify and refer at-risk young people with funded specialist community services. An early intervention approach is required while young people are still somewhat engaged in their education and/or training pathway.
- **Care Team Approach:** this allows a key worker to build rapport and trust with a young person to understand their individual needs and support them to navigate the mainstream services available to them, as well as provide warm referrals into specialist services. This worker can walk alongside the young person as they gain confidence and independence.

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

“So where I live, there's two buses a day. And if I don't get on the first bus at nine o'clock or eight o'clock, I can't get another one till three.” Tasmanian Youth Story (21, South)

The principles outline above are important and need to be considered in addition to the following considerations:

- Place-based approaches: further exploration of place-based models to support equity of access to services is required to determine the most suitable model for regional communities. In its ‘Working Future White Paper’ released in September 2023 the Australian government highlighted 10 key Action areas to support a dynamic and inclusive labour market. One of these is (9) ‘Partnering with Communities’ and includes future reform directions to boost place-based approaches. This Strategy can leverage and integrate this policy direction to better support Tasmania’s regional and remote communities.
- Individualised/tailored support: although funding to services needs to be attached to outcomes, there must be acknowledgement that each young person requires a unique approach to support, based on their strengths and circumstances. In regional/remote areas it must be acknowledged that funding requires outreach, and this takes time and must be provided where the young person can access. Time is required to build trust and rapport between a young person and their support worker to identify and address complex barriers to move them forward towards their goals.
- Facilitate transport options: lack of transport is a fact in regional and remote regions and must be overcome to allow young people the mobility to explore education, training and employment options. This needs to be in the form of community-based transport options and support for young people to secure their licence with safety and affordability.
- Exposure to employment opportunities: young people in regional and remote areas require greater exposure to a range of employment opportunities through targeted work placements and taster programs and job expos.

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

The Alliance firmly believe that the success of the Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy in responding to the complex needs of young Tasmanians will be contingent on greater cohesion and engagement between federal and state employment services, the Regional Jobs Hub Network, education sector, community services industry and intermediaries.

In its ‘Working Future White Paper’ released in September 2023 the Australian government highlighted 10 key Action areas to support a dynamic and inclusive labour market. One of these was building the capabilities through employment services. Within this action area one of the actions currently underway is a review of Workforce Australia and a reform of employment services. This presents an opportunity for the Tasmanian Government, the Regional Jobs Hubs, broader community services and intermediaries to highlight the need to better integrate the Federal Employment services with the Regional Jobs Hubs and other Tasmanian Government initiatives.

Integral to this will be an understanding of how the employment service system interfaces with the broader community services industry and more specifically the youth sector that specialises in

supporting the unique and sometimes complex circumstances of some young people. Although it is essential that the employment services sector (including the Regional Jobs Hubs) can identify when a young person needs more dedicated support, it is equally important that these young people are referred onto specialist services funded and skilled to provide this support. Collectively, we support community-led, placed based employment, education and training initiatives. However, it is important to recognise the strength and limitations of this model in the provision of holistic, therapeutic support to young Tasmanians with complex needs.

The youth community services sector is well placed across the State to work collaboratively in the delivery of holistic, targeted and therapeutic support to young people facing adversity. We employ appropriately qualified staff with the requisite skills and knowledge to work holistically and therapeutically with young people to address employment, education and training barriers. This includes young people who have experienced trauma, family violence, homelessness, poor mental/physical health, as well as individuals with low literacy/numeracy, limited English, poor social/emotional skills and low self-confidence and aspirations. Often young people have multiple barriers that require intensive case management support, case coordination and supported referrals to meet their unique needs and achieve long term outcomes. This distinguishes our sector from other supports available in the community and needs to be explicitly recognised in the Strategy.

The Youth Jobs Strategy needs to not only consider the complexity of issues such as mental wellbeing and disadvantage that impact on young people's capacity to gain education and employment but also the intersectionality of this complexity.

There is a compounding impact of complexity and disadvantage when youth is combined with a migrant background, identifying as Aboriginal, identifying as LGBTIQIA+ and living with a disability. The policy positions and actions associated must be cognisant of the compounding impact of these life circumstances and take actions that support these cohorts. First and foremost, this includes recognition at a strategy level.

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

It is essential to recognise that there are specific groups of young Tasmanians that face specific challenges and have different needs in order to fully participate in work, education and training. There is a diverse range of young people who face additional barriers, including LGBTIQIA+ young people, Aboriginal young people, young people living in regional areas, early school leavers and more. The needs and support required for three such cohorts are listed below, these are young people from a migrant background, young people living with a disability and young carers.

Whilst this response focuses on three specific cohorts, it is essential to note that there are gaps in mainstream supports for all young people in Tasmania. These gaps within the Tasmanian education system and essential infrastructure are preventing many young Tasmanians from fully participating in work, education and training. These gaps relate to educational attainment, functional literacy and numeracy, digital access and literacy, access to services and social disadvantage. The Alliance recognises that the Tasmanian Government is aware of these challenges and is currently delivering targeted initiatives to address a number of these challenges. It is critical that the Strategy acknowledges and addresses these broader population issues, whilst working to ensure greater integration between strategies, policies and programs.

Meaningful participation in the workforce is key to social cohesion and building a sense of belonging for newly arrived young Tasmanians, young people living with disability and young carers. These recommendations will help to ensure there is 'no wrong door' to access employment and pathway support for all Tasmanian young people.

Young people from a migrant background

Young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds face additional barriers to gaining employment, compared to their Australian born peers. This cohort experiences higher rates of unemployment, under employment and over representation in the casualised and seasonal workforce^{13,14,15,16,17}.

Barriers to participation in the Tasmanian workforce include; limited social capital and networks, experiences of racism and discrimination within recruitment processes, experience of racism and discrimination in the workplace and in education settings, limited knowledge of pathway options including VET pathways for young people and their parents/carers, interrupted education due to migration and refugee journey, language barriers, low cultural competency of employment and education service providers^{18,19}. Some young people in this cohort face intersectional barriers as carers, LGBTIQ+ and, survivors of trauma and torture. A targeted approach aligned with the National Youth Settlement Framework²⁰, is needed to ensure the unique needs of this cohort are addressed within the Tasmanian Jobs Strategy.

To unlock the ability for young Tasmanians from refugee and migrant backgrounds to fully participate in work, education and training, the Youth Employment Alliance recommends:

- The complex pathways needs of newly arrived young people be addressed through a whole of school approach, not only through English as an Additional Language (EAL) settings.
- Service providers with the place-based expertise in supporting this cohort be provided adequate ongoing resources to support their transition from education to work.
- Career guidance be provided by professionals in schools who are trained in, and understand the National Youth Settlement Framework²¹, VET and further education options for EAL students and the non-linear nature of their pathways.
- The Strategy considers newly arrived young people (17-25yrs) transitioning out of AMEP, not limited to year 12 student transitions.
- Anti-racism and, diversity and inclusion frameworks to be embedded in policy and practice across all employment, education, and youth support services providers.
- Employer of choice standards/recognition programs celebrate and promote best practice in addressing anti-racism and discrimination in the workplace and inclusive recruitment practices.

Young people living with disability

For young Tasmanians with disability, including mental ill-health, greater investment in the social enterprise sector is required. A clear strategy of how the Tasmanian Government could support Work Integrated Social Enterprises (WISE) would allow organisations to focus on service delivery for young people who struggle to access mainstream education and training streams.

Social enterprise programs offer young people real-world, hands-on work experience, building confidence and capacity, and setting them up for success in the workforce. These programs provide

inclusive spaces to reconnect with community and access wrap-around support, with flow-on benefits that extend well beyond work-readiness. A well-developed Social Enterprise Strategy, as seen in Victoria and New South Wales, coupled with adequate investment would unlock the ability for more young people with disability to gain work experience and pursue a career in Tasmania or further afield.

There are opportunities for Social Enterprise programs to target a wide range of young people including, but not limited to, those with disability. Many young job seekers struggle with low-confidence and social anxiety and this can pose a significant barrier to accessing paid employment. Young people suffering from mental ill-health may also require targeted supports to enter the workforce. These challenges, when coupled with a lack of work experience, can lead to entrenched un-employment for young people. The Youth Jobs Strategy provides a good opportunity to build upon existing Social Enterprise programs and expand these to reach a greater number of young people, with varying needs, across Tasmania.

There is also a need to provide additional information and support to workplaces who are interested in, or actively recruiting, young people living with disability to create inclusive environments where everyone can participate. This includes addressing employer misconceptions and anxieties about hiring young people living with disability and building employer confidence to support young people in the workplace when there are challenges impacting their ability to perform their job. Many young people living with disability are hesitant or nervous about disclosing their disability to employers for fear of not being offered employment. This further, demonstrates the need for better education and support for workplaces and employers to build supportive, accessible and inclusive work environments.

“... It's devastating for me when I'm trying my best and get treated like I'm lazy because it takes me a little bit longer to pick up on things and other people. And it sucks. ...I don't want to be judged at all [because I] have a disability.” Tasmanian Youth Story (21, North)

Greater representation of young people living with disability in the workforce would encourage more young people to enter the workforce and explore alternative employment opportunities, outside of Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE). Young people and their families are cautious to explore alternative employment options as they are not seen to be viable choice ‘You can't be, what you can't see’.

Young Carers

The diverse aspects and specific needs of a young person's life must be considered and supported to enable sustained participation in education, training, or employment. Collaborative and continuing pathways should be established with the community, disability, and health sectors so that young people can be connected with the holistic support they need. A specific action that will assist in increasing meaningful participation for young carers in Tasmania in education, work, and training is the implementation of a strong and consistent method of routine identification of young carers across all Tasmanian schools. This includes colleges, Tafe, and university. Once a young carer is identified, they should be connected to support that is specific and relevant to their caring role, such as the Carer Gateway, which in Tasmania is delivered by Care2Serve.

This focus on the routine identification of young carers in educational settings is vitally important to connect young carers to supports that are relevant. Care2Serve, through the Carer Gateway can provide practical support to alleviate caring responsibilities, financial support and targeted initiatives. However, great identification and coordination with the education and training system is required to ensure young carers receive the support they require.

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

“My partner actually doesn't have his license yet. And he's 25. His family was like... the opposite to my family. Like his parents wouldn't take him driving, stuff like that. And yeah, so he just didn't really have a chance to get his hours and stuff like that.”

Tasmanian Youth Story (anonymous)

While several Tasmanian Government initiatives are already underway that contribute towards improving access to transport, they often do not meet the needs of young people, are oversubscribed, have coverage issues (particularly in rural areas), or have strict eligibility criteria.

To affect real change and improve employment, education and training outcomes for young people transport disadvantage must feature in the Strategy.

Feedback from young Tasmanians relating to transport solutions strongly align with key recommendations outlined in the National Youth Commission Australia Inquiry into youth employment and transitions²². Whilst not necessarily considered innovative, further investment is required to:

- Expand learner driver mentor programs in the community, particularly in rural and remote areas.
- Expand driver education programs through secondary schools, such as the Driving for Jobs pilot program, to support marginalised and disadvantaged young people to gain their learner and/or provisional drivers' license.
- Offer young Tasmanians free or subsidised concessions for public transport, car registration, driver's license fees and learner driver training lessons.
- Provide more opportunities and support for young people to work collaboratively with government to co-design transport-related policy, initiatives and services.

Other transport solutions identified by young people at the 2021 Tasmanian Youth Forum:

*Transport*²³ include:

- Investment in better cycling infrastructure in cities, with linked up bike tracks and bike lanes and more accessible bike storage lockers.
- Explore car-pooling initiatives and the use of e-bikes and e-scooters.
- Explore alternative ways to test a young drivers' competence to become licensed.
- Offer smaller, more localised transport options based on community development principles.

The potential to offer uber ride share for young people in local communities, to a shared place of employment, could also be explored as an option.

The Alliance also recognises and supports Community Transport Services Tasmania initiatives to leverage its current infrastructure to better support young people (particularly in regional communities) with community-based transport options to and from education and employment and mentor-driving initiatives.

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

“We are a bit too ‘who you know’ here. Most of my jobs have been who I know, not my experience. You might not be given a chance unless you have that inside person.”

Tasmanian Youth Story (22, South)

Tasmania still relies strongly on natural supports and personal connections to secure employment. For many young people this is their parents and extended families. However, for many young people that experience disadvantage including socio-economic disadvantage or a migrant background they do not have this inherent social capital.

The Strategy needs to acknowledge the importance of this social capital and then provide incentives and supports to provide this social capital when it is not intrinsically available to a young person. This could take the form of community development initiatives, mentoring and coaching.

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

As highlighted in the discussion paper there are structural changes that have resulted in few entry-level jobs for young people and less capacity for young people to progress in workplaces. The Tasmanian government, employers and community sector must work harder to support all young Tasmanians to access employment, but particularly those from disadvantaged and complex backgrounds.

One initiative that has had considerable success interstate is Social Ventures Australia – Rebuilding the Career Ladder program²⁴. It focuses on improving opportunities for young people from less privileged backgrounds by promoting changes in the hiring and employment practices of employers. It recognises that employers hold the key to improving job quality and rebuilding careers for young people. It includes practical support for employers through the cornerstone ‘Employer Innovation Lab’ program, as well as strategies to address broader obstacles to employer action. This program was recently evaluated by Deakin Business School and University of Sydney Business School which strongly endorsed the structure, process and content of the program²⁵.

This program supports employers to reimagine areas of their business that could better align with supporting job readiness and career progression for young people, while involving young people in this redesign process. At first glance this is best suited to larger employers, but with the support of Regional Jobs Hubs and specific industry groups a more collective approach involving a group of smaller employers could be supported. The Tasmanian Community Services Sector needs to also be included in an initiative of this kind to provide access to additional supports for young people as required.

The core of this Youth Jobs Strategy is to build the capacity and capability of young people to enter the workforce, but this cannot be achieved without Tasmania's employers redesigning their workplaces to allow for young, entry level participation to support the building of skills and career progression in a secure pathway.

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

To be effective quality work exposure needs to commence in the early years of high-school to give students a 'taste' of work-like environments and progress to longer placements in workplaces with greater expectations. However, Workplace Health and Safety laws, Child Safe legislation and the requirement for close supervision of students restrict the practicalities of work placements for most employers. Ideally, work placements would be supported through specialist staff embedded in schools or third-party intermediaries that could provide the support to local business to enable them to provide opportunities for work exposure experiences for local students.

Another powerful analogue to work exposure is volunteering. Volunteering builds all the same interpersonal employability skills and has a structured support system to allow young people to access a range of activities across multiple sectors. Volunteering is often viewed by many employers as equivalent to employment when assessing the skills and experience of a young person entering the workforce.

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

Although this is a Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy there is opportunity for the Tasmanian Government, business sector and community sector to lobby the Federal Government through their reform agenda to ensure there is adequate income support for young people to undertake further study and training, this may include greater subsidies for employers.

Training institutions such as TasTAFE and UTAS are moving to shorter courses but need support to package these short-courses and micro-credentials into fuller qualifications that can be acquired on an as-needs basis. There is still a greater need for simpler access to courses in both VET and Higher Education, with stronger linkages to industry to ensure relevant courses and qualifications.

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

The healthcare and social assistance industry is the fastest growing part of the labour market²⁶. In Tasmania is estimated there will be a shortage of 4000 jobs within the community services industry in 2024²⁷. The attraction, recruitment and retention²⁷ of young people in the community services industry is essential in responding to the workforce challenges facing our sector.

The community services industry offers an attractive value proposition for many young Tasmanians. Young people want to see a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Tasmania and more opportunities for reconciliation, social connectedness and intergenerational collaboration in our communities.

Values alignment and the vast diversity of work in our sector, means that the community services industry is likely to appeal to a majority of young Tasmanians. The Alliance would like to see a more

targeted and coordinated approach in raising awareness of career opportunities and pathways, in our sector. This would include customised campaigns and recruitment approaches, using communication methods relevant to young Tasmanians, and could be designed in consultation with a representative youth group. This approach could form part of the TasCOSS Workforce Coalition Project.

The community services industry could also be better supported to provide work experience opportunities to young people through adequate resourcing. Many community sector organisations have limited capacity to support work experience placements and traineeships, onboard and mentor new staff and support employee development, due resource constraints. Recruitment and retention challenges for organisations need to be addressed to attract young people into our industry, and must include creative, contemporary and innovative approaches.

Other Considerations to inform the development of the Youth Jobs Strategy

Below are some further points that we believe require consideration as the Youth Jobs Strategy is developed.

Flexible work conditions and the gig economy. Labour market conditions have changed markedly over the past decade, and this has been accelerated by COVID. There is much greater flexibility in workplace conditions including the gig economy, and much greater part-time and remote work available. This has significant advantages and has increased participation to all-time highs²⁸. However, there is a cost to this structural change that includes a continued and increased vulnerability of some cohorts to insecure work and under-employment as well as the stress of multiple jobs. Young-people, women and people from a migrant background are particularly exposed to these pressures²⁹.

The Strategy must address the structural inequities in opportunities that come with full employment and the cost to young people. Employers and government can support this with industrial relations conditions that support flexibility but close loopholes that continue to exploit and disadvantage young people.

Providing a safe workplace for young people. Although most employers treat their young staff fairly, the national figures demonstrate that young workers are most susceptible to wage theft and to insecure employment, unscrupulous employers that exploit them and withhold wages and subject them to unsafe work conditions³⁰.

“I was employed by a sushi shop in the city. For nearly two weeks, we didn't sign any contract. And just after that I was kind of fired. Well not exactly fired, they told me they didn't want me anymore, and later I realized I was underpaid as well. After that, I was kind of... I kind of lost my confidence in finding jobs here.” Tasmanian Youth Story (24, South)

Additionally, young people have a greater risk of harassment including sexual harassment in the workplace and this is compounded by other forms of discrimination and disadvantage including gender, LGBTIQ+, ATSI and migrant background³¹

Greater education must be provided to both employers and young people about their workplace rights and responsibilities and potentially increased monitoring to ensure young people are supported in safe workplaces

“Workplaces don’t often enough engage with employees and understand or provide with respect when work is impacting on their lives. Workplaces need to hold accountability in maintaining safe working environments.” Pathways to Adulthood (22, South)

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