

Summary of Youth Feedback on Employment

January 2023

Introduction

Youth unemployment and underemployment is a significant issue in Tasmania. Many young people struggle to find employment and gain a foothold in the job market, they experience entrenched disadvantage in the labour market and are not adequately supported to find meaningful long-term employment. This has a profound impact on the wellbeing of young Tasmanians now and into the future.

This document provides a summary of feedback from over 1,000 young Tasmanians aged 12-25 years on employment related matters. Feedback was obtained during the following YNOT state-wide youth consultations:

- Tasmanian Youth Forum 2020 and 2022
- Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy consultation 2021
- YNOT and Brand Tasmania Interview feedback 2022

Feedback from youth sector organisations and young people engaged with employment services has also been included.

Key Issues

Key issues consistently reported by young people as significant barriers to gaining and retaining employment in Tasmania include:

- Transport
- Limited job opportunities
- Lack of pathways and poor pathway planning
- Confidence and communication in job application processes
- Poor treatment from customers and employers
- Workplace exploitation and discrimination
- Knowledge of how to gain work experience and barriers to entry level positions; and
- Disadvantage (economic, regional, ability, social and cultural).

Tasmanian Youth Forum Report 2022

- State-wide consultation (June 2022)
- 451 young people
- 12-25 years

Key themes:

- **Inequity**

Young Tasmanians can struggle to break into the job market, even in entry-level jobs, for which they do not always feel well prepared. They are often spoken down to and feel undervalued by their employers, co-workers and customers and are not given an equal chance when seeking employment, especially compared to older Tasmanians and those with more work experience.

“I think the jobs that require little work experience should always be available to people who have not had a job prior to that.”

- **Obtaining work experience**

Work experience requirements present challenges, and young people feel there is often no way to gain the experience required. This is a major barrier when young people apply for jobs and can lead to prolonged periods of unemployment.

“[We need to change] the ridiculous experience requirements that many organisations have for their entry level roles.”

- **Workplace discrimination**

Young people are less likely to understand their rights as an employee or know how to seek help if they feel discriminated against. Young Tasmanians from marginalised communities face additional barriers to employment particularly those living with disability, and from different cultural backgrounds.

“Young people, especially teenagers, are treated badly by older workers and especially customers...I myself have been working in the same business for three years now and still get treated badly.”

- **Supportive initiatives and employment programs**

Young people appreciate initiatives designed to help them enter and thrive in the workforce. These include:

- Traineeships, including traineeships for marginalised groups.
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Entry-level jobs that offer an opportunity for advancement.
- Skills training programs.
- Transport services connecting young people to work and training, such as Area Connect.

They would also like to see more places that can give them advice, support and information around career planning and employment.

“[There needs to be] more places to talk to people about what you need to seek employment or places where you can find a job suited for you.”

- **Transition out of casual employment and education**

Many young people struggle to find permanent work and often take on casual roles out of necessity rather than choice. It can also be stressful and difficult for casual workers without leave entitlements, to support unique and unexpected life situations, such as extended sickness, balancing their studies or young parenthood.

“Pretty much everyone finds working casually stressful. If you're unwell, you can't take a paid sick day. If you become pregnant, you can't receive paid maternity leave. You also don't get many benefits, or paid holidays, even though many companies give people casual employment on a full-time roster.”

YNOT and Brand Tasmania Interview Feedback 2022

- State-wide consultation (October 2022)
- 100 young people – 1-on-1, one-hour interviews
- 18-25 years

Key themes:

- **Limited job options and pathways.**

Young people feel as if a lack of job opportunities and career pathways, and awareness of potential pathways is often low. This is particularly challenging for young people who live regionally.

“There is not a lot of job opportunities down here, which is why most people when they finish year 12 tend to move to the mainland. There are opportunities in Tassie, but there are not a lot as such compared to the mainland.”

“There aren't many job opportunities in Launceston, especially in IT and other professions. It would be good if the government worked with companies to bring offices down here. People would move to work here.”

"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."

- **Poor career pathways in sport and creative fields.**

Young people acknowledge that there are volunteer opportunities available in fields such as sport and the arts, but there is less opportunity to build a career that can generate sustainable incomes.

They feel they must leave the state to build a career in these industries or juggle multiple jobs and competing priorities to make ends meet.

"We don't have a lot of options for performing arts down here. Even just going through the art school down here, we've got very limited teachers and tutors down here."

"I studied fine arts at the University. I've surrounded myself with it my entire life. I want to make a career out of it but there are limited opportunities for it. My last resort is moving, but I'm very much a family person. I'd rather stay here and have an opportunity for myself online rather than physically move myself unless it's absolutely what I need to do. I want to work for myself freelancing, but that's very hard to do compared to the typically 9-5 kind of thing."

"Coaching [football] is not really something that can really pay... I get like 20 bucks a game, it's nothing."

"We've kind of just got the one museum, and then we've got MONA and a couple of galleries and then that's it. Yeah, so when I say that there isn't as much down here, I just mean... like... there isn't as much option with what you want to do. Because you can still do performing arts, you can still do fine arts down here. But that just... I feel like it wouldn't be as fruitful as if you did it in somewhere like Melbourne."

"If you want to make a name for yourself, you kind of have to go elsewhere first."

"I think there are a few jobs here, but they're like... not many at all. And they wouldn't be very willing to take someone like fresh out of uni with no experience. Whereas I guess, in the mainland, it's a lot easier to convince someone to take you on. Because there's so many other opportunities for you. Whereas here would only be a couple of like small businesses, I think."

- **Transitioning from casual work or education to a permanent job**

Young people often don't meet work experience requirements and find it particularly difficult to find work immediately post-graduation. Feedback after applying for a job is often limited or not helpful and there is a comparative lack of graduate programs to the mainland.

“I guess it was kind of getting that first crack into the full-time job. That's sort of the challenge... Just constantly kept getting the same responses, like ‘you don't have any experience.’ It's like, no, I don't have any experience because I'm straight out of uni. And like, you have to give me the experience so that I can get experience. So, I think that was constantly the issue.”

It was like a whole year between finishing uni and then getting like a permanent job... I was like, just applying for whatever I was eligible for really... I think I was applying for all sorts of stuff. I was going to [employment provider] for a while...but they didn't actually help me get a job.”

“I always wanted to go into that Social Work path but getting that entry way was so difficult. Like I applied for a job, maybe at the beginning of the year. And they said “you're brilliant, but you just don't have the experience. So come back when you do have experience, and we'd be happy to reconsider.”

“I was feeling so pessimistic... maybe because I had been applying for so many jobs when I was on job seeker payment with Centrelink. And it used to be that you had to apply for like 20 jobs a month. So, I was applying for so many jobs, but all of it was “Unfortunately you've been unsuccessful”. Because so many people are already doing it, there's always that one person that has slightly more experience than you.”

“If you don't give me the chance to get the experience, then how can I have the experience?”

- **Low income and cost of living pressures.**

Limited incomes, cost of living and lack of resources directly affect how young people access education and training. This can limit on how much time they can devote to education and training as well as unpaid internships and volunteering opportunities that may build up their experience base.

“All the areas that they're currently raving on that there's shortages of staff are the ones that require unpaid placements, like teachers, nurses, you know, child protection workers, like all of those careers that they're saying that we just cannot fill are ones that they expect people to be able to do unpaid

work for 28 weeks in up to two years... the fact that the cost of living is so high, and people can no longer afford to be unpaid for 14 weeks a year.

“My parents aren't like super-duper loaded. Like we're well off enough. ... But it's still going to be really difficult for them to be able to support me through university.”

- **Transport**

Public transport can be frustrating, and a driver's license is seen as a requirement to access work and education, particularly for regional Tasmanians. Difficulties with transport can prevent young people from pursuing job opportunities, and significant costs and issues getting to and from work.

“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...I have to spend \$70 on petrol every week, going backwards and forwards [to work], because I can't get a good bus system.”

“I would say if I didn't have my license, [transport] would be quite hard. I think that's probably where Tassie is a step behind the mainland. You can probably live up there without a car and be fine but I think in Tasmania, unless you are in Hobart or Launceston CBD, it's really hard to move around.”

“That's what I'm in the process of doing at the moment [Learning to drive through Learner Driver Mentor Program]... I'm still with them. It's just... every time I tried to ask how's it going? Like, do you have any more [mentor] drivers? And they say “No, we're short at this present time and it's just... it's going to take a while to get another mentor in place.”

“Growing up [transport] was a huge thing because I live in Deloraine. You know, without good public transport, you can't get anywhere. The public transport is bad, really bad, so much so that when I got my license, I did promise myself I'd never go on a Red Line bus again. And I've kept that promise.”

“You can't really be in Tasmania without a license and your own car, or a car that you can access. Because we just don't have the public transport service network in order to sort of traverse without [driving], like what they do in some other places.”

“South Hobart, Sandy Bay, City – it's all close areas, you should just take public transport to reach it. But if you want to go from South Hobart to Sandy Bay [for University], you need to take two buses. They should have more connection.”

- **Disability and Health**

Young people with disability and health challenges are discriminated against and often feel misunderstood or not well supported, particularly by bosses. Disability limits job opportunities and impacts on key relationships in employment.

“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...I don't want to be judged at all because I have a disability.”

“I started out my very first job as a hospitality worker. I have anxiety and depression. So, I've had trouble in some circumstances. [My boss] caused me to have a panic attack... And she fired me then over it.”

Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Consultation Report 2021

- State-wide consultation – January 2021

- 281 Young people
- 12-25 years

Key themes:

- **Employment opportunities.**

Young people identified a need for more employment opportunities, particularly in rural and remote communities. Many also believe that employers should be incentivised to create new opportunities to employ young people. Young people spoke about high youth unemployment because there were not enough jobs in their local area.

Employers expected them to volunteer to gain experience, or there were few opportunities after school hours. Some young people were concerned that their unemployment would prevent them from moving to Launceston to continue their education.

- **Employability skills at school.**

Employability skills and work readiness training at school is important to young people. Whilst the majority knew what a CV was, they didn't know how to prepare one, create effective cover letters, or address selection criteria.

Casual employment while studying at school is valuable to young people. It helps them learn independence, begin budgeting and develop employability skills in the work environment: including time management, organisation, teamwork, and communication.

Young people want to undertake school-based apprenticeships as part of years 11 and 12, as it will likely lead to better employment opportunities in their local area, particularly in regional areas. However, those who were interested reported significant difficulties finding apprenticeships as very few are offered, and often required a personal connection with an employer first - such as a parent's friend.

- **Young people living regionally experience significant challenges with studying years 11 and 12.**

Some young people said that their local schools were unable to provide the academic options and career pathways available at the larger colleges. Extending schools to year 12 was welcome but it was felt that they did not cater to the needs of everyone and that the high schools that did this only suited a portion of their learning needs - if they wanted to study tertiary education they would still need to move to Hobart, Burnie, Devonport or Launceston to complete years 11 and 12.

- **Young people in King Island and Flinders Island said that most students prepare to leave for mainland Tasmania after year 10.**

They also reported that many do not plan to return to the islands due to a lack of activities, few employment or career options, and limited and expensive housing. Many of the young people in these areas said that they were excited to leave their hometown but wanted help to stay connected

to their families and friends. Young people identified transport, low income and high living expenses as major stressors when moving away to study.

Tasmanian Youth Forum 2020

- State-wide consultation (October 2020)
- 215 young people
- 12-25 years old

Key themes:

- **Meaningful Work**

Young people would like work to give them a sense of fulfillment and be relevant to society. A 'good job' for a young person was defined as something that is enjoyable and motivates you to want to keep working, that is beneficial to wider society, and pays well.

"Being able to find a job that you're passionate about, that you love rather than just working for the sole purpose of earning money, is really important."

- **Supportive work environment**

A good support network of people who respect and help them on the job is important to young people and feeling supported in the work environment is crucial in being able to retain and attract young workers. Bosses should be enthusiastic about mentoring, provide ways to help them learn and be aware of workers' rights.

"A good job has a decent boss and good mentors as well as a support network – ideally something that is relevant and helps the community, and that you enjoy doing."

- **Government initiatives**

Young people would like to see the government support businesses to hire teenagers and provide incentives to industries that encourage people to stay in Tasmania. They wanted to see more investment in the arts and creative industries as they would help in reversing the 'brain drain'.
Directly supporting teenagers

"I am only 15 years old and I have been employed for over a year. That has been an amazing form of independence. Being able to earn my own money and make my own connections through the workplace has been such a brilliant opportunity."

- **Information and awareness of career options**

More information about a broad range of career options, not just those requiring university education. They want to know how to get an apprenticeship and what practical steps they need to undertake to get a job.

They would like to see more opportunities in school to learn work skills, and assistance in getting work experience in local businesses and community services. Work experience days are important to young people and going out to different workplaces to get an understanding of their work environments is valuable.

- **Workplace exploitation**

Participants were aware of the possibility of being exploited in the labour force, as young unskilled people with no prior work experience. Young people discussed jobs where they might be standing for hours on end dealing with unpleasant people for a meagre wage, and the potential to either be working too little or too much.

Young people would like more information provided in schools about workplace rights and how to speak up. They would also like to see some online platforms and support groups for young workers on their rights, as well as direction for their own self-care and for regulating themselves and their emotions if suffering from workplace stress.

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Feedback from sector organisations and young people engaged with employment services

YNOT has recently received information from youth employment service providers in the community services industry, outlining key issues experienced by young people accessing their service. Common issues identified as barriers to employment include:

- **Transport**

Generally, young people find transport too expensive, and its cost is significantly prohibitive to access services. Cost of transport affects young people in terms of running costs for private transportation, the process of learning to drive, and in accessing public transport – particularly in regional locations. Budgeting for petrol and servicing is also preventative for many young people in gaining employment.

Jobs often require young people to have a car or vehicle that meets specific standards and are covered by comprehensive insurance. Specific industries also place stronger requirements on obtaining a driver's license, such as support work or logistics, and for many it is an essential requirement.

Accessing driving mentors/supervisors to help young people learn to drive and achieve their required hours is also a challenge- particularly after a young person has moved out of home or if they don't own a car – driver mentor programs are oversubscribed, and private lessons come at a significant cost.

- **Work Experience and Limited Job Opportunities**

Young people feel there is a real disconnect and lack of awareness amongst employers about the difficulties faced by inexperienced young job applicants. Employers are expecting people to have specific experience for entry-level jobs, however young people find it difficult to obtain this outside of

employment. Young people often resort to volunteering to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to compete in the labour market, but volunteering programs offer little or no hands-on opportunities to gain the experience expected to fulfil roles, or direct prospects for ongoing paid work.

- **Confidence, Communication and Finding Reliable Information**

Young people struggle with confidence in applying for jobs and there is a lack of communication from employers during the application process. Young people said they get disheartened when they do not receive acknowledgement on application which is a regular occurrence. After missing out on a job after an interview or job trial, they often do not receive feedback so do not know what needs to be improved. This negatively impacts their ability to build resilience and improve their applications through constructive feedback.

Young people have said they struggle to source employment information and how to approach job seeking activities and the early phase of work. Often, there is a heavy reliance on family and friends, and generic internet sources for information, due to limited social networks, a lack of trust and convoluted sources of information.

Navigating requirements such as how to get a Police Check/RWVP check and being told you need this before undertaking training can be challenging, confusing and costly.

Young people are also unaware of the multiple pathways to employment and formal education which can lead to better employment opportunities. Their feedback identified the need to bust myths surrounding pathways; for example, that university is 'too hard', or that certain industries or pathways are not viable or seen as 'lesser' than other types of work.

Unemployment can be 'the norm' in Tasmanian families and there is a need for role models and to work with the key influencers of young people to promote work, education, and training as positive, accessible and attainable for some young people who experience intergenerational disadvantage.

- **Employment Programs**

Voluntary employment programs and funds are underutilised by young people. This is largely due to a lack of awareness, limited information in the community or across young people's networks. Young people would like access to a centralised and user-friendly information platform about available programs in their area.

Young people registered with employment services, feel providers are focused more on helping them meet Centrelink obligations than supporting them in obtaining a stable long-term employment pathway, even after demonstrating they have experience in certain fields. Balancing work and study

commitments is often challenging for young people and can prevent them from accessing certain support payments or being able to undertake additional work while studying full time.

Work also needs to occur in partnership with young people rather than putting all the responsibility on young people. It is important that improving outcomes around youth employment is shared with employers: employers need to change perceptions and be appealing to young people, and there should be some activities, programs or initiatives for employers around youth employment issues.