

Principles of the Youth Jobs Strategy

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

The proposed principles for this strategy are strong, however in our opinion there are a number of key considerations for each principle that should be considered.

Youth-centred and informed design...

For the Youth Strategy to be successful, it is important that young Tasmanians are consulted, heard and included in the design and implementation of this strategy, it should not be designed in isolation. What is also critical is to ensure there is a diverse representation and input from the youth of Tasmania.

In our opinion, as important as it is to hear from those who face barriers to employment and further education, it is just as important to hear from those who have made a successful transition to work and further education successfully and hear their 'why', 'what' and 'how'. Utilise their experiences as best practice case studies.

Wellbeing and safety...

Wellbeing and psychological safety are important for all individuals but will look different for everyone. Searson Buck's experience in the commercial recruitment environment highlights the importance of resilience particularly in youth. If an employee can demonstrate this, the employer is much more likely to employ them in an on-hired or permanent capacity.

All too often, we hear from employers across Tasmania who comment on the lack of 'resilience' in the youth who are entering the workplace, and their ability to absorb, learn from and bounce back from the knocks our generation have encountered in our early careers.

Service providers to youth can play a role in this by supporting the individuals to learn from their experiences and build resiliency to ensure they don't float from job to job without direction or move to another role when something doesn't go just right.

Supporting the competency of resiliency should commence in the school system with ongoing support in the work environment from coaches, not councillors.

In addition to building resilience in our youth, there also does need to be coaching and support to the employer or other members of staff on how they can best support the youth to be successful and not just the 'back in my day' mentality.

Young people are supported...

We absolutely agree with this principle, the encouragement and promotion of becoming a life-long learner will be integral to the success of our youth. The data currently shows that the average tenure in a role is 3.2 years, and an individual will now have up to 13 different careers in their lifetime.

With technology advancements moving at the pace, they are, our youth cannot afford to stand still with their skills, or they will be left behind.

Young people can be at the centre...

Agree, as long as they are streaming and guided into the right career opportunities. Skills and psychometric assessments should be utilised to understand the individual's key areas of strength and development. This provides an awareness before entering their first role and an opportunity to build upon by way of personal and

professional development. It also provides the employer with an insight into the individual's level of capability and competency and means the individual is not set up to fail.

As a recruitment business, these tools are extensively utilised as part of our selection process. Candidates appreciate the insights and clients are able to build functions and tasks around the individual.

Not understanding this could place youth at more of a disadvantage when entering the workforce as employers are looking for objective measures of skill if experience is missing.

Informed best-practice and strengths-based approach...

Similar to above comments but youth are not presented this way with objective measures.

They are typically presented with "he's a really nice kid who wants to have a go."

There's a fair bit of chance in this approach and will not result in longevity of placement. Make best practice objective versus subjective.

"Billy has a strong alignment to the mechanical trades and has demonstrated this through a mechanical aptitude assessment. He is very interested in becoming a welder but will need support in the area of planning and prioritising work to ensure work is completed on time" approach.

Build and invest in what's...

Agree but make sure there is a variety of approaches, and each segment or cohort of youth is supported. Those with a higher level of work preparedness may be better suited to a more commercial environment via a recruitment organisation whereas those that need socialisation support with a different provider. From our experience not all programs are effectively supporting youth.

Leverage our place-based initiatives...

This is a safe alternative and one where local community employers need to become better engaged.

Invest as much into the employer as the youth being employed. Be conscious that very few employers are interested nor encouraged by the current place-based incentive schemes so proactively offered.

Unfortunately, the feedback we hear from employers see them challenged by high levels of turnover and tenure under a place-based incentive scheme.

Vocational Education and Training...

Absolutely however make it relevant and ensure currency. Many of the offered Certificates are disconnected from the real-world environment.

Our own experience employing in the aged care and community care sector tells us that host employers are dissatisfied with the level and relevance of vocational training to current practices. This is particularly evident in those completing Cert III in Individual Support, Aged Care, Health Services Assistant, etc.

This establishes an immediate barrier for youth wanting to engage in their first or even subsequent position.

Connected and seamless...

The no wrong door and multiple access points principle is important, however, what is critical is to ensure that ALL providers involved in this space understand exactly 'who' delivers what so that if an individual does enter the wrong door they are quickly and seamlessly directed to the right door, so they don't get lost on the way and just drop out.

Too often we see individuals requiring support being told to contact 'XYZ' as they may do that rather than providing that warm introduction. We've seen the impact of staff turnover within some providers having an impact on the support and program delivery which has resulted in the individual being referred in multiple directions without an outcome.

Evidenced, evaluated, accountable...

Exactly, base it on objective and not subjective evidence. Ensure a balanced evolution that involves a 360-degree assessment from the youth and the employer.

Hold the system, the business and importantly youth accountable for their commitments.

Success judged on outcomes...

Agree. This may however require a fundamental change to the funding models to support hard outcomes; employment contracts offered, duration of employment, jobs per sector, youth progression/development, etc

Effective Youth Pathways Practice

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

The common elements are those typically expressed by employers and their frustration with youth. To solve these issues and make employers more comfortable and accepting of a developing youth cohort, the support system needs to change. It needs to be more of a professional coach versus a social worker approach. A coach relationship empowers the individual and challenges them to step outside their comfort zone and to be accountable for their development. The coach will engage with the employer and provide them with honest feedback and suggestions for improvement or change.

The graph is difficult to interpret and really only makes sense once the statement "which means that over the last 12 years, more Tasmanian workers have been exiting the labour market than young Tasmanians have been entering⁷." That's the kicker.

Ensuring employers have the capacity and tools to engage and support youth is the most important theme. If they don't, the investment in youth and a vocational pathway means little as there won't be an industry or employer for them to safely commence their employment journey.

A proportion of the current Job Provider incentive-based placement fee should be directed not as cash but as support for business jobs coaches and resources particularly for Tasmanian sole traders and SMEs who typically do not have access to the in-house resources of training or coaching.

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

Government should redirect some funding to employers and provide access to tools or coaches who can support them in the engagement of youth. Businesses must also realise that youth are an important current and future workforce, but they need to invest additional training, coaching and on-the-job support. Schools

also must continue to offer vocational learning opportunities and encourage careers in a trades or vocational space.

There still seems to be a strong push to university rather than a trade at many of the events our programs team attend. These events are also well serviced by Service Providers however at a majority of events the Service Providers outnumber the Employers at least 2:1 in some cases higher, so more needs to be done to encourage employers to attend these events and for these events to provide immersive experiences for the youth to 'see & feel' what working in these roles may be like.

Industry associations in Tasmania are quite progressive; Civil Contractor Federation, MBA Tasmania, etc in the development of work preparedness courses and introduction to the industry, particularly for youth and females with good success.

Searson Buck's government equity programs; Career Connector and Job Ready Fund have provided and realised many of these opportunities for youth, regardless of their background, into a career in the civil or building industry.

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?

We believe an effective and individualised career curriculum and coaching model starting in the school system continues to be crucial to making a positive impact on a young person's transition into a work environment. These programs should however be delivered by an organisation connected to industry that understands employers and knows what employers need in their new employees.

School career coaches can support the individual with goal setting, informed decision-making, skill development, insights into the changing job market, mental and emotional support and building resilience to prepare themselves for the successes and knockbacks they will experience as they navigate the complexities of the job market.

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?

Enabling the same support as those available to their metropolitan peers is important, however the delivery method may need to differ. It could be delivered virtually, specific times of the year or by collaboration between providers to deliver multifaceted support at once.

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

Improved low-cost transportation infrastructure which includes public transport, expansion of the Area Connect service and increased access to programs such as Driver Mentoring Tasmania so young people can gain their licences quicker as the demand for this service far outstrips supply in most areas.

Increasing low-cost or no-cost transportation availability will allow those in regional areas to better engage with employment, education and recreational activities which increase their networks and social interaction skills. Area Connect is a prime example of such a program.

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?

Increased cross-collaboration between service providers, program delivery, employment hubs and employers is required to respond to and address the complex needs of young people and evolving skills and staffing requirements of the employer. Business job coaches and associated support service should be a consideration moving forward. Not necessarily a social support approach but business orientated individuals who understand how to mould, motivate and support youth into the workers of tomorrow in a business environment.

Through collaboration with industry, service providers can learn to better understand the challenges that employers face when hiring young people with complex needs and then better tailor their support to these young people to ensure they are set up for success when entering the workplace.

The reverse of this is that service providers also have the ability to educate the industry on some of the challenges today's young people experience and how they can best support these individuals in times of need whilst still meeting the needs of their workplace.

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?

Unable to on this cohort as it is not one that typically engages with our organisation.

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?

Expansion of the work undertaken with Area Connect, and Driver Mentoring Tasmania and look at the ability for programs such as the Job Ready Fund to have the ability to fund driving lessons for those where it is a genuine barrier to them getting to work.

Fund the delivery of driving lessons through schools/colleges, especially in regions with minimal public transport access and a review of the number of hours required to be undertaken.

A further expansion of the NILS Tasmania program and eligibility guidelines to help with the purchase of a car not just car registration for those who have gained secure employment.

Look at building extra funding into trainee and apprenticeship programs for employers to be able to support their young employees with driving lessons whilst working for an employer.

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?

Young people currently get information from their peers, their parents and we also need to recognise a vast majority of their information comes from social media platforms such as TikTok, SnapChat and Instagram – the strategy needs to take this into consideration.

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

'Job-Ready' is not a static state or a one-size-fits-all terminology, it should be tailored to the individual and there should also be a requirement for the individual to want to engage to be job-ready and take ownership of their development.

Through the delivery of the Job Ready Fund and Career Connector, Searson Buck has identified a myriad of needs for young people to be 'Job-Ready' from

- interview coaching,
- confidence building
- introductions to employees,
- the ability to take on paid temporary employment which then allows them to show demonstratable work experience
- access to funding to undertake training, pre-employment programs or gain licences for roles

Examples have included:

'Fee Free Training' in course areas of critical needs, still require individuals to have access to a laptop to complete their studies, the Job Ready Fund has stepped in to support these individuals to purchase a laptop and complete their studies.

Pre-employment programs require individuals to have specific clothing or safety equipment to safely participate in these programs to become 'Job Ready', so the Job Ready Fund has provided funding to purchase the items for individuals

Another example of job readiness can include ongoing coaching, interview support and check-ins provided by programs such as Career Connector overlap with financial support from the Job Ready Fund.

Feedback as follows from a participant who over the course of 6 months was supported into training and ultimately a job outcome as a remote firefighter:

"I completed both forklift training and wilderness first aid in the past two weeks. Which I was able to do thanks to the job-ready fund. Both courses were engaging and fulfilling. Thanks for organising that for me!! it would've helped me stand out in my resume/application! "

"Yes! Got the job and based on merit I was able to choose to stay in Hobart as opposed to moving up north! What a relief. Just need to pass the arduous fitness test and the medical and if that goes well, I will start on the 18th Sep. Thank you for your help, I really appreciate your time and for you checking in regularly."

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

Employers have a key role to play in shaping the work-readiness skills of our youth. Searson Buck's involvement in the delivery of the Job Ready Fund and Career Connector, has resulted in some great collaboration examples between Employers, Training Providers, industry bodies, service providers and funding partners. Two great Tasmania examples of these are:

The High Vis Army Pre-Employment Programs:

- Facilitated by CCF Tasmania (Industry Body)
- Participants referred to the program by Career Connector, Jobs Hubs, Employment Agencies
- Training delivered by Tafe or other providers
- Interview and resume coaching sessions delivered by Career Connector
- PPE/Clothing funded through the Job Ready Fund
- Work Experience provided by Employers
- Individual participants gain employment out of the program

Carlton Street Childcare Pre-Employment Program

- Participants referred by service providers
- Training facilitated by Foresite
- Training costs and WWVP cards funded via the Job Ready Fund
- Work placements facilitated by Carlton Street Childcare
- Traineeships offered to successful participants by Carlton Street Childcare through MEGT

Both these examples highlight that when designing programs in collaboration with industry successful employment outcomes can occur for youth.

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?

Youth must commence employment in a safe environment where they are supported. Identifying employers or host employers who are sympathetic to the unique needs of youth but not wrap them in cotton wool is important.

Within our own on-hired recruitment business, we have engaged youth, typically within the age groups of 19 – 23 and placed them with trusted clients on shorter-term on-hired arrangements. One where the host employer knows that the youth may not have the skills required but does have the motivation to be successful.

Expectations need to be clearly established for the employer and youth to avoid disappointment. This includes understanding the youth's range of skills, so they are not thrown into a task and fail and ensuring the individual has a clear understanding of what's expected of them in a work environment.

Work tasks and activities are typically manual or general office-type duties. This requires less reliance on experience and greater emphasis on motivation to learn and builds competencies in one or two key areas providing a sense of satisfaction.

Perhaps there is an opportunity for the government to support a Pilot Program where a labour-hire arrangement is offered to host employer businesses for short-term youth placements to “experience” a working environment over a period of 4 to 8 weeks. Searson Buck has the resources to support such a program.

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?

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Very simply. Do not expect youth to undertake multiple learning and development activities all at once. Their function at such a young age is to experience the work environment first. Learning will come with experience.

Invest in training but ensure it is aligned with the work they are undertaking now. Provide regular assessment of their performance and feedback on what they have done well and where they have areas of development.

Treat them like young adults, not caseloads.

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?

Supporting a new hire, whether this be youth, mature-age or skilled migrants is different across each cohort.

Investment in more tailored Employer Assistance Programs such as those provided by Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania and development employer-orientated content for the different youth cohorts; those with complex needs, those with less complex needs and those with none, would be beneficial.

Employers today are typically time-poor or do not always have the internal resources to support the new youth hires. Blend these programs to ensure there is in-person delivery, online and remote learning or support frameworks. This allows the business owner to dive into information at a time suitable for them, which most likely may not be during the regular work hours of 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Consider delivering support programs or information in an after-hours format when the business owner may not have the distractions of their business.

When promoting the opportunities of youth employment, there is a definite need to match the individual to the employer's culture. Culture is now king. Skills can be taught. Too many times we see providers present youth (and others) without understanding the fabric of a business.

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

Business owners are time-poor, so information needs to be readily available at a time suitable for them. Develop a range of courses and content that could be delivered across a range of mediums; during normal business hours, in-person but out-of-business hours and online content.

Build a series of courses or webinars focusing on youth which help business owners better understand youth and their challenges. Most will have had children so are familiar with youth, but in a home environment and will need support and tools to refamiliarise themselves with youth thinking and acting differently in a business environment.

Develop and offer traditional topics but delivered with a youth orientation and perspective;

- Communications style
- Resiliency in youth
- Handlining conflict
- Difficult conversations
- Coaching for youth
- Understanding stress in youth
- Managing stress in youth
- Setting KPI's/objectives in youth, etc

This could be delivered by a range of service providers including TAFE, a job service provider or a recruitment and consulting firm.

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

Feel free to share anything else.

It is great to see Jobs Tasmania and the Tasmanian Government so passionate about youth and connecting them to jobs.

Searson Buck is proud to be contributing to the employment pathways of youth by the facilitation of Career Connector and the Job Ready Fund.