

Youth Jobs Strategy

Consultation Report

Introduction

We know that across the state there are thousands of dedicated service providers, support workers, teachers, employers, parents, and community members working tirelessly to create opportunities and provide guidance and support for young Tasmanians navigating their journey to adulthood and independence.

Young people are clear about what they want and need to have a good life. They are also advocating for themselves and their peers and developing solutions to achieve the future they want and deserve.

Early development of the strategy drew on existing research and evidence, including review of previous consultation undertaken both locally and nationally. This was supplemented by new consultation and stakeholder engagement activities to ensure that the *Youth Jobs Strategy* is informed by what young Tasmanian, employers, and communities are experiencing and observing right now.

Through a phased approach, we built a strong evidence base for a strategy that delivers both short-term, practical actions, and a framework for systems and policy reform that is achievable and sustainable.

Based on our program of research and consultation, it is clear the strategy needs to address both social and economic imperatives, ensuring that efforts are aligned to support young people to learn, explore, and navigate pathways to work, and partnering with the employing sector to create great workplaces for young people that encourage participation and productivity.

This consultation report describes our methodology and summarises what we heard and learnt throughout the consultation process. The analysis highlights the consistent themes that emerged across a variety of consultation activities and stakeholder groups and have informed the development of the strategy's ambition, vision and principles. The consultation findings also led to the development of the strategy's Framework for Action and Roadmap.

Objectives of the consultations

Throughout the process many stakeholders reiterated a sense of consultation fatigue, and we heard that young people felt over-consulted on 'youth' issues and frustration that often their feedback did not appear to translate into action or change.

To ensure our approach was meaningful, accessible and valuable, we defined specific consultation objectives:

- Present a 'call to action' and secure commitment from critical stakeholders to drive and have ownership of the strategy's ambition
- Survey the real-life and real-time experiences of young people, employers, educators, service providers, and others in community in relation to youth engagement in education, training, and employment
- Understand regional contexts – the unique challenges and opportunities, gaps or duplication in service delivery, and community assets that could be leveraged
- Uncover the 'green shoots' that are working well in place: the partnerships, initiatives and strategies that are driving outcomes in and for communities.

Consultations with young people had the additional objectives to:

- Provide opportunities for young Tasmanians to connect and engage with the strategy in ways that are accessible, targeted, purposeful and sincere
- Test workshop outputs, preliminary findings and language
- Develop a vision statement for the strategy that articulates what success looks like from the perspectives of young people.

About the consultation activities

To capture a broad range of experiences and insights, a variety of consultation activities were undertaken to provide the Tasmanian people with different ways to engage with the strategy's development.

Stakeholder interviews

To understand the context and conditions in which the strategy will be implemented, project partners conducted over 200 face-to-face and online interviews with individual stakeholders across government, community, business and industry, the education and training sector, and the youth services sector.

This included regular engagement with the Youth Employment Alliance, the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, and Regional Jobs Hubs to ensure the strategy is aligning efforts and leveraging existing opportunities.

Youth Pathways workshops

Jobs Tasmania commissioned the Brotherhood of St. Laurence's Social Policy and Research Centre – their Learning Partners in the Regional Jobs Hub evaluation project – to facilitate a series of workshops with stakeholders involved in the Youth Employment Community of Policy and Practice.

The workshops were designed to draw out stakeholders' observations and experiences working in the youth employment sector, and develop a series of example pathway maps that demonstrate how young people might navigate pathways to education, training, or employment. To construct these pathways, stakeholders

identified the various steps, links, interactions, barriers, and opportunities along a young person's journey to employment.

The process aimed to illustrate the features and characteristics of those steps and identify the roles different organisations are or could be playing to improve youth transitions to education, training, or employment.

To better understand the barriers or challenges the pathway mapping activities identified, workshop participants then interrogated the underlying structural issues that were found to be contributing to or reinforcing the breakdown of youth pathways. Five challenge 'loops' were identified as the most critical to overcoming barriers to education, training, or employment for young people in Tasmania:

- challenge of building work readiness is holding young people back
- stretched employer resources lead to job seeker churn
- inflexible and narrow education model
- reliance on informal networks leads to unsustainable employment outcomes
- dependence on individual support workers risks disengagement of young people in employment, education and training.

Participants were then asked to put forward potential solutions, leverage points and the responsibility of key actors within the employment, education and training ecosystem. These solutions informed the development of actions highlighted in the *Youth Jobs Strategy* Roadmap.

A subsequent workshop was held with business and industry leaders to test the findings generated by the previous youth pathway consultations from an industry perspective, to ensure the key challenges for industry in engaging young people had been correctly identified, and to capture any critical elements that had been overlooked. The workshop also provided a platform where industry could test the solution ideas that emerged from the previous consultations, and to put forward any others as they saw fit.

Outcomes Framework workshops and consultations

Jobs Tasmania also commissioned Social Ventures Australia (SVA) to develop an Outcomes Framework for employment- and training-related programs that support population groups facing barriers to labour market entry. The goal was to develop an alternative approach to designing programs through funding models that support more intentional investment to address barriers people face, and fund for more realistic outcomes – funding for long-term impact rather than short-term activities.

In developing the Outcomes Framework, SVA conducted a workshop with representatives from the Tasmanian Departments of State Growth, Premier and Cabinet, and the Department for Education, Children and Young People as key

fundors of employment, education and training-related programs supporting vulnerable young people facing barriers to participation in the labour force.

Led by SVA, workshop participants co-designed a Theory of Change to define and prioritise the outcomes that are intended for measurement through the Outcomes Framework. These outcomes were then tested with key stakeholders working with vulnerable young people, including Launceston City Mission, Youth, Family and Community Connections, and Workskills Inc.

The Outcomes Framework will support the design and implementation of actions under the *Youth Jobs Strategy* by helping to articulate the outcomes the strategy is seeking to achieve, and providing indicators for how those outcomes can be measured. It will help government to better meet the needs of young people by:

- providing a common understanding and language of the outcomes being sought
- supporting an outcomes-focused approach in service commissioning and delivery
- promoting consistency in the measurement and evaluation of outcomes and activities.

Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper

In September 2023, a Discussion Paper was released to test the common themes arising from workshops and stakeholder interviews, and to provide context for the government's proposed approach to the *Youth Jobs Strategy*. It provided an opportunity for all Tasmanians to share their observations, suggestions and experiences, especially those who were not involved in other stakeholder consultation activities. Members of the public were invited to directly respond to the key issues raised in the paper, or make comment on any other issues or potential solutions they felt may be relevant to the development and implementation of the strategy.

The public consultation process closed for submissions on 27 October 2023. There were 34 formal submissions to the discussion paper received from across the state, with an additional 13 pro-forma feedback forms submitted through the dedicated consultation platform.

A large proportion of submissions were from organisations in the community services sector, including Carers Tasmania, Early Childhood Australia (Tas), National Disability Service (Tas), The Smith Family, Tasmanian Council of Social Services, and the Youth Network of Tasmania (on behalf of the Youth Employment Alliance).

A substantial proportion of submissions were from the education and training sector including Catholic Education Tasmania, Independent Schools Tasmania, TasTAFE, and the University of Tasmania.

Submissions from industry included agriculture, building and construction, energy, hospitality and ICT sectors, as well as individual employers.

Contributions through this process provided a rich and diverse range of insights including stories of personal experience, provider case studies, practice examples and national and international best-practice theory.

All formal submissions are published on the *Youth Jobs Strategy* website at: www.youthjobsstrategy.tas.gov.au

Youth Jobs Summit

On 19 February 2024, the Department of State Growth and Department for Education, Children and Young People hosted the Youth Jobs Summit.

The Summit was facilitated by Greg Johannes, former Head of the State Service and Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and previously Deputy Secretary of the Department of Economic Development. The session also included a presentation by demographer Dr Lisa Denny, to highlight the demographic and economic context and provide background on some of the key influencing factors such as population, participation, and productivity.

This forum brought together stakeholders from business and industry, the community and youth services sector, education and training providers, and local, state, and federal government to share, test and refine the key findings that were uncovered through the program of consultation activities.

Members of the Tasmanian Youth Voice Network participated in a youth panel discussion on what success (of the strategy) looks like from the perspectives of young Tasmanians.

Consultation with young people

Through our conversations with those working closely with young people in Tasmania, we understood that for a *Youth Jobs Strategy* to be successful, it needs to be developed with young people, not just for them; it needs to empower and enable young people to have a voice in the policy decisions that will impact their lives, and be part of the solutions at both the action and systems level.

We wanted to ensure that the consultation process was accessible for young Tasmanians in ways that work for them. Working closely with the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), we designed a program of consultation activities that aimed to elicit meaningful feedback from young people and to help them connect and engage with the strategy's development. This included:

Youth Jobs Strategy Youth Panel

Convened by YNOT, a dedicated Youth Panel was established to inform youth consultation methodology, design, and communication methods.

The Panel comprised 10 young Tasmanians aged 15 to 25 years from across the state and from a diverse range of backgrounds. Their primary duties were the development of a youth-friendly discussion paper and creative feedback process, and informing the planning and delivery of regional youth consultations.

Panel members were remunerated in recognition of their time and expertise, particularly in relation to the use of appropriate and accessible language and communication and engagement mechanisms.

Youth-friendly Discussion Paper

Supported by YNOT, the Youth Panel developed a youth-friendly version of the Discussion Paper and creative feedback process and promotional activities to encourage youth engagement.

The Panel designed a series of questions based on those included in the full Discussion Paper, considering language, visuals and content length, to ensure the material was relevant and accessible to young people.

The youth Discussion Paper was presented in short individual video clips featuring voiceovers by Panel members, accompanied by a small amount of background information summarised from the full Discussion Paper.

The youth Discussion Paper feedback process offered young Tasmanians creative ways to contribute, including written responses, audio/visual and creative submissions. The feedback process also allowed for both individual and collective contributions.

There were 20 submissions received from all regions of Tasmania, and 15 of the submissions were from young Tasmanians who identified as belonging to a priority population cohort.

Regional Youth Workshops

The Youth Panel also worked with YNOT and Jobs Tasmania on the design and delivery of regional youth workshops to test the findings of the Youth Pathways workshops (previously facilitated by the Brotherhood of St Laurence – Social Policy and Research Centre).

A set of agreed questions for the workshops were explored through a combination of round-table discussions and practical activities. The Panel tested the workshop program and provided feedback on the workshop content, sequencing, and activities.

Workshop participants were recruited by partnering with local community and not-for-profit organisations, including the Launceston City Mission, Migrant Resource Centre, Working It Out, Troublesmiths and the Glenorchy Jobs Hub. There were 56 young Tasmanians who participated in these workshops, with 34 identifying as belonging to a marginalised population group.

Tasmanian Youth Voice Network

The Tasmanian Youth Voice Network (TYVN) pilot aimed to shape a new way for young people to participate in government decision-making processes and have a voice on policies, programs and projects that directly affect them.

The pilot, co-designed between YNOT, Brand Tasmania and young people, commenced in July 2023 and provided members opportunities to be involved in paid consultations to support government policy discussions, strategic planning and decision-making as they arise.

In December 2023, the TYVN, in collaboration with Jobs Tasmania, convened a group of young Tasmanians to support the development of a vision statement for the *Youth Jobs Strategy* – a vision that reflects the aspirations, needs and desires of Tasmanian young people, in words that resonate with them.

The resulting vision for the *Youth Jobs Strategy* is:

All young Tasmanians feel empowered and are supported to access meaningful education, training or employment opportunities.

The group also built a word cloud identifying specific words they would like to see reflected or addressed in the strategy:



This word cloud became an important reference for the use of language in the strategy, and to support the development of the strategy framework and roadmap.

The TYVN also recruited a panel of young people to participate in the Youth Jobs Summit.

Thematic analysis

The analysis below collates feedback expressed through a range of consultation forums into common themes that helped shape the *Youth Jobs Strategy's* Framework for Action and Roadmap.

The importance of a youth-centred and co-design approach was raised consistently throughout the consultation process. Instead of being recognised as a stand-alone theme, youth voice, participation and empowerment are acknowledged as core elements of all common themes and critical components of the success of each priority action area under the strategy framework.

1

General observations about youth employment in Tasmania

Young people are one of the most vulnerable cohorts in the labour force

Many young people commented that while finding a job can be difficult, keeping it can be even harder. Young people are overrepresented in industries characterised by a high proportion of casual, seasonal, or temporary employment such as retail, tourism and hospitality, and their limited experience means young people are often the first to be let go when economic conditions require businesses to downsize.

Employment is an important part of the transition to adulthood and independence

It was widely agreed that the process of moving from the structured environment of school into the world of work is one of the most significant transitional phases of a young person's life. The ability to navigate this transition successfully has immense impacts on a young person's mental health and wellbeing and their capacity to achieve financial independence. However, many young people in Tasmania are struggling to enter the labour force, and even those who do, may experience underemployment, insecure employment, and exploitation.



The perceptions of young people can be a barrier to employment

Employer and societal perceptions of young people were repeatedly identified as a barrier to employment for many young Tasmanians. This included generalisations that young people are ‘lazy’, ‘unmotivated’, or lacking the communication skills, values, and attributes to be productive in the workplace.

Consultations with young people revealed that many experience nervousness and uncertainty when they are in a new workplace, which can manifest as a lack of interest, and affect their capacity to communicate what they need to do the job well.

A lack of local opportunities is driving young potential workers to the mainland

Many young people reported a desire to remain and build a life in Tasmania but felt that a lack of education, training and career opportunities made that difficult.

It was broadly acknowledged that many young people move interstate to pursue further education, training, and early-career opportunities that they feel are not available locally. Some respondents suggested that more needs to be done to not only retain young people, but also encourage them to return by promoting the career pathways and opportunities that are available.

2

The education, training, and employment ecosystem

Structure

The issues that overlay a young person's work and learning journey sit across three levels of government, multiple government portfolios, and intersect with various community and industry sectors. Almost all stakeholder groups indicated that the complex service ecosystem is difficult to navigate and leads to uncertainty and confusion for job seekers and employers navigating youth employment.

Several respondents referenced the important role of intermediaries in making connections and bridging the transition between the education and employment systems, particularly for young people lacking personal and social networks.

Many stakeholders, including those within the education, training, and employment ecosystem, also acknowledged that young people are not adequately supported through the transition from school to adulthood and independence. When young people depart from the structured environment of school, there are no formal mechanisms or processes in place to help them enter and navigate adult systems. Without a clear point of connection to the post-school education, training, and employment ecosystem, the risk of long-term disengagement is amplified.

Service delivery and accessibility

People in regional communities, including young people, noted that access to services was limited in regional and remote areas, even those that purported to offer outreach service delivery. Opportunities to participate in training or post-school education locally were also found to be limited, with many training organisations constrained by an inability to attract sufficient participant numbers to deliver training in regional areas.

Some young people require more intensive, holistic support over a longer period of time to address more complex barriers. Community and not-for-profit organisations play an important role in supporting this cohort, but many identify that a lack of funding certainty impacts their ability to attract and retain appropriately skilled staff, build internal capacity, and provide continuity of care.

While many stakeholders promoted a flexible, tailored service approach, a lack of consistency in the quality, availability and processes was identified as an issue that reinforces other structural challenges in the service ecosystem.

Accountability

It was consistently acknowledged that clearer articulation of responsibility and accountability are needed to improve outcomes and reduced duplication of effort. Many stakeholders stressed that accountability for the development of strategies and policies to improve youth employment and participation should be better defined and measured.

Evidence-based effort, evaluation and review were also seen as critical to accountability and ensuring actions and interventions align to the strategy's ambition, vision, and principles.

Governance

A lack of coordination across the three levels of government, and across state government divisions and agencies, was described as hindering innovation and driving siloed practices. Stakeholders observed a disconnect and/or lack of visibility of the significant efforts already in place to address youth economic participation, resulting in duplication of effort and unclear accountability. It was suggested that better governance across the levels of government would support connections between operational and strategic efforts of stakeholders.



3

Connecting to employment, education and training opportunities and pathways

Information

Young people obtain information about employment and training opportunities and pathways from a wide range of sources, and want it to be available in a variety of formats, not just digital media. Accessibility and reliability of information is also important, both for young people and those working to support and guide them. Information can be both overwhelming and restricting, with many young people commenting that they don't have exposure to alternative pathways outside university or a broad range of career or occupations.

Many young people connect to information in more informal ways – relationships with trusted adults can be a source of information and guidance, but those without access to these informal networks are even further disadvantaged. It was also acknowledged that it is critical that these points of connection in community are equipped to provide quality, accurate information.

Networks

Stakeholders working with young people stressed that many young people – particular those in disadvantaged population groups – have limited or no access to the informal networks that can help them find and interpret information, provide or direct to career advice, opportunities, or pathways, or help them to access support when they need it.

While the term 'informal networks' did not generally resonate with young people, they understood the concept and affirmed that access to personal connections and community networks has a significant impact on their ability to identify and connect to employment or training opportunities. They also acknowledged that the concept of 'it's not what you know, it's who you know' does not always lead to a fair outcome or the right person being given an opportunity.

Career education and guidance

Through all forms of consultation and across all stakeholder groups, there was consistent feedback that career education needs to commence at an early age to support younger age groups to start building aspirations, and to empower older cohorts to make informed subject choices and focus their learning around career goals, pathways, and opportunities.

Some stakeholders noted that multiple pathways to employment or further education do exist, but they are not always visible, connected, or universally accessible, especially for those who disengage from school prior to completion.

Even for those who do complete school, there is a sudden disconnection from the support and advice provided at school, and few clear avenues to obtain career information and guidance post-school. Some respondents suggested that provision of career education and career guidance needs to be made available at various points and places in a young person's life, both in and out of the school environment.

Industry exposure

Stakeholders in the youth services sector identified that participation in industry engagement and exposure activities enhances a young person's ability to develop employment aspirations and goals, and in turn increases the likelihood of engagement in post-school education, training, or employment.

Consultations with young people reveal they are eager to connect with people in industry to explore different careers and occupations, and want more information about how to access career pathways and opportunities.

Despite this, businesses and industry stakeholders observed that engagement with schools can be challenging, and describe a reliance on individual relationships with (and within) schools to connect to students and promote opportunities in their sector.

Work experience

Meaningful work experience opportunities are viewed by almost all stakeholders as critical to learning about different careers and occupations, and for gaining firsthand experience in a workplace environment. Workplace-based activities also help young people to build confidence, communication skills and other personal attributes that help them successfully enter the labour force.

Young people called for more opportunities to undertake work experience across a variety of industries and occupations to help build their readiness for work. However, for many stakeholders, the risks and resources associated with facilitating vocational placements or work experience are viewed as a barrier.

The social enterprise sector was highlighted as playing a key role in the provision of work-based experience and skill development, and demand is far exceeding the available placements, especially for young people with complex barriers to participation in the labour market

Job readiness

Job readiness was one of the strongest themes across all forms of consultation.

Almost all industry and employer discussion paper submissions highlighted the need for improvement in the level of job readiness and interpersonal skills in young job seekers.

Many young people acknowledge that they don't feel adequately prepared for the realities of work, and want to see job or work readiness incorporated into their schooling in a meaningful way. Lack of an agreed definition of job readiness reinforces the difficulty young people face in becoming job-ready – they report that the expectations vary between employers and industry sectors, making it challenging to understand what skills and attributes they should be focusing on.

Clearly defining what 'job-ready' means, in a general sense that can be applicable in a variety of settings, and expanded on to acknowledge the specific needs and expectations of some industries and occupations, was identified as a critical first step in supporting young people to achieve this status.

4

Barriers to employment, education and training

It was clear from consultations that a broad range of issues can impact a young person's journey to engage in education, training, and employment. Respondents across the youth and community services sector – and others – called for a 'whole of person' approach that acknowledges the intersecting barriers, and can help young people navigate the various support systems.

Young people reported that the *Youth Jobs Strategy* needs to value and promote equity and inclusivity, particularly to support those experiencing more complex or intersectional barriers to economic participation.

While the barriers to participation listed below might be described as 'common', stakeholders unanimously agree that a flexible, scalable approach is needed that can tailor and adjust the intensity, duration, and method of delivery to meet the individual's personal circumstances and preferences.

The list below is not exhaustive, however reflects the barriers most consistently identified across the various stakeholder groups throughout the consultation.

Mental health

Mental health, including drug and alcohol misuse and addiction, was clearly identified as one of the most significant issues impacting young people's ability to engage in and sustain an education, training, or employment pathway. Young people, service providers, educators and employers all agreed that more young people than ever before need support to manage their mental health and wellbeing, but found that services are oversubscribed, and often not accessible to those living outside metropolitan areas, or those who are struggling financially.

Employers also commented that they are increasingly having to respond to young workers struggling with their mental health, but feel unsure how or where to refer them to support, and are unclear how to manage the resulting staff absences and decreased productivity.



Transport

Transport disadvantage was also highlighted as a major challenge impacting young people's ability to participate in education, training, or employment. Many young people described how difficult it is to gain a driver's licence, citing prohibitive costs, both to obtain their licence and in relation to car ownership; limited availability of driver mentor and training programs, particularly in regional areas; and an inability to accrue the required supervised driving hours when friends and family are unable or unwilling to assist.

Consultations also found that public transport is not always a realistic or affordable option to get young people safely to and from work, especially those living outside metropolitan areas. Stakeholders commented that public transport options need to be not just cost-effective, but also safe, convenient, and aligned with typical work and training schedules to enable and encourage punctual attendance. Many respondents commented that alternative transport options need to be explored, including employer-provided or community-based group transport solutions.



Housing and homelessness

Stakeholders in the community services sector highlighted that insecure housing and homelessness have a significant impact on the capacity of young people to engage in education, training, and employment. These need to be considered when designing interventions and policy solutions to improve youth participation. They pointed to more intentional collaboration between the employment and social service ecosystems to improve integration of holistic and therapeutic supports with employment services.

Disability

Stakeholders from the disability support sector noted that some young people with disability experience the world of work differently. Their perceptions of work, and what constitutes a good job may be different, and they may require adjustments and additional supports in the workplace that some employers do not have the capacity to provide.

Stakeholders advocated for a universal design approach that makes the system or service more accessible to young people with barriers, including but not limited to disability, and as a result improving the system or service for all users.

Caring responsibilities

Caring responsibilities are one of primary reasons a young person disengages from education, training, or employment. A need for intentional and targeted approaches to identification of young carers in educational settings, and referral to appropriate supports, was identified as critical to improving education outcomes for young carers.

Stakeholders recognised that the challenges associated with caring responsibilities are often compounded by other barriers to participation, including transport, financial hardship, and low levels of literacy arising from disengagement from education.

Educational attainment and literacy

Respondents across various stakeholder groups highlighted the importance of educational attainment and adequate levels of literacy (including digital literacy and numeracy), as a foundation for successfully transitioning to employment. Many noted the clear correlation between lower levels of education and literacy and long-term disengagement and socio-economic disadvantage.

Stakeholders in the community and social services sector noted that marginalised and/or vulnerable young people are more likely to disengage from school early, often due to other barriers to engagement including financial stress and caring responsibility. Feedback from the education sector also highlighted that young people who are unable to complete their schooling not only miss out on critical elements of their educational development, but also important personal, social development and capability-building experiences that will help them to make the transition – and connections – to further study, training, or work.

Financial disadvantage

Many young respondents said that they have at times struggled to make ends meet while trying to find or sustain employment. Costs associated with securing employment, such as pre-employment police checks, working with vulnerable people registration, occupational tickets, licences, equipment, and clothing, can exclude young people with limited financial means from pursuing their chosen career pathway.

5

Skills and training

Skills mismatch

Young people report that there are significant mismatches between the skills and competencies taught through vocational or tertiary learning and what employers and industry require. Some also described a mismatch between their field of study and the jobs that are available to them, with many graduates working in entry-level roles unrelated to their qualification.

Consultation also revealed that in some instances the training system has not kept pace with the rapid emergence of new technology, resulting in workers with skills and qualifications that are no longer in demand, and impacting the productivity and competitive advantage of some Tasmanian industry sectors.

Employers and industry representatives stressed that education and training need to have legitimacy in the contemporary workplace. Training needs to be co-designed with employers and industry to ensure that training packages are reflective of current industry practices, equipment, and technology.

Accessibility

The training system was described as a 'mystery' that is disconnected and difficult to navigate and access, both for young learners and for teachers, parents, and other trusted adults trying to provide advice and support. Respondents called for reform to simplify the system and streamline coordination to improve user experience and accessibility.

The 'how' training is delivered is important to young people. They want learning that is engaging and relevant, and post-COVID, they want to learn face-to-face as well as online, with opportunities for practical application of learning. Education and training need to be accessible and delivered in a variety of formats that support learners with different needs and learning preferences. This is especially true for groups who face barriers to economic participation.

6

Employers and the workplace

Entry level roles/experience

Young people, community organisations and educators commented on the prevalence of unrealistic expectations and skills/experience requirements for entry level roles. Many young people are finding the only opportunities they are considered for are lower-skilled and often insecure jobs, that have limited opportunity for career development or progression, and are not fully utilising their qualifications or skills.

Industry groups recognised that an 'entry-level' role in some industry sectors may not be suitable – or in some cases safe – for a young person with limited workplace experience. Others commented that more support is needed to help businesses redesign entry-level roles, and their workplaces more broadly, to empower businesses to recruit and integrate young people into their workforce.

Communication/values alignment

The skillsets most valued by employers and most critical for young people navigating the transition to work are enterprise skills – skills that are transferrable across industries and occupations, such as problem solving, financial literacy, digital literacy, teamwork, and communication.

Some employers are still reluctant to take on younger, inexperienced workers, and smaller businesses without specialist HR staff feel ill-equipped to provide the support young people need when they enter the workforce. This often results in failed hires that reduce the confidence of both the employer and the young person.

Young people are looking for more than 'just a job'. Organisational culture, social and environmental impact, and opportunities to pursue professional development and advancement, are important.

Young people also want employers to know that the process of entering the labour market is extremely stressful and may impact their performance, both at interview and on the job. Some young respondents indicated they experience significant anxiety about making mistakes while they are still learning, and the repercussions that might have on their current and future employment.

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