



Wednesday, 25 October 2023

Submission in response to the Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper
c/o Jobs Tasmania

Via email: YouthJobsStrategy@jobstasmania.tas.gov.au

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper.

By way of background, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is an independent membership organisation that positively leads the Tasmanian business community.

The TCCI is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation, funded by business to provide products and services which contribute to meeting member businesses objectives.

As a member of the Australian Chamber Alliance and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), and the broader Chamber movement across Australia, TCCI provides valuable support to its members through a range of programs and services, and actively advocates their concerns as the 'voice of business' at all levels of government.

The TCCI represents more than 1,500 businesses through its Tasmanian membership base. The TCCI also reaches up to 20,000 businesses through regional chambers with the TCCI Chamber Alliance.

The TCCI membership reflects the breadth of the Tasmanian business community. It includes businesses from every region of our state including major cities, regional towns and remote areas; it includes large businesses employing thousands of people down to micro-businesses; it includes businesses that have been in Tasmania for generations through to new start-ups; it includes public companies, cooperatives, not-for-profits, private companies, and family businesses; and it includes businesses in every industry sector of our economy.

Furthermore, it should be noted, that the TCCI has actively engaged with the business community, stakeholders and government on a range of work readiness activities over the past 13 years. This work has posited TCCI extremely well to understand the challenges and opportunities in relation to youth engagement.

We commend the Tasmanian Government for initiating this discussion, as it addresses a critical issue that affects not only our state's current economic landscape but also its future prosperity. It is our firm belief that young people are a key segment in addressing the ongoing skills shortages across our State and fostering economic growth.

This submission seeks to express the views and recommendations of TCCI, with a focus on the pivotal role young people play in our business community and the need to ensure their productivity and readiness for the workforce.

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The TCCI believes that it is imperative to improve Tasmania's participation rate, which is currently, and has historically been, the worst in the nation. It is also no coincidence that Tasmania has also experienced some of the highest youth unemployment rates in the nation as well.

While there are many issues that contribute to Tasmania's high youth unemployment rate and low participation rate, it is clear that an effective Youth Jobs Strategy, with full engagement from the community as well as young Tasmanians, would go a long way to tackling some of the key challenges affecting the State, our communities and our economy.

Notwithstanding that, ensuring young Tasmanians transition seamlessly from education and training into a career and thereby lowering youth unemployment and improving the participation rate is one of the keys to sustainable economic growth in Tasmania.

To this end, it is imperative that the Youth Jobs Strategy pays specific attention to improving career readiness among young Tasmanians, as this directly impacts our members' ability to absorb, support and benefit from their talents and potential.

Our submission makes the following recommendations for the Youth Jobs Strategy:

Right Priorities: While obviously young people must be at the centre of any strategy aimed at addressing skills shortages and bolstering the state's productivity, the role of business and industry should be prioritised too.

Ongoing Business-community Input: Any strategy will fail if the business community and the those implementing the strategy are not working together effectively. While the strategy should have the young person at the centre, it also needs to be sensitive to the needs of business as well, given how critical employers will be. To that end, there needs to be an ongoing and enduring role for the business community in the oversight of the development and implementation of the strategy. Further, it is our view that a taskforce should be formed comprising of representatives of the business community (including large employers), other community groups, intermediaries, unions, local government and others. The taskforce should be chaired by the relevant minister (most likely the Minister for Skills) and should have direct input into the development and implementation of the strategy.

Enhance Career Awareness and Aspiration: The current system suffers from a lack of career readiness, hindering the seamless transition of students into job opportunities. There is an inconsistent approach to career awareness with an ad hoc engagement with the schools sector from some industries. For example, those sectors funded by various government initiatives, have a greater level of engagement with schools, however there is still overarching coordinated approach to school engagement and usually this is relationship dependent. We propose increased investment in programs that uplift career awareness, aspiration, and motivation among students and also programs that support businesses to be better able to integrate students into their workforce both for training and familiarisation purposes and also for ongoing employment opportunities. Research shows that the more engagement a student has with workplaces, the more likely they are to be employed.



Importance of Intermediaries: We recognise the importance of intermediaries in bridging the gap between the education system, businesses and the workforce. We believe these intermediaries should be better supported, as expecting the government or businesses themselves to solely shoulder this responsibility is unrealistic. Industry engagement in schools must be facilitated and enabled by intermediaries to ensure a successful connection. This needs to be adequately resourced and coordinated to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes. The piece meal approach over an extended period has contributed to both employer disengagement and youth disengagement. This can be seen in high youth unemployment rates in Tasmania.

Support for business: As with any new generation entering the workforce, there are challenges assimilating into the workplace, for both parties. Technological advancements, mental health issues and impacts of the COVID 19 Pandemic, have resulted in a greater level of support for young people and employers to maintain a successful employment relationship. Employers in particular require support to adapt their work practices and culture to accommodate the needs of this new generation of workers. Whilst the current Employer of Choice Assist program goes some way to supporting these employer needs. The program is limited to businesses with less than 20 employees. We know that businesses of all sizes experience challenges supporting young people into employment.

Utilise the Employer Validated Work Readiness Project: We recognise the Government's previous work, funding the TCCI to develop an Employer Validated Work Readiness Framework, piloted and endorsed by job seekers and employers. We recommend the incorporation of this Framework into the future Youth Jobs Strategy, supported by appropriate funding. This project has provided valuable tools for assessing work readiness and supporting employers, which are crucial components of any comprehensive strategy.

Further information:

https://www.skills.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/201036/Qualities_Employers_are_looking_for_in_Employees.pdf

Clearly Defined Roles: It is essential that the roles of all stakeholders involved in the Youth Jobs Strategy are clearly defined, agreed upon, measurable, and well-understood. This ensures effective collaboration and accountability among all parties, leading to the successful implementation of the strategy.

The TCCI is deeply committed to the success of the Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy, and we would like to continue to work with the Government on the development and implementation of the Strategy. We trust that the government will consider our recommendations and insights to develop a strategy that truly benefits the youth of Tasmania and our state's overall economic growth.

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The TCCI would like to thank the Tasmanian Government for committing to develop such an important strategy and for considering our submission.

The TCCI would welcome the opportunity to expand on our submission in person should you wish.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a horizontal line at the bottom.

Michael Bailey
CEO
Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry