

Youth Jobs Strategy

SUBMISSION TO DISCUSSION PAPER

October 2023



Jobs Tasmania
GPO Box 536,
Hobart TAS 7001
YouthJobsStrategy@jobstasmania.tas.gov.au

27th October 2023

Dear Jobs Tasmania members

Submission to Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper from Burnie Works

As Chair and authorising signatory of Burnie Works, we provide the attached submission to the Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper.

The Youth Jobs Strategy represents a significant opportunity in identifying and addressing challenges for young people when transitioning from school to employment. Additionally, the Youth Jobs Strategy can support identifying and addressing challenges in how policy, systems, services, and employers can best support this transition, and retain young people in positions.

Burnie Works is heavily invested in education and employment outcomes for young people through our place based, collective impact work. Together with community we seek to understand the challenges and issues they are facing and work together on community-led actions with government, business, service providers and schools. Our submission extends its support to the principles and the youth pathways practice outlined in the discussion paper. Furthermore, we provide additional insights from discussions with over 60 young people in Burnie about what they expect from employers, and barriers they are currently facing trying to achieve their employment dreams.

Please find attached our submission enriched with the voice of young people in pataway / Burnie.

Yours sincerely



Jacqueline De Jonge
Chair
Burnie Works

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission provides insights from young people of Burnie to support the development of the Youth Jobs Strategy. Generation Z represent the future of the workforce. Thinking in terms of generations can assist us in understanding how societies evolve over the years¹. Workplaces cannot fall into old habits of expecting long term tenure, and unquestioning obedience to employers. Whilst employers do not need to react to every whim of gen Z employees, we cannot change the learning styles, work patterns or employment attitudes of an entire generation. Employer expectations need to shift, and positioning ourselves to understand and better engage with young people is needed ².

We are talking about a generation of young people that do not know the world without the internet³. They have instant access to more information and knowledge than ever before. They are connected at the push of a button and are the first generation to be truly global². Gone are the days where employer's hold the power. "People aren't working for you: They may be employed by you, but they are working for their own reason²." Gen Z want employers that care about their wellbeing. They want ethical, open, and transparent leaders, who support diverse and inclusive workplaces⁴.

We must listen, learn, and adapt.

This submission suggests there is a lack of understanding among employers about the needs, values, and aspirations of young people. Meeting the expectations of young people will be essential in successful outcomes for young people, business, and the economy in Tasmania.

It's important to note our response is placed-based. The findings in the submission are based on discussions with over 60 young people aged 16-24 years old, from Burnie, within the past two weeks. Our focus was on their perception of employers and their expectations of employers, including work environments and conditions, pay and job security, and work/life balance. The submission also addresses challenges and barriers faced by young people in achieving their dream jobs, including the lack of internal and external resources and the need for mental health support.

We ask for serious consideration of these findings. The submission also states its support of the principles and practices in the discussion paper and offer further insights to some of the other discussion questions.



¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/22/5-things-to-keep-in-mind-when-you-hear-about-gen-z-millennials-boomers-and-other-generations/>

² https://content.workplacegivingaustralia.org.au/app/uploads/2021/02/Understanding_Generation_Z_report_McCrindle.pdf

³ <https://wpengine.com.au/resources/gen-z-2020-full-report/>

⁴ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/336275/things-gen-millennials-expect-workplace.aspx>



BACKGROUND

Burnie Works is a place-based collective impact organisation funded by the Federal Government's Stronger Places, Stronger People initiative. Our work is dedicated to creating positive change for the Burnie community, working with the community to collaboratively identify opportunities and design solutions. Burnie Works leads place-based initiatives that influence key stages along an individual's life course within the areas of education, employment, justice, children and families, and community wellbeing. Through our collective impact approach, Burnie Works aspires to create meaningful, sustained impact for a thriving community.

Why we are in a position to have a say:

Burnie Works is a well-established collective impact organisation in Burnie, built upon strong foundations of relationships with community, schools, business, service providers and government. We strive to create strong, meaningful, and purposeful relationships that connect, support and resource across all aspects of community. We foster relationships with young people through activities including Burnie City Youth Council, BIG Science Fair, and school engagement opportunities.

Our current employment and education activities; BIG, Dream Big, Books in Homes, Student Friendly Workplaces, and the Every Day Counts school attendance campaign, aim to increase youth involvement in education, employment aspirations and literacy and school attendance rates.

The Youth Pathways program is a 24-month pilot program led by Burnie Works, in partnership with Youth, Family and Community Connections (YFCC). The program aims to help young people aged 17-25 in the North-West region of Tasmania to overcome challenges to successfully remaining in employment. The program uses a voluntary youth coaching approach, working directly with young people to build their capacity to identify and navigate challenges that may be affecting them in the workplace and in their lives more broadly. The program also works with businesses that refer young people to the program, to build their capability to support young employees.

More broadly operating in Burnie is the Employment Partnership Group (a network of Employment Service Providers, Registered Training Organisations and Disability Employment Services) and NWAY – North West Action for Youth (bringing together the youth sector to share information, network, and work collaboratively to respond to key issues affecting young people).

PURPOSE

The Minister's foreword in the discussion paper states that the government wish to ensure that young people are "supported and empowered to achieve their career and life goals". We support the principles and the youth pathways practice outlined in this discussion paper and have provided some extra insights from our discussions with young people in Burnie about the things stopping them from achieving their dreams.

However, we have identified a gap in the Youth Job Strategy. We believe that addressing employers lack of understanding of Generation Z (young people aged roughly 10 to 25 years) will be essential to achieve successful outcomes for young people, business, and the economy in Tasmania.

The discussion paper identifies that employer's success relies on a skilled workforce and "with historically low unemployment leading to workforce shortages across most sectors, employers need to look to young people to meet their workforce demands." It is concerning, but not surprising, that employers are saying they "lack confidence or skills to employ young people" and they talk of



“generational differences being difficult to manage in the workplace.” The paper states that businesses are “having to work a little harder”.

We think business just need to work a little smarter, perhaps with some support, to understand how this generation of young people are different (needs, values, and aspirations) so business can implement solutions that improve the relationships and meet the needs of young people, and in turn the needs of employers. This could be improving communications, so expectations are clear, being more flexible, ensuring organisational values align with young people’s values (diversity, respect, environmental etc).

Our submission focuses on this.

We have been asking young people what types of things are/will be important when it comes to choosing an employer. With the aim of beginning to identify some of the reasons why young people are more likely to voluntarily leave their jobs, have weak job attachment, and participate in education, training, and work at lower rates than their mainland counterparts⁵.

COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE COLLECTION

As part of its activities, Burnie Works delivers the Community Knowledge Collection Project, funded by the Department of Social Services. The purpose of this project is to gather stories of what matters in our community. These stories are then brought together with other information and data to shape community advocacy, action, and change. The Community Knowledge Collection Project is a unique resource that allows Burnie Works to be responsive to what is occurring **right now** for Burnie residents. In this case the project allowed for discussions with, and survey responses from over 60 young people, in the two weeks prior to compiling this submission.

Methodology

Essential to this submission was that youth voice be at the centre. This meant meeting youth where they were at, in their “safe” spaces. We estimate just over 60 responses from young people aged 16-24 were received during face-to-face conversations and survey submissions with the following cohorts:

- Year 11 and 12 students at the local college
- Year 11 and 12 students in the Back on Track Program
- Youth Pathways participants
- Survey submissions from broader community

During this process we asked:

- 1. For all businesses to succeed they are going to need to attract your generation of workers. Do you think that they know what you want and expect from an employer?**
- 2. Thinking about your transition from being a student to being a worker, regardless of what your job might be, what types of things are / will be important to you in choosing an employer?**
- 3. Are there things stopping you for chasing your dream job?**

FINDINGS

A thematic analysis using inductive and semantic approaches was applied to the knowledge collected. An inductive approach allowed for the data to determine the themes rather than any

⁵ <https://youthjobsstrategy.tas.gov.au/>



preconceived ideas of what may be present. The sematic approach meant the explicit content of the data was analysed rather than reading into subtext and assumptions that may be underlying.

Limitations and Mitigations

The main disadvantage of using a thematic analysis is the bias toward the answers of the participants, with the risk of personal beliefs and perceptions affecting results. To limit this, each Community Knowledge Collector involved completed and input their own responses. The grouping of themes was then carried out by Burnie Works' Community Data and Evaluation Officer. The Community Knowledge Project Coordinator then completed an overarching check of the themes that emerged. We also believe questions were delivered in a way, and in an environment that was safe for participants to reveal their true feelings without distortion.

Question 1 – Refer Appendix A

For all businesses to succeed they are going to need to attract your generation of workers. Do you think that they know what you want and expect from an employer?

Please note not all college students answered this question.

A good proportion of young people responded that employers do know what young people expect from them. Additionally, an equal amount was unsure, or said it depended on the circumstances, the job, and the age range of employers.

"I think this is circumstantial to industry preference. For example, my experience is that industries like Arts and Hospitality DO know how to meet the expectations of young people - far more adaptable, understanding, supportive, allowing "freedom" for the individual to be themselves, and therefore enjoyable. On the other hand, many departments such as government departments, administrative roles, health professionals still have a long way to go in changing their expectations".

-Young person

Young people believed that in many cases employers want the same thing too, and that if "workplaces don't adapt, they won't be attractive to our generation."

Question 2

Young people were asked, **thinking about your transition from being a student to being a worker, regardless of what your job might be, what types of things are / will be important to you in choosing an employer.** As shown in Appendix B, young people shared a wide variety of responses to with three main themes presenting:

Work environment and conditions

Young people identified qualities of a workplace environment that were important to them. They wanted respectful environments, with respect being a two-way street. Employers need to be understanding, patient, caring, and hold values that align with the young people they are employing.

This is supported by research that has found today's young workers place more value on having respectful communication in the workplace over trendy work perks⁶. Businesses could place more

⁶ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/23294884211016529>



emphasis in training leaders and managers on how to be effective communicators and establish respectful communication with their employees.

Safe work environments ranked highly with young people wanting their physical and mental safety accounted for in the workplace.

“They need to be aware of and supportive of mental health issues. [This could look like] programs like the Youth Pathways Program and just [genuinely asking] how people are”.

-Young person

Young people of Burnie don't want to go home anxious or stressed. These sentiments are supported by Mission Australia's Youth Survey. In 2022, young Tasmanians were asked what they were extremely or very concerned about, 42% of young people in Tasmania said coping with stress. This was the highest issue of personal concern for young Tasmanians aged 15 to 19⁷. This is also reflected in research from Pew Research Center showing young workers are more likely to show lower levels of job satisfaction, when often describing their job as stressful or overwhelming⁸.

They wish for environments free of bullying and harassment, to feel comfortable and know that their information is secure at work. They want clear communication and to understand what is expected of them. A shared understanding of the expectations of young employees and employers is necessary for the satisfaction and success for both.

To do this, industries need good management across all levels of the organisation that fosters supportive, comfortable environments and support systems for young people. Employers need to adopt good workplace culture, build team morale, take the time to build relationships with their employees, and communicate effectively.

Pay and Job Security

Pay conditions, job security, and professional development were important to young people when asked what is important to them in choosing an employer. Participants shared the need for an alignment between pay rates and cost-of-living expenses as well as wanting a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. Career progression supported by professional development that allowed for regular pay rises was one way mentioned that could support this and sustain retention of young people.

Young people seek job security, certainty of enough shifts or full time work where possible. They want more than casual positions, and to be valued for their work. This is reflected in findings from Monash University's 2021 Australian Youth Barometer - Understanding Young People in Australia Today's Report, where the past 30 years has seen the decline of number of hours worked per week, with younger workers more heavily affected⁹. A significant amount of young people work in industries characterised by a high proportion of casual, temporary or insecure work with few opportunities for career development. Numerous conversations with the youth of Burnie reflected these sentiments and concerns of young people.

⁷ <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/state-reports-2022>

⁸ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/05/25/young-workers-express-lower-levels-of-job-satisfaction-than-older-ones-but-most-are-content-with-their-job>

⁹ <https://www.monash.edu/education/cypep/research/understanding-young-people-in-australia-today>



Flexibility and work/life balance

Many of the conversations with young people mentioned the need for flexibility within the workplace and work/life balance. They need to know it's ok to ask for time off and they won't be punished. Young people that are combining studying and work also need this flexibility and need to know that study will come first. This has been evidenced through Burnie Works' Every Day Counts and Student Friendly Workplaces campaign where students shared the difficulties of balancing study and work commitments. Hand in hand with flexibility comes the trust needed between employers and employees to be able to work from home when needed or spread their 38-hour week over days of their choice to meet other personal or family commitments.

Work/life balance for young people was very important. It means not too much pressure or overtime, it's ok to take time off with short notice, and that "an employer is understanding that as a young person we may have study or social life events that we may want to attend."

Question 3 – Appendix C

We thought it important to consider **the things stopping young people from chasing their dream job** as additional insight for the Youth Jobs Strategy to consider. It is clear that young people want more than just a job.

"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".

"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".

– Tasmanian Youth Forum 2020

The comments above are supported by research from Gallup, which states that Gen Z want an employer who cares about their wellbeing. They also want their leaders to be ethical, exceed the legal minimum requirements, take bold action to address moral and ethical blind spots. And they want to know that the work they are doing has a net positive impact on humanity and the natural world¹⁰.

Trying to obtain meaningful work often comes with challenges and barriers. The young people we met with talked about many of these challenges in particular the internal and external resources needed to obtain and maintain work. External resources included access to funds for university or further education, the need for scholarships or accommodation to support further study which is quite often distant from their homes, or the cost of transport involved with accessing further education. Some had considered studying and working simultaneously but struggled to balance the need to work to cover costs of life, versus wanting to train in an area of interest which then means not being able to work as much as they needed. Some also spoke about not chasing their 'dream job' because it didn't pay well enough.

On the other hand, internal resources included barriers such as the lack of or access to information, and exposure to possibilities for young people. A simple case of not knowing what's possible if they don't know what's out there was evident, with limited career facilitation support and career exposure opportunities glaring gaps in the current system supporting year 10-12 students through

¹⁰ <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/336275/things-gen-millennials-expect-workplace.aspx>

this transition to work. Young people were worried they couldn't meet ATAR requirements, had chosen the wrong classes, or lacked the relevant qualifications needed to chase their dream job.

Lastly, a major concern for young people when chasing their dream job is their mental health. More than ever mental health struggles for young people are prevalent. When Tasmanian young people were asked what the barriers to people achieving study or work goals were, 63% stated Mental Health as the number one barrier (higher than the national average of 55%)¹¹. Young people are worried about people's opinions of them, hold fear of the unknown, experience an array of pressures from family, school, and work, and are sick of being seen as just a worker rather than a real person - all affecting their mental health.

"Previous employers have given me a sense of never being good enough even when I may have given my all to a company".

-Young person

OUR ASK

Burnie Works wishes to reiterate its support for the principles and the youth pathways practice outlined in the discussion paper. Considering the discussion question 'what does it take to be job-ready', we ask Jobs Tasmania to consider asking, **what does it take to be Gen Z ready?** We ask for serious consideration of our findings. They are from those most affected by the adoption of the Youth Job Strategy, in a geographically remote area with historically low youth employment rates, and reveal a gap in the outline of the strategy to date. Our conversations are heavily supported by research suggesting young people have learnt from their predecessors and they want it all; work/life balance, fair pay, and value alignment¹². Employers need to step up and uphold just as much responsibility as government and young people, when employing young people. Understanding Gen Z is essential for this to occur, and support is needed to make this happen. Developing resources for business, for example "Understanding Generation Z – Recruiting, Training and Leading the Next Generation" can be a valuable step in this direction¹³.

Considering further support for businesses to be able to meet the needs of existing young people and inspire potential young employees to enter their workplaces is needed. With students largely being left to their own devices to navigate early transitions into work. Multi-stakeholder collaborations could be used to scale up work-integrated learning initiatives¹⁴. Programs aimed at helping young people transition into working life, such as Youth Pathways can help. Programs such as this support both employers and young people. However, if the overall business is not acting in the way young people expect (wellbeing, ethical and transparent leadership, and diversity, equity, and inclusion) the trend of weak job attachment will probably continue. Helping businesses to embrace the synergies of developing a high-functioning and resilient multi-generational workforces is a win for all. To understand the Youth Pathways Program in more detail please read the evaluation report at Appendix D.

¹¹ <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/youth-survey/state-reports-2022>

¹² <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220613-gen-z-the-workers-who-want-it-all>

¹³ <https://mccrindle.com.au/resource/report/understanding-generation-z/>

¹⁴ <https://www.monash.edu/education/cypep/research/understanding-young-people-in-australia-today>



Balancing support and learning for young people is essential for positive and meaningful outcomes in this transition phase. Career Youth Facilitators have played a critical supporting role for young people and further roll out of these programs will be essential.

The 'Every Day Counts' campaign is a Burnie Works' initiative to contribute to improving student attendance at school through a shared commitment by students, parents, caregivers, schools, and the community.

Through conversations with education providers, parents/carers, students, and members of the Every Day Counts Community Network, we have heard that some students as young as 14 are working late shifts and are being rostered on during school hours. We have also heard that this is happening during exams. Improving the experiences of young people in their first job could build aspiration and set them up for a better experience when it comes to transitioning from school to full time work.

With no review since July 2012 of Tasmanian Child Labour Laws, the legislation now falls behind other states in terms of protective measures, not least of which are the hours and times worked by students. Burnie Works suggests this legislation is reviewed. This is supported by the feedback from the Tasmanian Youth Forum 2020 where young people discussed the possibility of being exploited and the potential to either be working too little or too much. They asked for more information to be provided in schools about workplace rights and how to speak up¹⁵.

Once the Youth Jobs Strategy is in place the work has only just begun. We extend a warm invitation and our ongoing support for continuing work of the Youth Jobs Strategy and working together to create, test, and trial possible outcomes of the strategy.

To arrange further discussion please contact:

Burnie Works
Fiona Loughran – Communications and
Engagement Officer
Email: floughran@burnieworks.com.au
Phone: 0490 865 472

¹⁵ https://hdp-au-prod-app-sgtas-engage-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/9216/9466/4837/YNOT_Summary_of_Youth_Feedback_on_Employment_January_2023.PDF

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Question 1 responses

Appendix B – Question 2 responses

Appendix C – Question 3 responses

Appendix D – Youth Pathways Program Evaluation Report

APPENDIX A – QUESTION 1 RESPONSES

Do you think that employers know what you want and expect from them?

- Yes 14
- No 6
- Maybe
- Sometimes they do
- Depends on the circumstance
- Maybe, within different industries
- Some do some don't, those with younger bosses do (under 35)
- Dependent on the job and age range of employers and employees
- I think this is circumstantial to industry preference. For example, My experience is that industries like Arts and Hospitality DO know how to meet the expectations of young people - far more adaptable, understanding, supportive, allowing "freedom" for the individual to be themselves, and therefore enjoyable. On the other hand, many departments such as Government departments, Administrative roles, Health professionals still have a long way to go in changing their expectations.
- Some do some don't. Those with older generational workforce don't
- Don't know
- Some of them
- Yes and no. Not many of this generation actually want to learn. Most older people see us as a waste of time.
- Vague idea but not fully on board
- For the most part
- Some do. It depends on how informed they are. Case by case.
- Everyone expects different things.
- I believe we want many of the things that older generations also want. However, I believe that we may value our time and our work-life balance slightly more (we have more freedom and knowledge to do so). And are therefore seeking more flexibility, and a workplace that isn't a drag. We want to enjoy ourselves, I do anyway, while at work as we spend much of our

lives working! However to answer your original question, I do believe that older generations have an understanding of what we want and expect. And in many cases they want the same things too! It's a simple fact that if work places don't adapt, they won't be attractive to our generation.

- I do think they "know" what we expect as a generation, however, as most of these businesses are ran by older generations. These people need to understand that by promoting certain values in their business, they need to also live by these values.

APPENDIX B – QUESTION 2 RESPONSES

Thinking about your transition from being a student to being a worker, regardless of what your job might be, what types of things are / will be important to you in choosing an employer?

Work Environment and Conditions Qualities

- Values that lead to positive environment
- Empathy
- Being respected and showing respect.
- 2 way respect
- Respect x6
- Understanding
- Patience
- Helpful
- Caring, flexible & kind
- To have a welcoming behaviour
- Do their values align with my values?
- Values align to my values (environment, pollution, behavioral, equality)

Safety

- Physical and mental safety
- Workplace is safe
- Need to be aware and supportive of mental health (this looks like programs like Youth Pathways & asking how people are)
- A healthy work environment, mentally and physically
- Don't want to go home anxious
- Not stressful
- No bullying or harassment
- Security of personal information
- Feels safe, comfortable, heard x3
- Don't want to work with people that are assholes and want to fight
- Are there unions? Who can help if they get in trouble in the workplace.
- Cleanliness of the store

Expectations

- Communication is clear
- Clear expectations of me
- Clear expectations
- Making sure employees know how and when task are done for submission

- Communication between staff and management
- It's important that they expect youth to know less than they did growing up

Workplace Culture

- Good team morale
- Positive relationships with coworkers/boss
- Good relationships with them
- Good work culture
- People you know in the workplace
- Nice people
- A good work environment x5
- Get on with the other people there
- Comfortable with the people you work with
- Nice workplace environment – people are professional but fun
- A good work environment (unlike Spotlight, KFC, and Hungry Jacks)
- Understanding between you and the employer
- Other people in my demographic
- People that you get along with and talk to
- Good work environment
- A welcoming place

Management/ HR

- Good management (HR)
- Supportive environment
- Support systems
- Encouraging and supportive in the work place
- Support from higher ups
- How the company is organised/structured
- Ongoing support in the work environment
- Productivity of the store, running smooth

Pay, Job Security and Conditions

Pay

- I am compensated accordingly
- Good pay
- Regular pay rises
- Balance out pay rates with cost of living
- Good wages
- Fair pay fair days work
- Just pay
- Getting paid by law
- Good pay
- Value for work

- The money
- Decent pay/award wage
- Money x3
- Fair pay – paid for the work that you do
- Don't want to work for nothing, not in to slave labour

Security

- Security
- Job security – not casual
- Having hours available
- Enough shifts
- Job security
- Full time hours
- Reliability

Conditions

- Breaks (need to have them and more often than every 5+ hours)
- 4 weeks leave
- Good holidays
- Not scheduled on for long shifts
- More than 4 weeks leave

Flexibility and Work/Life Balance

- Flexibility x2
- An employer who is understanding that as a young person we may have study or social life events that we may want to attend
- If still at school, they know this and make accommodations x2
- Good work/life balance
- Flexibility – its OK to take time off short notice
- The trust and understanding which allows me to work from home on painful days without feeling judgment, etc.
- Flexibility x5
- Flexibility for students
- Doesn't penalize you for asking for time off
- Work/life balance
- Reasonable flexibility where possible (eg. Working from home or choosing how to spread my 38 hours across my desired days).
- Our life shouldn't be engulfed by work.
- Not too much pressure or overtime
- Able to have time off when needed

- Flexibility around school and sports
- Work life balance x2

Diversity and Inclusion

- Respect women
- Supportive of cultures and religious practices
- Equal opportunities and shared responsibility
- Gender equality
- Promoting women & empowering women (male dominated industry)

Individualised

- Being valued as an individual
- That they know my skills and capabilities and personality
- My opinions experience and knowledge matters
- Allows me autonomy, and expression. I have my nose pierced, and this should not affect my ability to work at a high standard
- Understanding of your issues

Professional development

- A job where where I feel fulfilled and can constantly achieve and learn more
- Opportunity for further training and development
- More training and more time to learn
- A range of choices that can reach goals.
- Career progression
- Opportunities to grow as a young adult
- The employer sees you as low level and treats you accordingly (training etc.)
- The job provides training.

The Other Things

- Just want to get in to a job, figure out the rest later
- That I really enjoy the work
- Variety in the work day
- Interesting jobs – not just standing around
- Work close to where I live
- Hands on work
- Can't pick and choose when you are young
- Money is a benefit but not the focal point
- Youth don't have a whole lot of options

APPENDIX C - QUESTION 3 RESPONSES

Are there things stopping you for chasing your dream job?

Resources

Money

- Need a scholarship
- Money x3
- Can't afford Uni or further education. x2
- Studying part time and working part time - not possible for me as I need full time income to survive
- Need accommodation
- Money. Dream job doesn't pay well enough.
- Have to move away to study
- Time v's money (being able to train in an area on interest v's needing to work)
- Transport
- Not having a drivers license
- Money
- Transport x2

Access to Information

- Not enough info on careers
- Getting in to jobs can be word of mouth
- Not having guidance of whats possible

Lack of Skills

- Qualifications x2
- ATAR scores x2
- Have done classes on the wrong things
- My resume - what's on it x2
- Bad ATAR scores
- Not finishing school
- Lack of ability

Exposure to Possibilities

- Not knowing if it would be fulfilling
- Not enough experience
- Not being able to try new things out
- Not having the right resources in Burnie for study e.g. nursing is in Dev or Launceston
- Not knowing what it is really like can lead to multiple career/study changes
- Access to education - not offered locally

Mental Health

- Struggles with mental health
- People's opinions x2
- Previous employers have given me a sense of never being good enough even when I may have given my all to a company
- Fear of the unknown - mental block
- Being seen as a worker rather than a person
- Reluctance to communicate with others - anxiety talking to employers and applying for jobs

Environment

- Support systems - people to believe in you
- Unsupportive environment and people
- Apprenticeship - having to be in it for 4 years before going out into big wide world
- Friendliness of staff and students
- Not wanting to leave partner to go out to see for long periods at a time
- Judgmental people. Think you should get more money or a job that benefits them better
- For the Air-force, they don't want to start too young

Pressure

- Responsibilities: family, situations, life at home, looking after family, etc
- Pressure to do year 11 and 12 when there are other avenues to get to uni

Gender

- Gender bias and judgements

Timing

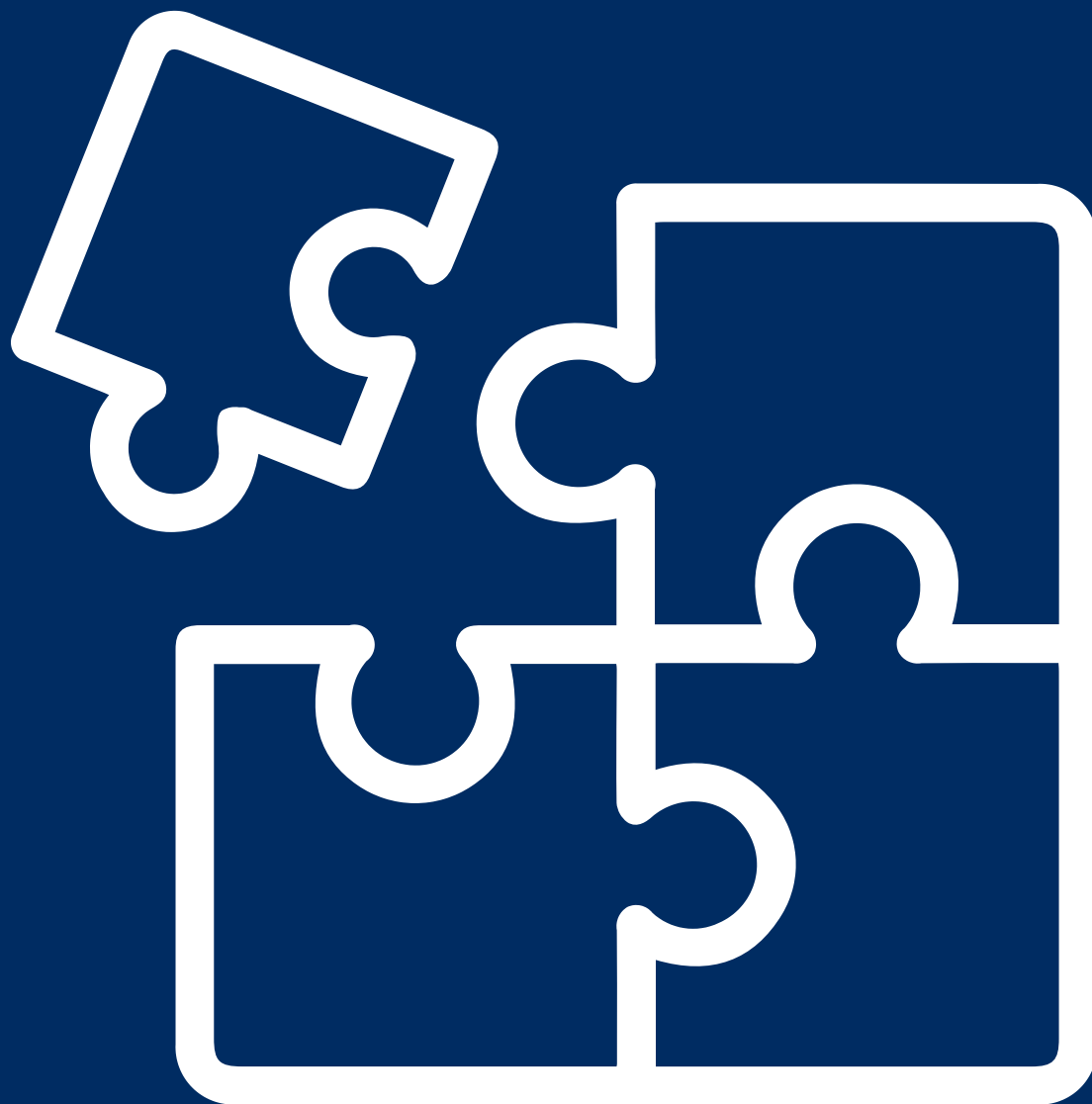
- Indecisiveness
- Can't kick goals till I've finished apprenticeship
- Everything
- Poor sleep schedule

Age

- Age, too old to start their dream sporting job
- Have to be a certain age

Nothing

- The only person that can stop you is yourself. As long as you believe and strong in your work ethic anything is possible
- No
- Not really
- No – I am lucky and already working my dream job!
- No, only you can control what you want in life.



Youth Pathways

Evaluation of the Youth Pathways pilot program | September 2023

Prepared for: Burnie Works

Acknowledgement

SVA would like to acknowledge the participation of [client's name] employees who took time to provide thoughtful and thorough input, contributing to the strong evidence base that is critical to this analysis.

Project acknowledgement

SVA would like to acknowledge the participation of Burnie Works and Youth, Family and Community Connections, and the young people and employers who participated in the Youth Pathways program, who took time to provide thoughtful and thorough input, contributing to the evidence presented in this evaluation.

Legal disclosure statement

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Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with innovative partners to invest in social change. We help to create better education and employment outcomes for disadvantaged Australians by bringing the best of business to the social-purpose sector and by working with partners to strategically invest capital and expertise.

SVA Consulting is Australia's leading not-for-profit consultancy. We focus solely on social impact and work with partners to increase their capacity to create positive change. Thanks to more than 10 years of working with not-for-profits, government and funders, we have developed a deep understanding of the sector and 'what works'.

Our team is passionate about what they do and use their diverse experience to work together to solve Australia's most pressing challenges.

This report has been authored by SVA Consulting by Katherine David and Simon Faivel.

For more information contact us:
consulting@socialventures.com.au

Contents

Executive summary	4
Introduction and Context	6
Method for this Evaluation	8
Youth Pathways' Theory of Change.....	9
Youth Pathways' Activities	12
Findings	14
Outcomes.....	20
Outcomes for young people.....	20
Outcomes for businesses	26
Concluding remarks	30
Appendix 1	32
Appendix 2	33

Executive summary

Burnie Works engaged Social Ventures Australia (SVA Consulting) to undertake an evaluation of their Youth Pathways pilot program. The evaluation sought to understand the effectiveness of implementation of Youth Pathways, the outcomes for young people and businesses, and key lessons that have emerged from the pilot.

About Youth Pathways

Youth Pathways is a 24-month pilot program led by Burnie Works, in partnership with Youth, Family and Community Connections (YFCC). The program aims to help young people aged 17-25 in the North-West region of Tasmania to overcome challenges to successfully remaining in employment. The program uses a voluntary youth coaching approach, working directly with young people to build their capacity to identify and navigate challenges that may be affecting them in the workplace and in their lives more broadly. The program also works with businesses that refer their young people to the program, to build their capacity to support young employees.

Key findings

Consultations with young people, businesses and program staff highlighted that Youth Pathways is a highly valued program. Over the pilot period, the program demonstrated an ability to adapt to external changes and respond to the needs of young people and businesses.

Several challenges impacted the ability to recruit and work with businesses, however through program iteration and the building of relationships and trust in the program over time, referral numbers for young people participating in the program grew, particularly in the second (and final) year of the pilot.

18 businesses in the North-West
have worked with Youth Pathways.

111 young people have participated
in Youth Pathways since it
commenced in 2021.

A key success factor of the program was the coaching model, delivered by skilled coaches through a youth-focused, holistic lens.

The program developed core 'soft skills' in young people that were seen as important elements of improving engagement and success in the workplace. Young people and employers spoke of the growth of young people over the course of the Youth Pathways coaching sessions, with increases in confidence and improved mental wellbeing, both within the workplace and in life.

These improvements in 'soft skills' - confidence, engagement and mental wellbeing - were identified as factors that contributed to stronger foundations for the future in young people. Businesses spoke of the positive impact that Youth Pathways can have on retaining young people in the workplace and building capacity in workplaces to better support young employees.

Young people and employers highly value the Youth Pathways program.

Youth Pathways develops 'soft skills' and life skills, and improves confidence in young people to succeed in the workplace.

Youth Pathways supports young people and businesses to improve retention of young employees in the workplace.

Introduction and Context

About this evaluation

Burnie Works commissioned Social Ventures Australia (SVA) to undertake an evaluation of their Youth Pathways to Employment pilot program (Youth Pathways).

The challenges for young people

Young people in the North-West region of Tasmania face significant challenges with entrenched disadvantage, poor educational outcomes and high unemployment. In the West and North-West region, the youth unemployment rate was 15% in 2018.¹ Many young people in the region do not have access to the support required from families, social networks and educational institutions to develop crucial skills and traits for 'employability'. This represents a challenge for young people entering the workforce and meeting the expectations of employers.

The challenges for businesses

Many businesses in the North-West region experience workforce shortages, and face challenges attracting employees with the right skills. Employers often indicate that new recruits are lacking in the core employability skills,² as has been reported anecdotally in the North-West region. To illustrate workforce shortage issues, in the Burnie region, 41% of employers in 2021 reported difficulty in filling vacancies.³ Employers are motivated to support and retain staff through apprenticeships or full-time employment but lack the appropriate support. Anecdotally the costs of employing and onboarding a new staff member for businesses in the North-West region are significant, between \$20,000-\$50,000, a figure that is in line with the Australian average to hire a new employee of \$23,800.⁴

About Youth Pathways

Youth Pathways is a pilot program led by Burnie Works, in partnership with Youth, Family and Community Connections (YFCC). The program aims to improve retention of young people in employment, recognising that many young people face challenges and barriers that impact their ability to remain in employment. The core activity of Youth Pathways is a voluntary youth coaching program for young people aged 17-25, delivered through a YFCC youth coach. In parallel, the program also works with local businesses to build capacity in employers to support young people within their workplace.

Youth Pathways commenced in late 2021 through funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund. The concept for the program was initiated through a Burnie Works' led committee: the Employment Partnerships Group (EPG). EPG is a collective of employment service providers from the Burnie

¹ Brotherhood of St Laurence, Australia's youth unemployment hotspots – snapshot March 2019.

² L Brewer, Enhancing youth employability: What? Why? And How? Guide to core work skills, 2013, International Labour Organisation.

³ Recruitment Experiences and Outlook Survey (REOS) for August 2020 to April 2021, conducted by the National Skills Commission.

⁴ HR Industry Benchmark Survey 2021: Australia and New Zealand. ELMO and Australian HR Institute.

region, formed to understand what the pressing issues are for young people and employment in the region. The EPG initially identified a gap where young people could benefit from additional assistance in the form of coaching within their internship placement support. This concept eventually became the Youth Pathways program, a 24 month pilot project.

A changing landscape

Since the pilot's inception in 2021, Youth Pathways has encountered a rapidly evolving employment landscape with significant changes impacting the implementation of the program. Youth Pathways initially received referrals through Workforce Australia's PaTH Internship program, for young people considered 'job ready'. A significant challenge encountered at this time was the lack of definition more broadly of what constituted 'job ready', and many young people referred were not suited to the coaching model, requiring much more intensive support such as case management.

The PaTH Internship program was then discontinued in July 2022, prompting a redesign of Youth Pathways to focus on working with and receiving referrals directly from local businesses for young people aged 17-25, to support retention of young people in their workplace. Youth Pathways now receives referrals for young people aged 17-25 from businesses across the North-West region, from Latrobe to Wynyard. Further details of changes in the employment landscape and resulting changes in the pilot are outlined in Appendix 1.

Investment in the Youth Pathways pilot

The Youth Pathways pilot program is funded through the Tasmanian Community Fund, with an annual investment of approximately \$250,000. The investment covers staffing costs for a Youth Pathways business coordinator, a Youth Pathways youth coach, and other program and operational costs.

Method for this Evaluation

This evaluation used a theory-based mixed methods approach to answer the following key evaluation questions:

1. **Implementation:** How is the Youth Pathways program implemented and to what extent is this implementation effective?
2. **Enablers:** What's working well about the program?
3. **Barriers and challenges:** What barriers and challenges impact on the effectiveness of the program?
4. **Outcomes:** What are the outcomes of the Youth Pathways program for young people and for businesses?
5. **Lessons and opportunities:** What can we learn from the Youth Pathways pilot? What should be considered in the future in the way the program is implemented?

Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) was developed with program staff as part of the evaluation, to help answer the evaluation questions. The ToC served as the initial framework for subsequent phases of the evaluation, including data collection, to understand and 'test' whether outcomes were achieved for young people and businesses, and to what degree. The ToC was refined iteratively based on insights from the data collection phase.

Data Collection

Primary data sources involved interviews with key stakeholders, including young people (n=2), businesses (n=3), program staff (n=3) and members of the Employment Partnership Group (n=1). Secondary data collection involved review of program data, reports, case studies and data from post-program 'exit' surveys of young people.

Interview data was analysed thematically using a deductive approach, drawing on the ToC developed for Youth Pathways. Findings were considered in the context of relevant broader Australian and international research.

Limitations

Youth Pathways has undergone significant change in implementation throughout the pilot period of 2021 to today (September 2023). These changes were required due to a change in the funding landscape of employment services, namely the defunding of the PaTH Internship program in the middle of 2022, requiring the pilot to evolve to work with a different cohort of young people and a different referral source.

Whilst this evaluation has captured and documented the changes in implementation across the pilot period, the evaluation focused on capturing the experiences of young people and businesses who participated in the program in 2023, representative of the 'current state' of the pilot. These experiences may therefore not be representative of program participant experiences from earlier iterations of the program.

Youth Pathways' Theory of Change

About the Theory of Change (ToC)

The ToC for Youth Pathways demonstrates the logical connection between Youth Pathways' activities, and the intended outcomes as a result of these activities. The ToC describes key issues facing young people and businesses in the North-West region of Tasmania, the unique response of Youth Pathways and the broader 'backbone' lead of Burnie Works, and the inputs and activities required to achieve the intended outcomes (see figure 1). Activities of both Youth Pathways and the lead backbone of Burnie Works are included, given the mutually reinforcing nature of these activities to achieve the desired outcomes.



Figure 1 - Key elements of the Theory of Change

Outcomes for key stakeholder groups experiencing change (young people and businesses) are represented along a continuum ranging from changes in *connections and mindset*, leading to changes in *actions and behaviours*, and finally to changes in the *foundations for the future* (see figure 2).

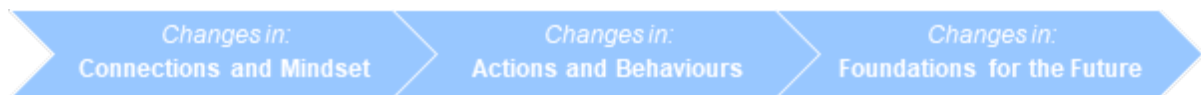


Figure 2 - Key elements of outcomes in the Theory of Change

The ToC should be read from left to right (see figures 3 and 4).

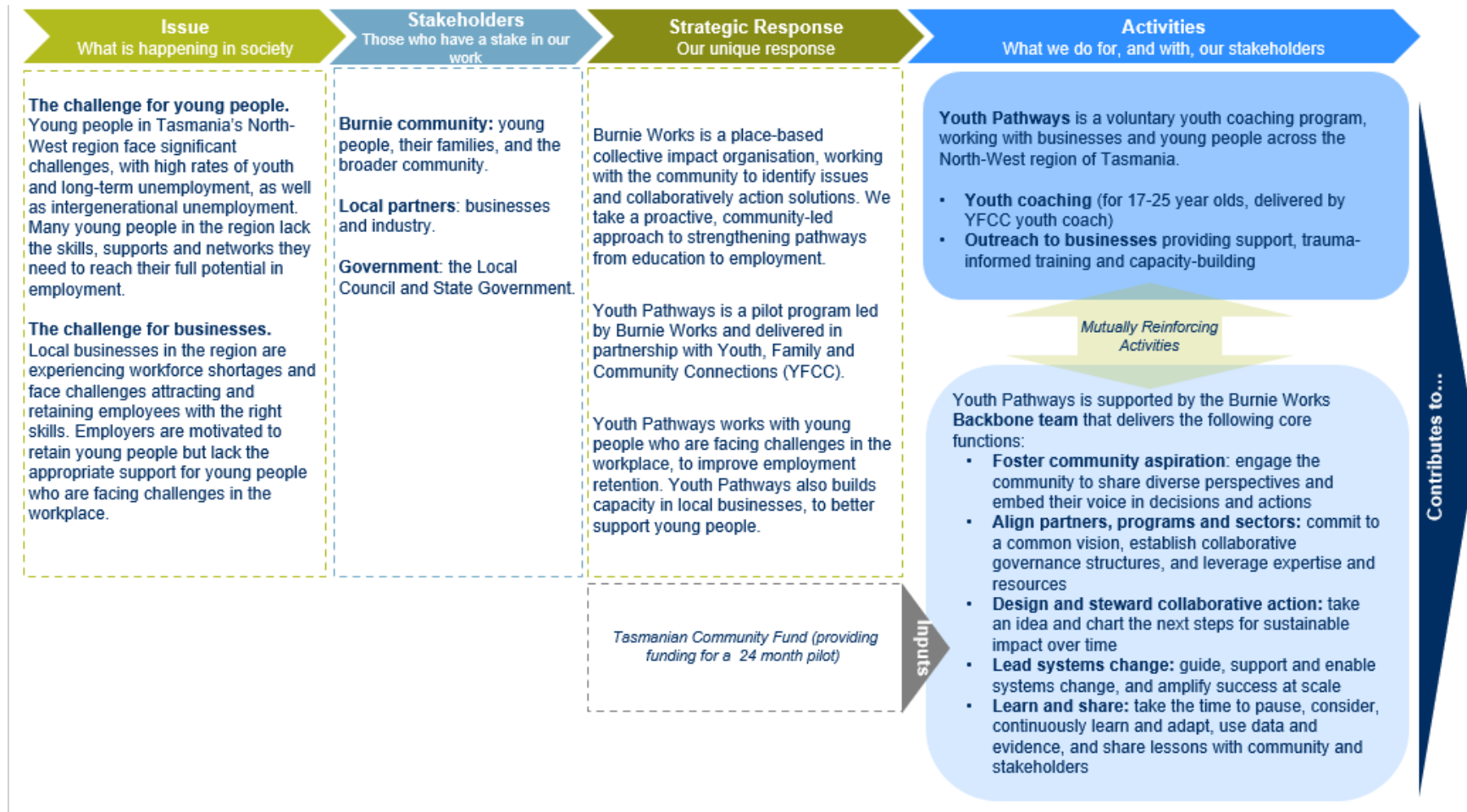


Figure 3 - the Theory of Change for Youth Pathways (page 1)

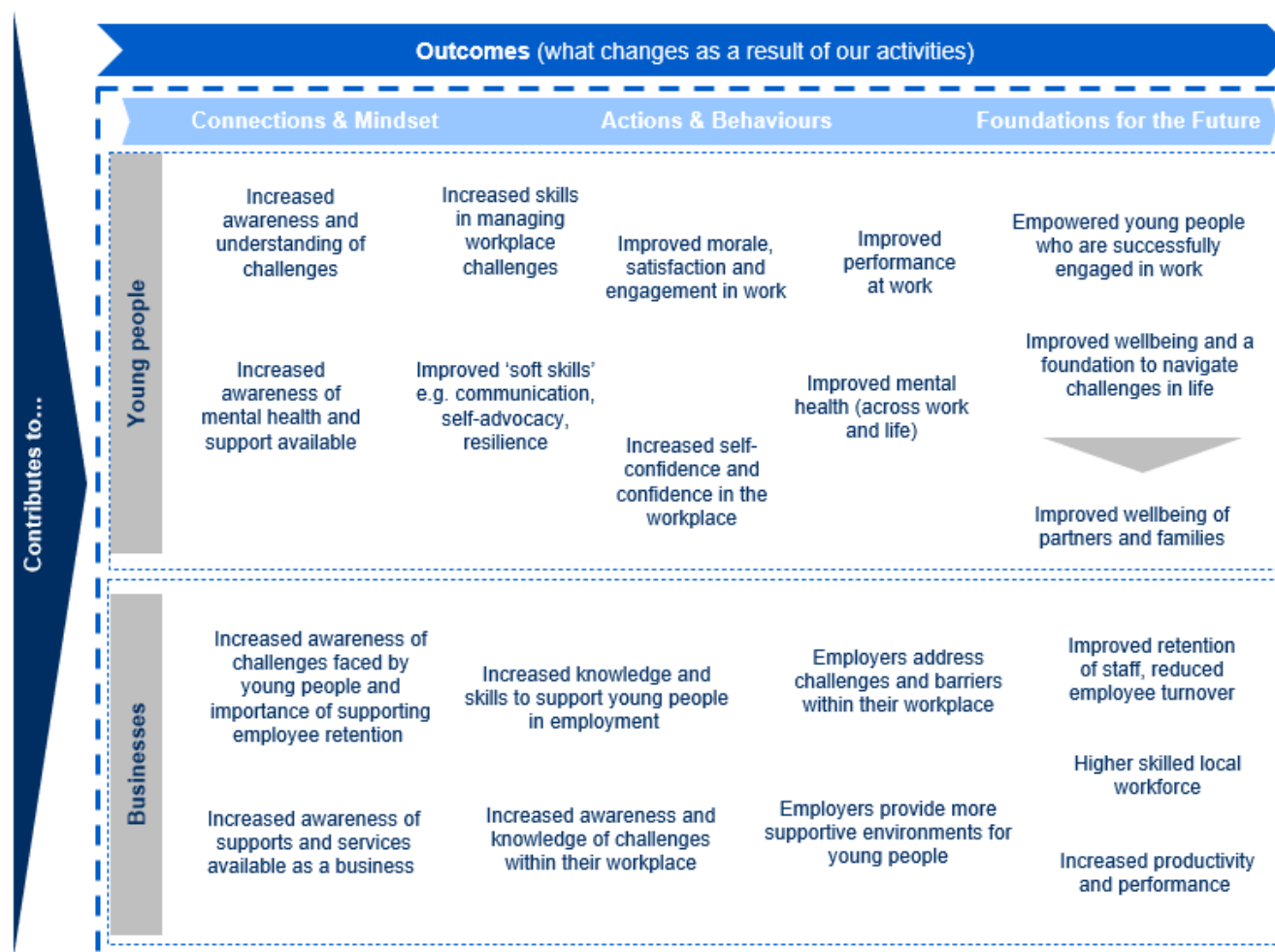


Figure 4 - the Theory of Change for Youth Pathways (page 2)

Youth Pathways' Activities

The following description of activities focuses on the implementation of the program in its current form, where Youth Pathways works directly with businesses to receive referrals for young people to participate in the program.

What is youth coaching?

Youth Pathways utilises a youth coaching model to work with young people. This model is distinct from mentoring that is commonly implemented in employment situations. Similarly, the model is distinct from counselling or case management. A youth coach helps young people understand their strengths and weaknesses, set goals, and understand the actions that are necessary to achieve their end goal.

One program staff member shared an analogy to demonstrate the role of coaching:

“If you think of the role of a football coach, the role of a coach is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their players and then give them goals based on their abilities. Coaches don't DO things for you. They give you the skills and teach you how to do the thing, but it's ultimately on the individual to 'play the game'.”

Building capacity and core skills in young people, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, is recognised as a critical element of enhancing youth employability. These skills, such as listening and communicating effectively, solving problems and teamwork are important to enhance an individual's ability to secure a job, stay in work, move flexibly in the labour market, and engage in lifelong learning. Coaching in the workplace has been highlighted as a practice to enhance these skills.⁵

A number of programs across Australia utilise a coaching model however they are generally focused on coaching for unemployed job seekers rather than post-employment support that focuses on retention. Workplace or employment coaching has shown positive results across the evidence base, and has been linked to improvements in short-term and long-term employment in a recent international evidence synthesis.⁶

Who is Youth Pathways for?

Youth Pathways works with any young person aged 17-25 that lives and works in the program delivery region. The program is deliberately designed to cater for all young people, rather than solely targeting 'at risk' or 'disadvantaged' young people. This delivery model recognises that many young people, without the right support, have challenges in work performance, difficulty meeting

⁵ L Brewer, Enhancing youth employability: What? Why? And How? Guide to core work skills, 2013, International Labour Organisation.

⁶ Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse, [Evidence Snapshot – Employment Coaching](#), 2021, accessed 17 August 2023.

expectations and are ultimately at risk of leaving the workplace. Given these challenges, Youth Pathways works with these young people with the aim of supporting employment retention.

What does Youth Pathways do?

Through the youth coaching model, Youth Pathways gives young people the ability to understand goal setting and action planning, to give them the skills to succeed in future employment and life.

Youth Pathways recruits local businesses in the North-West region. The program accepts referrals for young people in these businesses who may be experiencing challenges. Over a 12 week period, the Youth Pathways coach works the young person, through weekly coaching sessions delivered at the workplace. Coaching sessions are highly individualised to meet the needs of the young person, identifying barriers and challenges to retention of employment and implementing a coaching plan for growth in these areas. The Youth Pathways team also works with employers to address challenges that may be impacting the young person in the workplace.

Appendix 2 outlines further detail regarding program activities of Youth Pathways and the components of the coaching model.

As well as promoting the program directly to businesses, Youth Pathways staff promote the program through other means e.g. local media, employer conferences and meetings, and to secondary school students who are nearing school completion.

Trauma-informed mental health training was also delivered in 2022 within the Youth Pathways program to businesses through an external training provider, Chess Connect. The training was available to employment services, business owners, community services workers and not for profits in the region.

Findings

Since the program commenced in 2021, it has undergone several changes in response to the external employment landscape, aiming to meet the needs of young people and businesses within the broader context.

This evaluation focused in greater depth on implementation and outcomes for young people and businesses participating in the program from the beginning of 2023 onwards, given the relative stability of the program over this time and the sentiment from stakeholders that the program is 'working as it should'.

Responding to challenges

The ability of the program to adapt swiftly to external changes outside the program's control, such as the abolition of the PaTH Internships program, and be agile in response to business feedback, should be highlighted. The broader support and 'way of working' of Burnie Works as the organisation leading Youth Pathways was regarded as an important factor, allowing the program to evolve and ultimately reach a state where impact could be maximised.

"There is no fear of failure...it allows for iteration and evolution of a program, and change will happen over time."

– Youth Pathways program staff member

This agile way of working was matched with flexibility from the funder, Tasmanian Community Fund, to allow changes to the program.

Recruitment of businesses and referral pathways

All program staff involved in past and current iterations of the program acknowledged the significant challenge of recruiting businesses. Over the course of the pilot to date, 386 businesses were engaged through a mixture of face to face meetings, email and phone calls, with 18 of these businesses progressing to participate in Youth Pathways and refer young people. Businesses were most likely to engage positively with the program when there was an existing connection through the networks of program staff.

Several factors impacted the ability to 'sell' the program to businesses and onboard them. Challenges were experienced through low awareness of the program and the broader 'Burnie Works brand', competing priorities for businesses, and an environment of reduced trust of general 'employment services'. This meant that trust and relationships needed to be built over time, requiring multiple engagements with businesses, and the need to extend the program's geographical reach beyond the Burnie region.

“Youth Pathways was seen as just another employment service, and businesses didn’t engage.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

The ability of Youth Pathways staff to proactively engage businesses and share the benefits of the program was valued. Employers recognised the need for services such as Youth Pathways to proactively seek businesses out, with employers finding it challenging to navigate services in the employment landscape for their young employees.

“We’ll pound the pavement to find those opportunities and then bring them forth.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

Employers also emphasised the way program staff understood the needs of businesses and young people and felt this was a facilitator to recruiting businesses.

Whilst this building of relationships and business networks has taken time, the program has more recently seen an increase in the number of businesses participating and the number of referrals within the region, with 62% of total program referrals occurring in 2023. Businesses are recommending Youth Pathways to other businesses, and likewise young people are referring other young people who could benefit from the program.

Coaching sessions

Sessions between the youth coach and the young person generally last half an hour on a weekly basis. These sessions are conducted at the young person’s workplace, during paid work time.

“I think it’s worked really well...the weekly or fortnightly catch-ups, it’s really healthy.”

– Employer

“They can come and meet our apprentice at the end of the day... for us as a business it’s worked well.”

– Employer

Both young people and businesses commented on the length of the sessions.

“We basically had just half an hour sessions for most of it, so that was a bit of a detractor...it would definitely be better if the sessions were longer.”

– Young person

“I think the half hour session could be a bit longer, to really unpack what they need to unpack...in my opinion, to get better bang for buck and better value out of the time spent together, it would be better off being a 45 minute or one hour session.”

– Employer

Other young people and employers however felt that the half hour sessions were the appropriate length, for several reasons.

“Honestly, they don’t have a longer attention span.... That’s pretty draining for them after 30 minutes. I’ve asked them [the young people], do you feel you’ve got enough time with the coach, is it too long or short? ‘Nope, half an hour is good.’”

– Employer

“I found the 30 minute sessions to be a perfect medium.”

– Young person

The understanding of what constituted coaching was not shared across all individuals interviewed. Program staff reported this was a challenge given the lack of understanding in employment circles of coaching. Some employers referred to coaching as counselling, and program staff reported stigma in some workplaces around the terminology used to describe the program young people were participating in.

The ‘fit’ of the coach with young people

The importance of the ‘fit’ of the coaching staff with young people was highlighted by employers and young people interviewed and was seen as an important enabler for success of the program. This enabled successful recruitment of businesses on to the program, as employers felt they could trust the coach to build rapport and work well with their employees.

“The coach has to be the right coach. The right person has to be in that role, which is going to be a pretty niche role. I think the coach we have comes across really well. That’s a key link in the chain....They’re establishing that rapport with the young person.”

– Employer

The 'fit' and skillset of the coach in working with young people within a coaching context was also viewed as a crucial driver of successful outcomes for young people participating in the program.

"What worked really well was [the young person] really got along with the coach."

– Employer

"I've found it easier recognising my problems with myself. I've found [the coach] non-judgmental and easy to talk to."

– Young person

"I found [the coach] so easy to talk to. I couldn't be happier with the improvement I have made within myself and that's thanks to [the coach]."

– Young person

Appropriate support for young people

Responses were mixed regarding who was best suited for the program. Some employers felt the program was only relevant in specific circumstances where young people were going through challenges, and would continue to refer on a 'case by case' basis.

"In terms of my other staff, I wouldn't put them through it...I offer a different counselling service to my staff from another entity..."

– Employer

Other employers felt it was useful for all new young employees and were seeking to encourage the uptake of Youth Pathways across all new young employees, viewing the 'soft skills' gained through the coaching as foundational for all young people.

"We want to...include Youth Pathways as part of that training approach [for all apprentices]."

– Employer

The importance of aligning young people and the coaching model was highlighted in previous iterations of the program, when the program was delivered through the PaTH Internship program. At this point in the implementation of Youth Pathways, many young people were referred to as 'job ready' when in fact they faced multiple challenges and barriers to employment that could not be

supported through a coaching model alone. This resulted in Youth Pathways staff needing to provide support to young people beyond the anticipated scope of the program, even at the 'screening' process prior to accepting referrals. It should be noted that this challenge subsided when Youth Pathways evolved to work directly with businesses, receiving referrals from a different cohort of young people already in employment.

Program delivery: across organisations and across regions

Youth Pathways has two organisations working in partnership for program delivery: Burnie Works and YFCC. This has at times presented challenges given the different approaches and frameworks of the two organisations, with staff needing to navigate around different policies and procedures, and different data management systems.

“It would flow better if we were in the same system, rule-wise.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

Similarly, the program spans a large geographical area, with the two organisations located in different cities (Burnie and Devonport) and the 'service area' covering from Latrobe to Wynyard. Over the course of the pilot, coverage has extended beyond the Burnie region to include businesses from across a broader area to increase referral numbers. Staff involved in the program recognised the need to strike a balance between the breadth of areas covered and the ability to service the number of incoming referrals. Nearly all coaching sessions are undertaken face to face at the young person's workplace, necessitating significant travel requirements for program staff. Whilst online or phone sessions are offered to all businesses, in nearly all circumstances the young people and businesses participating in the program preferred face to face sessions.

Trauma informed training delivered to businesses

Trauma informed training sessions were delivered to local businesses across two time periods in 2022. The training was delivered online in a workshop format by Chess Connect, an external provider that specialises in upskilling employers to recognise trauma and learn how to respond in an effective and person-centred way.

Businesses were asked at the time of the training to provide feedback through a post-workshop survey however no survey responses were received by the Youth Pathways team. Employers who undertook interviews as part of this evaluation were not involved in the trauma informed training. We were therefore unable to gather any external data about the effectiveness and impact of this training.

“Trauma informed training will take a long time to develop in businesses...they are still getting a handle on mental health issues.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

Youth Pathways moved towards broader activities with the aim of educating employers about being trauma aware and the importance of mental health amongst young employees. These activities

included presentations and discussions at jobs fairs and business events, and working with a larger employer to improve team leaders' understanding of working with young people in a trauma aware and mental health context.

Outcomes

The following section details outcomes that Youth Pathways has had on young people, employers and businesses. These findings are derived from the interviews conducted with young people, employers and program staff in the course of this evaluation, review of program data and reports, and review of 'exit' survey data completed by young people at the conclusion of the program. All employers and young people interviewed in this evaluation (five interviewees) participated in Youth Pathways in 2023 only.

Outcomes for young people and businesses are represented below in line with the Youth Pathways Theory of Change: changes in connections and mindset, leading to changes in actions and behaviours, and ultimately resulting in changes in the foundation for the future (see figure 5).

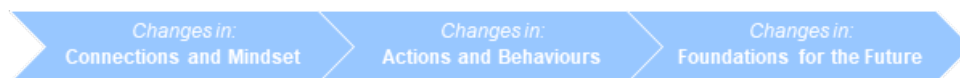


Figure 5 - Outcomes for young people and businesses across a continuum of change

Outcomes for young people

Youth Pathways contributes to several key outcomes for young people. The program supports young people to improve their life skills and set personal goals, as well as focusing on building skills to navigate challenges within the workplace.

111 young people have participated in Youth Pathways since it commenced in 2021

Connections and mindset

Valuing and engaging in the program

Young people remarked about how much they valued the program and its impact on them.

“I personally love [the program], I love meeting with the coach every week.”

– Young person

This is further evidenced in the fact that the program is now receiving other referrals through past and current participants, with young people believing their friends and family members may benefit from it.

“We’ve gotten several people on to the program simply through just coaching a young person who knows someone, whether it be their family or friendship group....they go, this is really helping me, and I think it could help someone else, and then they refer them.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

Developing ‘soft skills’ for work and life

Employers reported that many young people who begin at their businesses do not have the ‘soft skills’ required to succeed in the workplace. They felt this represented a fundamental gap between what an employer can offer a young person, and what the young person needed.

The development of ‘soft skills’ for young people was recognised as a significant and unique strength of the program to meet the needs of young people experiencing challenges in employment.

“The young person, they’re really just craving someone to teach them something that is not obviously taught in the curriculum at school...those soft skills and those life skills are highly valuable to them...often they’re coming from places where they’re not having those sorts of things instilled in them from their parents.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

These skills, such as communication, conflict resolution, teamwork, self-advocacy and planning were recognised as helping young people overcome barriers in the workplace.

“What I’ve found [after Youth Pathways], my relationships with other people, it just flows smoother...I’m not taking it out on others.”

– Young person

Research suggests that ‘soft skills’ are best learned in the context of the workplace rather than in isolation, alongside employment so learning can be contextualised, as is the case in the implementation of Youth Pathways.⁷

⁷ Social Ventures Australia, [Future Fair? Securing better quality jobs for young people in Australia](#), 2019, accessed 30 August 2023.

Actions and behaviours

Improving confidence through a holistic approach

Youth Pathways takes a holistic, youth-centred approach, recognising that challenges experienced by young people in work require a whole-of-person approach. The approach aims to build capacity broadly across multiple dimensions of a young person's life. Through the 12-week program, activities cover many aspects including identifying values, goal setting, and boundary setting, rather than being solely focused on the work environment.

During interviews, improved confidence in young people was commonly pointed to as evidence that the program is having an impact.

“It’s helped me with confidence at work, but also just in general.”

– Young person

“My confidence at work...normally I’m quiet and reserved...so now I’m, you know, cracking more jokes and being more open.”

– Young person

“I’ve definitely [noticed changes in employees]. Especially two of them have become a lot more confident. To the point where last week, we had Beacon Foundation at Burnie High and we quite often go along. I went up to one of the apprentices...I think it’d be great if you would like to go and talk about what it’s like to be an apprentice...And [the young person] went, yep I think I can now...[the coach] has been working with [the young person] around building confidence and how to have voice in the workplace, have a polite voice, but still, it’s okay to be assertive sometimes and to help him push back.”

– Employer

Fostering mental wellbeing

A strong theme emerging from the consultations was the importance of recognising and managing mental wellbeing to support young people in employment. Businesses recognised mental health as a barrier for young people to succeed at work but did not feel they could fully support young people. Employers and young people were grateful for the focus on mental health through Youth Pathways.

“I’ve suffered with mental health for quite a while. I’ve never really found someone I’ve felt comfortable enough to tell, talk about myself to...but with [the youth coach] I was really comfortable. I think that’s what I’ve enjoyed about it the most, I’ve finally found someone I can actually talk to.”

– Young person

“I feel like I’m less grumpy, or less sad, because I’m getting whatever I’ve got on my mind off my chest, which in turn puts me in a better mood, and puts me in a mood to actually want to work. So, it sort of goes in turn with each other.”

– Young person

Youth Pathways refer on to other YFCC services or external services as needed. The uptake of mental health services as a result of referrals through Youth Pathways was noted by program staff members. These included referrals to headspace (a youth mental health service) and young people’s general practitioners.

“We can only go so far with [anxiety] in coaching. It’s good to be knowledgeable of it, and we can do worksheets around it. But when it comes to anything more than that...we use our referral channels and we refer on to the mental health practitioners...I would say 70% of participants have had mental health referrals...100% of the time referrals to other services are taken up by the young people.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

Improving performance and engagement at work

Young people and employers spoke of the impact of Youth Pathways on their engagement and performance in the workplace.

“I have a clear mind, so I’m able to retain information, and remember things better because I’m not worried about whatever else is going on in my head. All that space that it’s taking up is now gone, because I’ve laid it all out. And then, when I’m at work, my mind is purely on work.”

– Young person

“I wouldn’t have thought that talking about things would help me improve my work...”

– Young person

All employers interviewed reported seeing positive impacts within the workplace of young people completing Youth Pathways.

“I can definitely see more of a focus in them.”

– Employer

“[The program] has definitely had an impact on [the young person’s] demeanour at work, their attitude, has been much more positive.”

– Employer

“It does improve performance generally...from an employer’s perspective, we’re more satisfied with their performance and with their overall demeanour and attitude.”

– Employer

Youth Pathways also connected young people with work-related training as needed, for example training to gain a forklift licence, cover letter workshops and resume workshops.

Foundations for the future

Whilst the program focuses on retention within current employment, there is also a broader view and importance placed on setting young people up for future successful employment.

“Trying to help them to stay within their role at their current employer... and if you go to move [to other employment], move with care. So go from this role to the next role, don't have that break and fall back into unemployment in between. Which is not something a young person tends to do that easily when they get pissed off... to move with care.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

“The [young person]...what they've been able to work through with [the youth coach]...is really beneficial long term...make [the young person] aware of that at a young age so that it will prevent further headaches down the track.”

– Employer

“[The youth coach] has been teaching them how to have a bit of confidence in saying no, and that's what I hope that they'll get through this, that they'll learn what their rights are in the workplace, how to have respectful conversations, disagreements.”

– Employer

Through a youth-focused lens, the program also focuses on supporting young people in education alongside their employment, for example when people are attending TAFE.

“One of the young people was really struggling with their TAFE... their manager wasn't picking up on it. We've been able to negotiate time for that young person to go and do their TAFE, and they've been on top and in front of it ever since.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

Findings from this evaluation are strengthened by a synthesis of international research finding improvements in short-term and long-term employment through interventions that included employment coaching.⁸ Coaching has been highlighted as good practice to improve young people's core employability skills and therefore enhance their ability to navigate in the labour market and engage in lifelong learning.⁹

Outcomes for businesses

Businesses from across the North-West Latrobe to Wynard region are eligible to participate in the Youth Pathways program to access youth coaching for their young employees. The types of businesses vary, but predominantly involve small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that are trades-based.

18 businesses have participated in Youth Pathways. The majority of businesses refer multiple young people.

Connections and mindset

The value employers place on Youth Pathways

Employers valued the program for the way it filled a gap in what they were able to provide for young people at their workplace, particularly young people who were struggling.

“The program seemed to offer something that we couldn't provide for some of our young people...it filled a void for something that we couldn't otherwise provide.”

– Employer

⁸ Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse, [Evidence Snapshot – Employment Coaching](#), 2021, accessed 17 August 2023.

⁹ L Brewer, Enhancing youth employability: What? Why? And How? Guide to core work skills, 2013, International Labour Organisation.

“I was really concerned about these young men in the workplace and how they were... you know, we tell them how to put that bolt in there and do that... but were we actually looking after them as a new employee and as a young person in the workplace?”

– Employer

“If you want to invest in your people, this program is worthwhile.”

– Employer

Actions and behaviours

The impact on the workplace

Employers spoke of the way Youth Pathways has allowed them to address problems early in the workplace. With the young person's permission, the Youth Pathways team is able to raise issues that are occurring in the workplace to enable quicker resolution.

“What Youth Pathways has done, the young people are able go in [with the youth coach] and talk about some of the issues and frustrations and challenges they're facing, and then the coach straight away comes to me...I would never have known that this had been happening, so that meant I could go and have a conversation...”

– Employer

“[After Youth Pathways] we were able to provide feedback to TAFE that their onboarding process was really lacklustre. So [TAFE] actually sent somebody out that next week, and sat down, and sorted it all out. Everything's under way now.”

– Employer

One employer reported the program has prompted and steered broader organisational changes to better support young employees.

“We’ve identified from [Youth Pathways]...that we have a gap with our team leaders...we need to train our team leaders to be team leaders and what that means. But we also need to focus on developing a better training package for new employees, especially for young employees...and we want to do that and include Youth Pathways as part of that training approach.”

– Employer

Foundations for the future

The impact on retention in the workplace

All businesses interviewed felt the program could positively influence retention of staff, for example through improved performance and improved satisfaction at work. Specific examples were provided where stakeholders felt the program had directly influenced retention.

“We had one young person that was third year apprentice that was going to quit over something minor, and then we’ve been able to work with them to help them realise this is just this person’s personality type, they’re an extrovert, you’re an introvert, let’s not run away from your apprenticeship when you’re one year from finishing.”

– Youth Pathways program staff member

“It was sort of my last-ditch effort [for the young person]. So, I’ve put the investment into [the young person] having twelve weeks of the mentoring and yeah, I can see a big improvement.”

– Employer

Employers talked about the program assisting to improve performance at work, support young people to succeed in their role and ultimately be more likely to complete an apprenticeship or remain in their employment.

“When we sign up an apprentice, we want to help them get through to the end of it. And it’s definitely helped them, to be able to keep their job, to finish the apprenticeship. Hopefully they’ll be a good tradesperson at the end of it.”

– Employer

“In turn, it makes them a more employable person....we’re more likely when they finish everything off in the apprenticeship to offer them a full time trade role...because they have performed to an acceptable standard.”

– Employer

“I’d definitely recommend [Youth Pathways] to other people...If the intention is from the employer to retain someone, and to work through, or help them get through some of the difficulties they may be going through...you’d want to engage someone like this [the youth coach]...to actually help them overcome these difficulties. So they can become the employee you expected them to be when you employ them.”

– Employer

Concluding remarks

This evaluation of the Youth Pathways pilot sought to understand the implementation of the program, implementation enablers and barriers, and outcomes for young people and businesses. By its very nature as a pilot, the program has evolved to respond to the core needs of young people and businesses. Recognising the evolution that has occurred since the commencement of the pilot, this evaluation focused on the implementation and outcomes of the program from the beginning of 2023.

Through this evaluation, several considerations should be highlighted.

Implementation considerations

Session length

One aspect raised during the consultations regarding ongoing implementation was the need to consider optimal session length of the coaching sessions. This may involve introducing flexibility into the session length based on preferences of both the employer and young people involved, noting that the sessions are delivered on 'paid' work time.

Delivery mode

Another consideration centres on delivery of face to face versus online sessions, particularly in terms of balancing increasing numbers of young people in the program across a wide geographical area. This balance is challenging, noting that there is a strong preference from young people and businesses for face to face coaching sessions, and developing trust and rapport is a critical enabler to outcomes of coaching.

Supporting businesses

Developing further clarity around the barriers to businesses engaging with the program and exploring the best way to support businesses is needed, whilst considering the need to balance confidentiality of young people disclosing workplace issues to the youth coach within the program.

Broader considerations

Beyond the implementation considerations, other insights and considerations emerged that are relevant for similar programs in the future.

Building momentum

Building trust and relationships with businesses takes time and effort, with the need to get 'runs on the board' to demonstrate to businesses the value of the program. This is evidenced by the growth of referral numbers over time throughout the course of this pilot. This also represents a significant challenge for pilots in general, given that the time it takes to build momentum is often at odds with the funding cycles of pilots.

The importance of flexibility

Pilots in their nature 'test' innovative approaches. The importance of flexibility from both the program and the funder was highlighted as an enabler through Youth Pathways, with the program continually reviewing what's working well and what can be changed to evolve iteratively.

Holistic, youth-focused approach

In Youth Pathways, skilled coaching was seen as a key enabler. This coaching was embedded in a broader suite of services through YFCC, with staff experienced in youth mental health and able to draw on organisational support and knowledge of external services. Implementation and outcomes are likely to be more challenging where programs are delivered with less experienced sole practitioners in the absence of strong frameworks and onward referral pathways.

As evidenced throughout the course of this pilot where the cohort of young people referred changed over time, some young people may not be suited to coaching alone and may require access to more intensive services.

Conclusion

Through this evaluation, Youth Pathways has demonstrated important outcomes for young people and businesses, both in the immediate term and laying the foundations for the future. The nature of the pilot to adapt and respond to the changing environment, and the way the pilot has implemented a youth-centred coaching approach, has contributed to a program that can work holistically to support and improve retention of young people in employment.

Appendix 1

The evolution of the pilot: responding to a changing employment landscape

The landscape of employment and employment services changed significantly since the creation of the Youth Pathways program in 2021. The program initially worked directly with Workforce Australia, receiving referrals under the PaTH Internship program. At that time, young people who were 'job-ready' were referred, and Youth Pathways was designed to provide a 12 week period of youth coaching. Significant challenges arose through this referral pathway however, in that there were no set guidelines regarding how young people were classified as 'job-ready'. The program received referrals for young people with complex needs and multiple barriers to entering the workforce, frequently requiring significant case management support beyond coaching.

In July 2022, with a change in federal government, the PaTH Internship program was discontinued. This change significantly affected the referral pathway and implementation of Youth Pathways. The challenge however, presented an opportunity for Burnie Works and the Youth Pathways team to redesign the program and harness learnings from earlier stages of the pilot.

At the same time, broader employment landscape changes were occurring, including the development of a local Jobs Hub (West North-West Working) and employment services through YFCC such as Fit For Work. Considering the network of existing services and gaps, alongside consultations with young people and local businesses, Burnie Works and the Youth Pathways team re-launched Youth Pathways with a focus on post-employment retention support, in the second half of 2022, seeking referrals directly from businesses. The program has since broadened from a focus on working with young people within the initial 'probation' period to working with young people aged 17-25 in any time period of their employment.

Similarly, the geographical location of businesses that are eligible has broadened, from the Burnie region to a larger geographical area of the North-West region including Devonport. The program has been implemented directly with businesses across this larger geographical area since the beginning of 2023 onwards.

In the broader context, the Tasmanian Government has recently announced the development of a Youth Employment Strategy. Anecdotal evidence from Jobs Hubs partners around the state indicates that young people are experiencing challenges in adapting to work environments and businesses are seeking assistance to meet these challenges. The development of the Youth Employment Strategy represents an opportunity to consider these challenges and potential solutions.

Appendix 2

Youth Pathways Activities

The following steps show how the program works with both businesses and young people to implement the Youth Pathways coaching model.

Local businesses are recruited to participate in Youth Pathways

Employers then refer young people in their business aged 17-25 to Youth Pathways. Referrals are accepted based on referral and program requirements.



Initial meeting to understand challenges

Youth Pathways meets with the employer and the young person to discuss work-related challenges and outcomes. This forms the basis of developing SMART goals that guide the youth coaching sessions.



Youth Pathways coaching sessions

The Youth Pathways coach meets with the young person at their workplace weekly. Coaching sessions last for approximately half an hour.

Coaching sessions involve identifying barriers and challenges the young person might be experiencing in a work context, also considering broader challenges outside of work through a holistic approach. A coaching plan is implemented for growth in these areas.

The coaching sessions are highly individualised and centre around the needs of the young person, often covering the development of a wellness vision and understanding key motivators for the young person. Sessions work to move forward week by week, to achieve steps towards the broader goals set.

Working with businesses

The Youth Pathways team also works concurrently with employers to address challenges that may be impacting the young person in the workplace. The Youth Pathways coach and business coordinator are able to work with employers to highlight workplace challenges that may have surfaced through conversations with the young person, following consent from the young person. Activities with employers also centre on capacity-building of businesses to better understand how to support young people in the workplace.



Coaching sessions continue for 12 weeks

Onward referrals to other services are made where required. The young person is given a plan for continuing to move forward beyond the Youth Pathways program. Advice and support is provided to employers regarding long-term supports that may be beneficial for the young person.

