

About yourtown

yourtown is a national organisation and registered charity that aims to tackle the issues affecting the lives of young people. Established in 1961, **yourtown's** mission is 'to enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their quality of life'.

yourtown provides a range of face-to-face and virtual services to young people and families seeking support. These services include:

- Kids Helpline, a national 24/7 telephone and on-line counselling and support service for 5 to 25 year olds with special capacity for young people with mental health issues;
- intervention programs for young people at risk of early disengagement from formal education;
- training programs, social enterprises and services which assist young people to secure and maintain employment;
- training, mentoring and employment services for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- accommodation responses to young parents with children who experience homelessness and women and children seeking refuge from domestic and family violence;
- young parent programs offering case work, individual and group work support and child development programs for young parents and their children;
- Parentline, a telephone counselling service for parents and carers; and
- therapeutic interventions for young children and infants who have experienced trauma and abuse or been exposed to violence.

We are one of the largest providers of charitable youth services in Australia, employing over 700 staff across four states and responding to around 230,000 contacts every year. We currently have 50 service centres in 36 locations across Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. Our service locations are prioritised to areas of high socio-economic disadvantage.

Most of our face-to-face services are targeted at young people who face significant barriers to employment. We specialise in working with young job seekers who are at the highest risk of long term unemployment, including: early school leavers; young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; young offenders/ex-prisoners; those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and single parents from jobless families.

yourtown has over 15 years of experience helping young people who face significant barriers to finding and keeping a job. As part of our commitment to addressing youth unemployment, we currently deliver youth specialist jobactive services under subcontract to MAX Employment in 26 locations and Transition to Work (TtW) in 12 locations across four states, as well as ParentsNext in Port Pirie in South Australia.

We also operate an Indigenous Vocational Training and Employment Centre (VTEC) in South East Queensland and are currently piloting an innovative approach to addressing long-term youth unemployment in Elizabeth in South Australia and Caboolture in Queensland called **your job your way**.

We are pleased to have the opportunity to share the insights we have gained with the Employment Services Expert Advisory Panel.

Introduction

As a national youth services provider, **yourtown** is very concerned about the number of young people experiencing unemployment. In June 2018, the youth unemployment rate stood at 11.6%, compared with the rate recorded for all persons of 5.4%.¹ Young people are particularly affected by the changing dynamics of the labour market, including the decreasing accessibility to low skilled, entry level jobs and high rates of casualisation, and need appropriate support to engage effectively in employment.

What is even more worrying is that increasing numbers of young people are experiencing long-term unemployment. As highlighted in the Discussion Paper, long term unemployment occurs disproportionately among young people who comprise 16% of the total population, but 26.1% of long term unemployed people;² There is evidence that this cohort is falling through gaps in federally-funded employment programs, putting them at risk of permanent detachment from the labour market;³

This issue is a major focus for our submission, which is based on the insight we have gained from our extensive experience in service delivery and the research we have undertaken specifically with young people in unemployment for more than 52 weeks and with our staff.

yourtown's research confirms that long term unemployed (LTU) young people are among the most disadvantaged in the labour market. They are often dealing with a range of highly complex and multifaceted barriers to engagement with learning and work. These barriers and their consequences are compounded as time spent in unemployment is prolonged.⁴

yourtown recently undertook a survey of nearly 300 young people in long-term unemployment across Australia. Through this research, young people told us that the following issues prevented them from finding and sustaining employment:

- educational - such as low levels of formal schooling, literacy and numeracy;
- vocational - such as limited work history and low work skills;
- practical - such as not having a driver's licence and limited access to support through social/familial networks or services;
- contextual - such as intergenerational unemployment and living in low socio-economic areas;
- psycho-social - such as mental health concerns, substance use and homelessness;
- cognitive-motivational - such as low self-esteem and poor decision making skills; and
- anti-social - such as offending history and poor anger management.⁵

Labour market factors such as lack of work experience and required social capital, negative employer perceptions of long-term unemployed young people, competition for entry level jobs from higher skilled workers, credential inflation, and employment protection are also barriers to young people finding work.⁶

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Cat. no. 6202.0 – Labour Force, Australia, June 2018.

² Australian Government, 2018, The next generation of employment services. Discussion paper. Appendix G, 108

³ Melbourne Institute Policy Brief No.4. 16, June 2016.

⁴ **yourtown**, 2016, Tackling Long Term Youth Unemployment: Discussion Paper, Mar 2016, www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/YT-Tackling-Long-Term-Unemployment-Discussion-Paper.pdf

⁵ **yourtown**, 2016, Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment: *Advocacy Paper*, Dec 2016. See *Appendix I*

⁶ **yourtown**, 2016, Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment: Discussion Paper, Mar 2016.

Our survey also showed that young people in long-term unemployment are not a homogenous group and different youth cohorts have varying experiences of unemployment - critical insight when developing effective interventions.⁷

For example, young men, who have a higher rate of long-term youth unemployment than their female counterparts, told us that not having a driver's licence, limited transport, low literacy and numeracy, anger management issues, unstable accommodation, and offending history were more important barriers to employment.

By contrast, young women told us that they more often experienced a lack of available jobs, low self-esteem and mental health issues as employment barriers. Young Indigenous people ranked a lack of qualifications as the main barrier to employment, while young people with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds rated difficulties in accessing social and institutional support due to their residency or citizenship status as a principal work barrier.

The top issue for young people in regional and remote areas was the lack of jobs, whereas young people in metropolitan cities were more likely to view limited work experience, low work skills and having no car as barriers to employment.

As a result of our experience and research on this issue, **yourtown** believes that LTU young people need a more intensive, individualised and specific approach than is offered through current employment services and has developed a recommended model for responding to this challenge.

yourtown's research underpinning this model is detailed in our 2016 Advocacy Paper which is at [Appendix 1](#). This paper highlights the voice of young people in long-term unemployment to describe strategies about overcoming barriers. Our stance on effective strategies for tackling long term youth unemployment is described in our June 2018 Position Paper which is at [Appendix 2](#).

yourtown is currently trialling a pilot program for young people in long-term unemployment called **your job your way**, based on the model of response developed from our advocacy and research. Details are at [Appendix 3](#).

The model is informed by **yourtown's** internal and external research and over 15 years of experience in delivering federally-funded youth specialist employment services and other youth services. The activities and outcomes of **your job your way** are depicted in a Program Theory. The pilot will be formally evaluated in conjunction with the Centre for Social Impact (a collaboration of the University of New South Wales, Swinburne University of Technology and the University of Western Australia) and include a cost benefit analysis.

Given the extensive research we have undertaken to inform the design of **your job your way**, we are confident that the model will prove successful in its mission and we look forward to being able to share our findings with the Department as part of the current review process.

Following are **yourtown's** responses to points raised in each chapter of the Discussion Paper.

⁷ **yourtown**, 2018, Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment: [Position Statement](#), Jun 2018. See [Appendix 2](#).

Key recommendations include:

- an employment services model which includes core services, coupled with specialist service provision directed at particular cohorts of job seekers;
- improved service quality through the specification of core quality standards, benchmarking of best practice and reduced caseload sizes;
- inclusion of a 'safety net' to ensure that job seekers using online services are automatically reviewed at 3, 6 and 12 months;
- redevelopment of government-funded employment services branding, predicated on the proposition that recruiting job seekers through the system creates social value for the community;
- greater emphasis on selecting providers who have a demonstrated level of commitment to, and engagement in local communities; and
- introduction of, as a minimum, six year contracts, with annual payment reviews to reflect CPI adjustments, and business reallocation based on achievement of benchmarks against key performance indicators.

Chapter 2 The goals for future employment services

yourtown supports the Expert Panel's broad description of the goals for future employment services. In particular, we support:

- focusing scarce resources on the most disadvantaged job seekers;
- trialling an assessment system which better identifies the respective needs and strengths of job seekers;
- providing more intensive and better targeted face-to-face services for job seekers who need extra support, including those who are long term unemployed, Indigenous Australians and young people;
- reducing caseload sizes to improve the quality of services provided to disadvantaged job seekers;
- using online job boards to provide job matching services and more tailored employment information, advice and training;
- providing employers with more incentives to hire disadvantaged job seekers;
- using digital technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, reduce administration and simplify compliance reporting; and
- targeting services to the needs of regions and enabling them to build local solutions.

Additional goals

yourtown believes it is vital that the following additional goals are also included in future employment service models if Australia is to effectively support young people to find and maintain work:

- **provide support for school-to-work transition.** A significant proportion of young people are still disengaging early from formal education and/or having difficulty in making a successful transition from school to work. As noted in the Discussion Paper, as at May 2018, 10.7% of the Australian youth population were not in work or attending full-time education.⁸

There is a need for early intervention in this area which could be accomplished by paying a service fee to local providers to connect with at risk students 15 years and above while they are still at school. Providers would facilitate links with support services, provide information and advice on pathways to employment and help students prepare for transition to work;

- **find practical solutions to address young people's transport issues** as this is one of the most significant barriers to their obtaining employment. This includes the problem of accessing a vehicle and accumulating sufficient practice hours to sit for a licence. Options may include allowing highly disadvantaged young people who are unable to obtain sufficient practice hours to complete all required hours through driving schools and/or pass a competency-based test;
- **recognise partial outcomes from job seeker engagement in short term contract work and self-employment**, linked to improvements in work readiness. This would reflect the move towards a gig economy and the increase in participation in part-time/casual work.

Chapter 3 Helping disadvantaged Australians into work

Enhanced employment services

yourtown believes that there is a need to rationalise the current 'patchwork' of services and programs which is confusing for job seekers and employers. Our view is that enhanced employment services are best delivered through a model that includes core services, coupled with specialist service provision directed at particular cohorts of job seekers.

This is evidenced in the effectiveness of our current operating model in which MAX Employment, as a generalist provider, has successfully partnered with **yourtown** as a youth specialist provider.

As identified in the Discussion Paper, young people aged 15-24 are a particularly vulnerable group of job seekers. **yourtown** believes that they should be serviced by youth specialist, enhanced service providers because of the complexity of issues that they face in overcoming barriers and engaging in employment.

⁸ Australian Government, 2018, The next generation of employment services. Discussion paper. Appendix G, 108.

Specialisation in the delivery of youth-specific employment support services also allows for the development of in-depth knowledge of youth culture, responses to their specific, help-seeking behaviour and youth-oriented, specialised communication strategies and skills. This enhances the effective delivery of these services.

Given the future focus on job seekers facing significant barriers to engagement in learning and work, enhanced services should include individualised interventions that respond to the needs and address the specific barriers of each person. It would include 'joined up' case management, soft skills development, accredited pre-employment training, work experience, labour market induction, placement assistance and post placement mentoring.⁹

Providers should be required to have demonstrated skills and credibility in working with particular cohorts of job seekers, e.g. Indigenous Australians, refugees, youth. Specialist providers should offer welcoming environments conducive to engagement of the relevant cohort, e.g. culturally aware, responsive, suitably skilled frontline staff.

Focusing on long term unemployed job seekers

yourtown notes that the Discussion Paper indicates that the majority of job seekers in jobactive are long term unemployed and believes that this is a key issue to be addressed in the future targeting of enhanced employment services.

In general, **yourtown** advocates for employment services spending to be directed to those least able to find their own employment and who are at high risk of permanent detachment from the labour market and lifetime income support.

Based on our research and experience, young people who are already long term unemployed are in this high risk group and in need of a more targeted and intensive approach than is offered through current employment services. This is because:

- the existing jobactive approach does not place adequate weight on the duration of unemployment as a barrier to employment in and of itself;
- long term unemployed young people are often misclassified as job ready;
- this cohort requires a specific suite of pre and post-employment interventions and tailored, intensive support to make a sustainable transition to employment; and
- mainstream jobactive services are not resourced to provide the intensity of support and engagement necessary to address barriers and improve the life chances of long term unemployed young people.¹⁰

Consultation with **yourtown** staff also indicates that existing caseload sizes do not enable consultants enough time per job seeker to (a) develop the rapport and trust necessary to build and maintain engagement and motivation; (b) comprehensively understand individual needs, strengths and interests, and (c) collaboratively develop a detailed plan of action, including post-employment strategies targeting ongoing capability development.

⁹ **yourtown**, 2018. Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment - Advocacy Paper, Dec. 2016 - Appendix I

¹⁰ Melbourne Institute Policy Brief No.4 16, June 2016.

In the absence of a program catering to this cohort, we have designed an evidence-based model to augment jobactive as a specific, enhanced service. This model, known as **your job your way** targets young people aged 16-21 who have been unemployed for over 52 weeks, and are at high risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market.

Young people eligible for **your job your way** are pre classified as long term unemployed (LTU) and registered with jobactive. The cohort reflects LTU representation across all three jobactive streams (A,B,C) and may include young people who are: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders; disabled; homeless; struggle with mental health; from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and/or on a humanitarian visa.

your job your way delivers intensive, concurrent services and support to long term unemployed young people and aims to contribute to the evidence base regarding effective approaches to intervention. Features of the model include:

- the delivery of intensive services to small active caseloads of around 25 young people;
- providing a dual support team of a qualified case manager (Pathways Coach) and an Employment Mentor; and
- working with the young person using a strengths-based, trauma-informed best practice model of employment services, targeted employer engagement and intensive 'in work' mentoring to 26 weeks.

yourtown is currently piloting the program with a cohort of job seekers in Elizabeth in South Australia and Caboolture in Queensland. An overview of **your job your way** is at [Appendix 3](#).

yourtown is investing significant resources in the evaluation of this pilot by engaging the Centre for Social Impact to measure the social and economic impact so as to build a strong evidence base to inform future policy development in this area.

Improving service quality

yourtown's view is that the quality of services job seekers receive could be improved through:

- the specification of core quality standards, coupled with benchmarking of best practice;
- reducing caseload sizes; and
- having enhanced services for particular cohorts delivered by culturally competent staff, with standing in the relevant community.

yourtown's view is that there needs to be a better understanding of the capability and experience of the frontline workforce in employment services. We believe that rather than the need for mandatory minimum qualifications for the employment services industry, there needs to be recognition of the complexity of human services work within a highly regulated environment.

It should also be recognised that an effective Employment Consultant needs not only appropriate knowledge, skills and experience, but the right attributes, e.g. the ability to build rapport and effective relationships. We believe that the key to success is recruiting people based on these attributes, and providing them with the appropriate ongoing support and training.

Chapter 4 Empowering job seekers and employers through improved online services

yourtown is broadly in agreement with the move to expand and improve online services to job seekers and employers and is keen to see the outcomes from the Online Employment Services Trial.

We believe that digital technology should be used to strengthen and enhance service delivery via the creation of responsive, relevant apps which will allow job seekers to be more independent and prepare for dynamic labour market elements such as the 'gig' economy. Providers should be encouraged to capitalise on the ubiquity of smart phones to provide resources and support for induction, employment preparation, job search and compliance regimes for job seekers.

We note, however, that any online solutions need to take into account the fact that not all communities have equal access to online services and that different cohorts will have varying levels of digital literacy, learning styles and access preferences.

For example, in our consultation with young people in the Transition to Work program about digital services, they explained that it can be difficult for them to access data and therefore digital applications and the internet on their phones. The other issue is that the upsurge in the use of mobile devices does not necessarily equate to increased digital literacy or the capacity to use technology to complete training programs, undertake job search, develop resumes or apply for jobs.

It is also important that online services should not further marginalise particular cohorts and that access arrangements should take account of user choice and capability. For example, online matching may well have very little benefit for young people with limited experience or qualifications. The most disadvantaged jobseekers need face-to-face, personal and intensive support provided by specialist staff who understand their needs and issues.

Most importantly, our view is that there should be a 'safety net' provision where there are automatic review points for job seekers who are still unemployed at 3, 6 and 12 months, in order to identify whether they may need to be referred to enhanced services. This should prevent those job seekers who are at high risk of long term unemployment from being 'lost' in the system.

Chapter 5 Better meeting the needs of employers

yourtown's own research has demonstrated that employers place a very high value on having strong personal relationships with recruiters who understand them and their business and who are dedicated to meeting their needs. This research has also shown that employers:

- are confused by the multiplicity of different brands, services and program offerings;
- dislike being approached by multiple providers;
- are looking for a service that can form part of their current recruitment system;
- respond well to the 'try out' concept of PaTH, with two in three **yourtown** completed placements subsequently resulting in employment; and
- would welcome moves to reduce the evidence required for claims for employment outcomes, continue the streamlining of bureaucratic processes and remove red tape.

Our experience is that wage subsidies continue to be very effective tools for leveraging placement of job seekers at high risk of long term unemployment and should be retained and better supported.

In addition to what is proposed in the paper, **yourtown** also believes that services to employers would be enhanced by:

- a brand overhaul of government-funded employment services that promotes the social value that employers can create by using the system to recruit staff, rather than simply emphasising that it is a free service. In our experience, many of our employer clients, particularly small to medium enterprises, see using **yourtown**'s recruitment services as part of their commitment to the local community;
- providing a single national point of contact for wage subsidies, with the service delivery to be contracted out or managed via the national IT platform; and
- easing the burden of evidence collection on employers and job seekers through enhanced data matching, e.g. through the ATO, or being prepared to accept a statement from an employer on letterhead with an ABN reference.

Chapter 6 Assessing job seekers to tailor support to their needs

yourtown's view is that there needs to be a strengths-based approach to activation of job seekers through a thorough, more engaging and more collaborative intake and assessment process conducted by professional staff with the appropriate qualifications, skills and attributes. In particular, we would note the importance of developing trust and rapport as a precondition for a job seeker to disclose full information about their situation, barriers and aspirations.

yourtown agrees with the proposed adoption of a more holistic approach to assessment that builds on the JSCI process and captures factors such as strengths, skills, attitudes, capabilities and resilience. In this context, the employment services market should allow for more provider specialisation in regard to high risk groups (e.g. youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, refugees).

Services should be staffed by appropriately skilled and experienced professionals who understand the needs of those cohorts of job seekers and are able to establish a relationship of trust.

yourtown would also argue that the current classification system in jobactive is flawed, particularly in that long term unemployment is not recognised as a barrier in itself. Further details of the rationale for our position are cited in [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 2](#) to this paper.

We agree that there is also a need to streamline the current process for changing the classification quickly where necessary. The intake and assessment process also needs to support better engagement and personal agency with the compliance framework (i.e. so that the job seeker knows how to work within the framework and avoid breaching).

A revised approach to assessment should also build in the following elements:

- an assessment of digital literacy - this will be critical to identifying those job seekers who need more support than will be available through the online portal;
- job seekers should be eligible for enhanced services from Day 1 if they fall into cohorts identified as at risk of LTUE, e.g. early school leavers, never employed, Indigenous Australians, ex-offenders;
- in recognition of the merits of early intervention, those at risk of long term unemployment (i.e. unemployed more than 6 months) should automatically qualify for enhanced services; and
- the Department should consider flagging job seekers who reach the 3 month unemployment mark for assessment of their risk of long term unemployment.

yourtown supports Option 2 - staggered assessment of job seekers, focused on identifying needs and work readiness and determining eligibility for enhanced services.

Chapter 7 Incentives for job seekers to find work

yourtown supports:

- the adoption of a more flexible, personalised, strengths-based approach to activation of job seekers through a thorough, engaging and collaborative intake and assessment process exemplified in Transition to Work and ParentsNext; and
- the use of a points-based activation system for all job seekers to promote a broader mix of activities (e.g. job searches, attending interviews or participating in online services), allowing job seekers to choose from a range of approved activities relevant to their needs.

We believe that penalties are useful as a last resort, but that the focus should be engaging and empowering job seekers through a strengths-based approach and recognising their achievements along what may be a long journey into work.

yourtown also believes that job seekers should be given incentives to achieve or exceed their points (or build credits to use in case of minor compliance failure) by providing transport and phone credits.

There also needs to be recognition that there is a critical period of transition from long term unemployment to paid work, where highly disadvantaged job seekers need to be provided with some continuing support during an initial period to ensure retention.

Chapter 8 Targeted regional and local approaches

yourtown welcomes the potential introduction of place-based and regional approaches to help job seekers, particularly in high unemployment areas.

Local, place-based organisations in regional towns should be selected to be providers based on both their demonstrated level of commitment to, and engagement in the local area and their proven expertise in delivery of employment services.

Other interventions which could be considered in high unemployment areas are:

- encouraging the development of social enterprises to assist job seekers facing significant barriers to employment to engage with the labour market. **yourtown** has operated social enterprises for more than 18 years, providing paid transitional work and training for unemployed young people as a stepping stone to open employment;
- encouraging large employers to set social procurement targets which require them to purchase goods and services from local social enterprises which provide jobs for disadvantaged job seekers; and
- ensuring that any business receiving government funding has a set target for employing people from disadvantaged groups. Setting these targets should be part of the contract/tender process in low socio-economic areas. Ultimately, this should work across three levels of government.

Chapter 9 A service culture built on competition and quality

yourtown strongly supports the concept of permitting enhanced services providers to specialise in particular cohorts of job seekers (e.g. Indigenous Australians or young people). We believe that this is essential to effectively support disadvantaged people into sustainable employment. Such providers would be required to service all job seekers from their specialist cohort who select them within a particular region, but might not be required to service other job seekers.

Based on the identification of vulnerable groups in the Discussion Paper, **yourtown** advocates for youth specialist enhanced service providers to be part of the future employment services market to help address the critical issue of long term youth unemployment.

yourtown's view is that government should reduce the size and increase the number of employment regions to correspond with 'natural' labour markets. There is too much diversity within current regions. We also support the concept of encouraging tenders from providers who wish to deliver a specialised service inside a specific geographic area within an employment region.

yourtown favours the continuation of a 'moderately flexible market' with a cap on the number of providers in each employment region, based on local labour market conditions. This would enable providers to have a predictable market share and the Department would still be able to intervene in the market in the public interest where necessary.

We also believe that the government should be considering offering a minimum of six year contracts, with annual payment review to reflect CPI adjustments, and with business reallocation potentially every three years, based on achievement of benchmarks against key performance indicators, rather than STAR ratings.

yourtown's preferred option for purchasing would be a simplified tender process which allows new providers to periodically enter the market. This could be achieved by establishing a 'panel' of enhanced services providers comprising organisations that demonstrate they meet a set of relevant minimum criteria.

Panel participants could apply to enter the market at the start of the future employment services model and if opportunities arise during subsequent business allocation periods (e.g. if another provider leaves the market).

Chapter 10 Transitioning to a future employment services model

yourtown welcomes the proposed iterative approach to transitioning to a future employment services model.

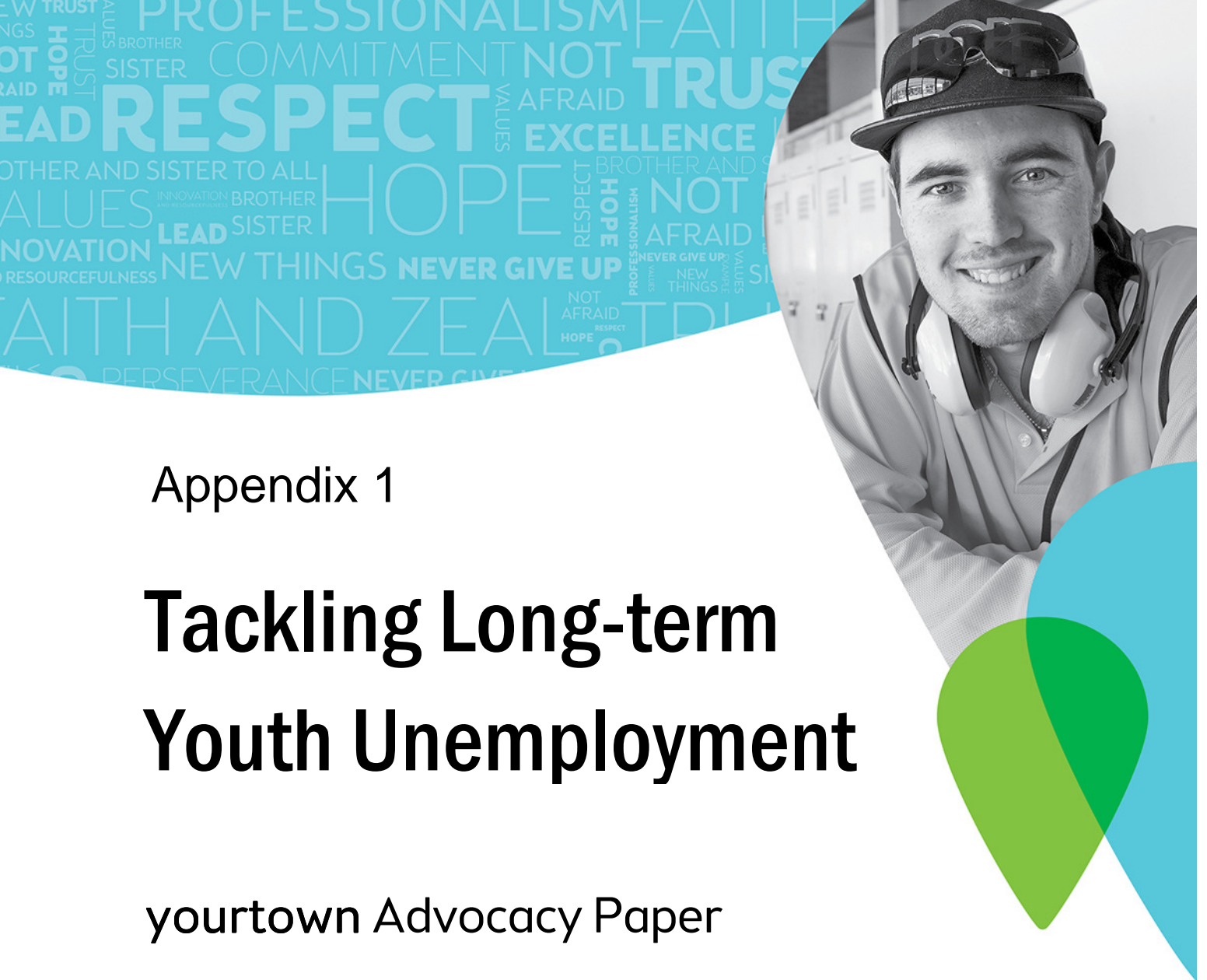
Given our experience in providing employment services for young people aged 15-24 who have been identified as disadvantaged in the current labour market, we would also appreciate the opportunity to be involved in any prospective co-design of future models for service delivery.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment: **yourtown** [Advocacy Paper](#), Dec 2016,

Appendix 2 - Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment: **yourtown** [Position Statement](#), Jun 2018

Appendix 3 - **your job your way** Information Sheet. Jun 2018



Our Mission

TO ENABLE YOUNG PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITHOUT VOICE, TO IMPROVE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.

Vision Statement

YOUNG LIVES TRANSFORMED, COMMUNITIES STRENGTHENED.

About us

yourtown is a charity with services young people can access to find jobs, learn skills, become great parents and live safer, happier lives. For 56 years, we've been tackling the issues impacting young people in Australia – like unemployment, mental health, and family and domestic violence.

We aim to be part of the solution by delivering programs that tackle grass root issues affecting our community. These include:

- **Training and Employment** services that give young people extra life choices and get them jobs;
- **Work Enterprises** that provide on-the job experiences and skills for life;
- **Indigenous Employment and Wellbeing** programs that create job options and community engagement opportunities;
- **Education and Re-engagement** programs that keep young people in school and offer other positive pathways;
- **Counselling and Mentoring** from Kids Helpline's 24/7 service for Australia's children and young people, Parentline for parents and carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory, and face-to-face support for our services' clients;
- **Family Refuges** that give families temporary, safe homes and/or domestic violence support; and
- **Parenting and Family Services** that teach young families positive parenting and connect families with community.

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Overview

More than 50,000 young people across Australia aged 15 to 24 years were in long-term unemployment last year, that is, they had been looking for work for at least one year. The incidence of young people in this category has increased since 2007 reaching its highest point in 2015. **yourtown** is working with more than 7% of these young people and has an extensive knowledge of the issues they face.

The rates and incidences of long-term youth unemployment remain high, and the negative consequences are experienced at individual, community, and society levels. However, the difficulties in accessing suitable long-term data for young people means there is a lack of specific research in how to address this ongoing issue.

Barriers for young people in long-term youth unemployment

yourtown has access to young people in long-term unemployment and staff with expertise in the area and can therefore use research as advocacy to provide a voice for young people. Through a survey of 285 young people in long-term unemployment across Australia and focus groups and interviews with 21 service delivery and management staff, barriers to employment have been identified and specific strategies developed to address the issue of long-term youth unemployment. The barriers associated with long-term youth unemployment include:

- **Educational issues** such as low levels of formal schooling and qualifications and poor literacy and numeracy;
- **Vocational issues** such as limited work history and low work skills;
- **Practical issues** such as not possessing a licence and limited access to social and institutional support;
- **Contextual issues** such as intergenerational unemployment, living in low socio-economic areas, and lack of available jobs;
- **Psycho-social issues** such as poor mental health, substance misuse, and homelessness;
- **Cognitive-motivational issues** such as low self-esteem and motivation due to negative experiences, lack of future outlook, poor decision-making skills, and low cognitive ability; and
- **Anti-social issues** such as offending history and poor anger management.

Strategies to address long-term youth unemployment

In this Advocacy Paper, the key elements to addressing the issue of long-term youth unemployment have been identified through research. The process was grounded in a critical review of relevant literature in Australia and overseas with a specific focus on young people in long-term unemployment and formed **yourtown's** Discussion Paper on this topic. The findings of that paper informed this research process with young people in long-term unemployment and service delivery and management staff with expertise in working with this cohort. The key elements form a wider service model of intervention for effectively working with young people in long-term unemployment. The model is presented in Figure 1.

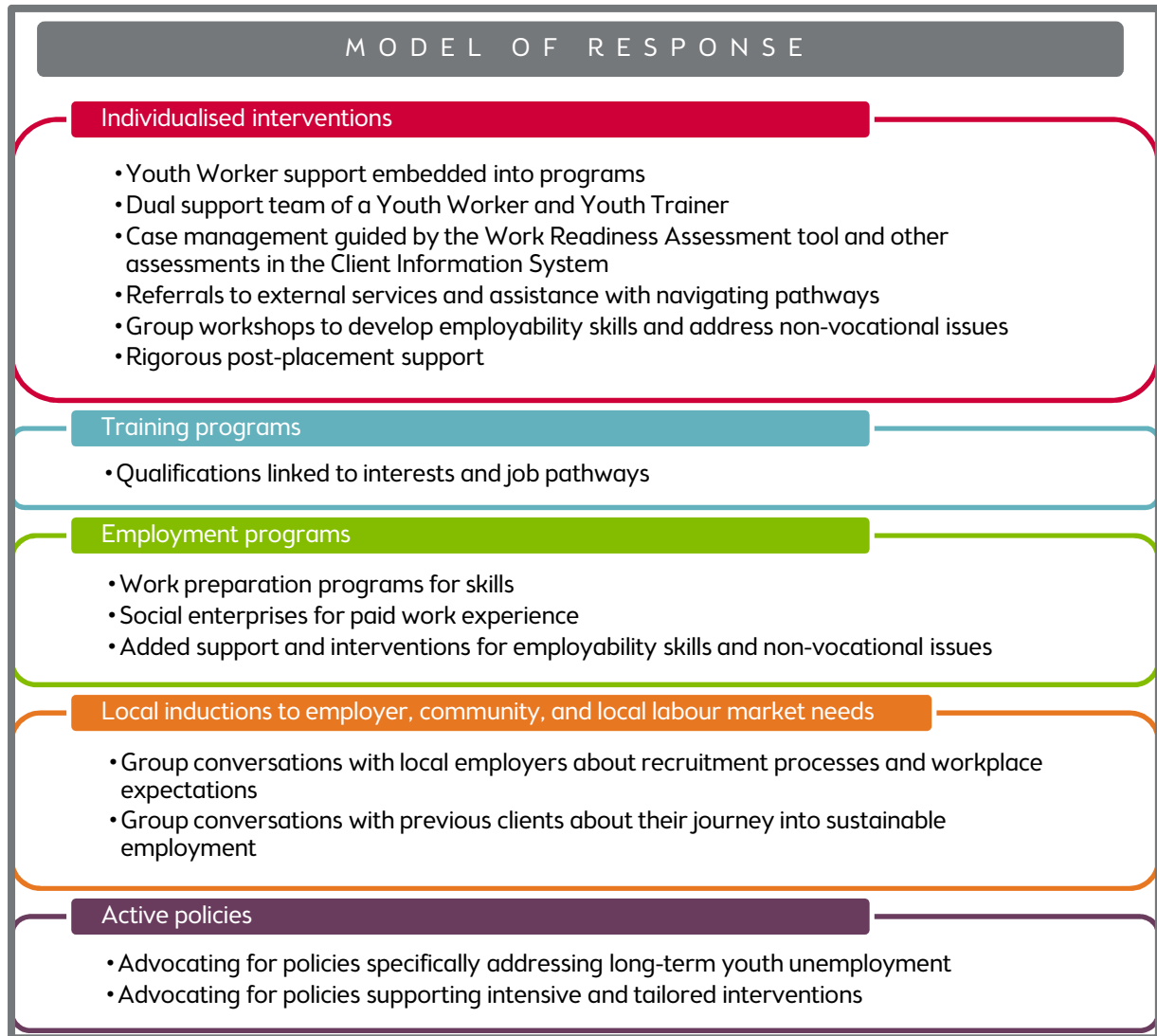


Figure 1. Model of response and key elements for addressing long-term youth unemployment.

Analysis of the data collected from the survey of young people and consultation with service delivery and management staff has yielded some key specific strategies for **yourtown** to adapt into in practice when it endeavours to assist young people in long-term unemployment. These key strategies revolved around intensive and tailored support that forms a model of intervention for specifically assisting young people in long-term unemployment. The research provides support for the various aspects of the model at a general level. The voices of young people have been used to detail specific elements and then put together in the overall model of intervention. This model would then need to be trialled and would require action research and evaluation to determine its effectiveness.

Recommendation: That the proposed intensive and tailored model of response to be implemented in programs assisting young people in long-term unemployment.

The current employment policy landscape is starting to recognise that strategies need to look beyond the broader issue of youth unemployment and focus specifically on addressing long-term youth unemployment. However, the policy approach does not take into account the intensive and individualised support that is required to adequately assist young people in long-term unemployment, particularly on a wide scale if these strategies are to reach the more than 50,000 young people across Australia in long-term unemployment. The aforementioned model on intensive support requires added investment to the models

of interventions that are available in the current landscape of policy and funded employment programs. Changes at a policy level are needed regarding support for young people in long-term unemployment.

Recommendation: That policies are developed to allow for the proposed model of responses and its key elements of intensive and tailored interventions in programs assisting young people in long-term unemployment.

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Introduction

As part of its organisational priorities, **yourtown** is committed to using research as advocacy for those children, young people and families who are without a voice when it comes to topical issues. Long-term youth unemployment is one of the topics of **yourtown's** advocacy work. The issues faced by young people in long-term unemployment are multifaceted (Kieselbach, 2003; Reine, Novo, & Hammarstrom, 2004) and can potentially add to the risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market (OECD, 2002). The consequences of these barriers become exacerbated as the time spent in unemployment is prolonged (Aaronson, Mazumder, & Schechter, 2010). The longer time spent in unemployment and the complex and serious nature of the barriers to employment means it is more difficult for this cohort to leave unemployment and obtain meaningful work (Covizzi, 2008).

A suite of documents have been developed as part of **yourtown's** advocacy work on long-term youth unemployment, including:

- **Discussion Paper** reviewing Australian and international academic literature on the issues associated with long-term youth unemployment;
- **Advocacy Paper** highlighting the voice of young people in long-term unemployment to describe strategies about overcoming barriers; and
- **yourtown Position Paper** detailing **yourtown's** stance on effective strategies for tackling long-term youth unemployment.

This document represents the Advocacy Paper. It follows on from the literature review in the Discussion Paper.

Outline of this paper

This Advocacy Paper uses the voices of young people in Australia to highlight their experiences in long-term unemployment which are then used to develop strategies to better assist this cohort. This paper details the research questions that were sourced from the previous Discussion Paper on the topic and how these questions informed the data collection from young people and staff who work with this marginalised group.

The findings are presented at a general level where the quantitative survey data is presented and then explained using qualitative data from young people and staff. The quantitative data analysis findings are also presented for specific cohorts of males and females, Indigenous, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people in long-term unemployment. The qualitative data is then presented to discuss strategies that are viewed by young people as effective. The findings of this paper are then used as a basis for recommendations to assist marginalised young people in long-term unemployment.

Concepts and definitions

Key concepts of 'youth' and 'long-term unemployment'

The Australian Government's Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the international Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) define the 'youth' component of long-term youth unemployment as being from 15 to 24 years. However, the concept of youth in the current labour market policy and employment services context is seen by the Australian Department of Employment as being from 15 to 29 years. The ABS (1995) and OECD (2002) define long-term unemployment as the duration of unemployment of 52 weeks or more where an individual has not worked in a job for more than two weeks.

In this paper, discussions about long-term youth unemployment data sourced from the ABS will be in relation to young people aged between 15 and 24 years who have been in ongoing unemployment for at least 52 weeks. It should also be noted that ongoing unemployment in this context is defined by the ABS as not having work for more than a two-week period and actively looking for work and being available to work.

Defining long-term youth unemployment

The Australian Government Department of Employment's definition of long-term unemployment is young people who have been in ongoing unemployment for at least 52 weeks. Because of the profound effect of the Government's youth unemployment policies, the concept of youth when discussing survey responses in this paper will revolve around young people aged between 15 and 29 years that have been in ongoing unemployment for at least 52 weeks. The definitions and statistical explanations for various long-term unemployment terms developed by the ABS (1995) are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Terms and definitions associated with long-term youth unemployment.

Scope of this paper

Long-term youth unemployment was selected as an advocacy topic due to:

- Ongoing high incidences and rates (see Figure 3 for trend in long-term youth unemployment rate);
- Negative and ongoing consequences experienced by individuals (Carvalho, 2015; Kelly, McGuinness, & O'Connell, 2012; Leeves, 2002; Marston & McDonald, 2008) as well as their families (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005) and communities (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002); and
- The lack of research on the topic mainly due to difficulties in accessing suitable long-term data from the relevant cohort of young people (Covizzi, 2008).

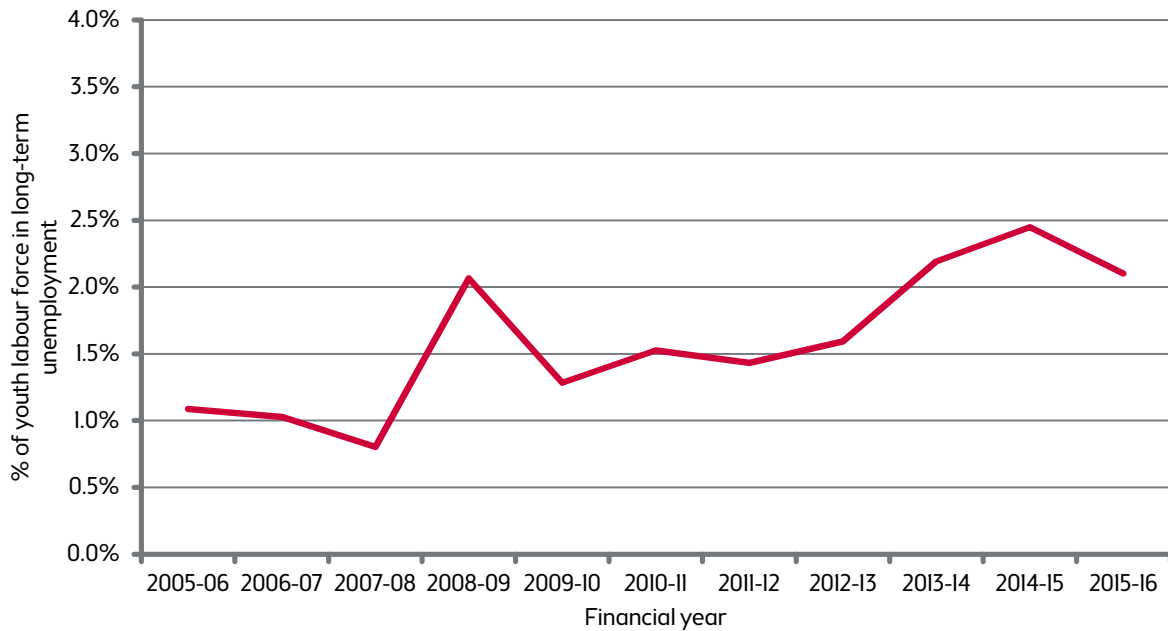


Figure 3. National long-term youth unemployment rate from 2005-06 - 2015-16.

yourtown job seekers in long-term youth unemployment

yourtown has developed this Advocacy Paper in response to the high rates and incidences of long-term youth unemployment across Australia and also the high numbers of young people in its services who are in long-term unemployment. Earlier in 2016, **yourtown** had 10,600 job seekers aged between 15 and 29 years in its jobactive employment services caseload. Of these young job seekers, 53.5% ($n = 5,668$) had been in unemployment for at least 52 weeks. Further analysis showed that 6,975 job seekers in **yourtown's** caseload were aged between 15 and 24 years. Of these young people aged between 15 and 24 years, 53.3% ($n = 3,718$) were in long-term unemployment. More than 50,000 young people aged between 15 and 24 years were unemployed for at least 52 weeks across Australia during the 2015-16 financial year. The aforementioned jobactive caseload data indicates that **yourtown** is working directly with more than 7% of these young people.

Specific focus on the voices of young people in long-term unemployment

The discourse on the broader topic of youth unemployment contains the voices of numerous stakeholders. Young people in long-term unemployment are a particularly marginalised group in the labour market and it is important to keep the focus of these advocacy papers on the issues, experiences and strategies that are specific to these young people rather than the broader topic of youth unemployment. In addition, when looking at the research on long-term unemployment it should be noted that some of the research findings are only applied in a broad sense or may be targeted towards other cohorts such as mature-aged workers or people made redundant who have struggled to re-join the workforce. Therefore, **yourtown** has made a considered effort to obtain the voice of young people who are classed as being in long-term unemployment and to gather the expertise of people who work directly with marginalised young people in long-term unemployment.

Purpose of this paper

Objective

The objective of this paper is to provide a voice for these young people in long-term unemployment that can be used to define their current barriers to employment and to develop strategies to effectively assist them in obtaining sustainable employment and participating meaningfully in society. Discussion points

were raised in the Tackling Youth Unemployment Discussion Paper based on long-term youth unemployment data trends, gaps in the reviewed literature, and suggestions for further research focusing specifically on young people in long-term unemployment. These discussion points informed the research questions in this paper that were directed at young people in long-term unemployment and people with expertise who work with and provide support for young people in long-term unemployment.

Research questions

The following research questions guide the data collection and discussion of this Advocacy Paper:

- What are the underlying factors in the high long-term youth unemployment rate?
- What are the barriers to employment experienced by young people in long-term unemployment?
- What are the differences in the ways that males and females experience long-term unemployment?
- What do young people in long-term unemployment perceive as useful strategies for assisting them to obtain employment? What elements of interventions are not as effective in assisting young people in long-term unemployment?
- How can **yourtown** respond more effectively to young people in long-term unemployment?

Method

A mixed method approach has been used in this research project. The quantitative data component of the mixed method was in the form of options in the survey tool for young people in long-term youth unemployment. The qualitative component took the form of open-ended questions in the survey of young people and also the semi-structured focus group or interview questions of staff who work with young people in long-term unemployment.

Procedure and data treatment

Data collection

The survey for young people was disseminated via paper and a website link via email to young people in **yourtown's** face-to-face programs. The website link to the survey was also posted on the websites and Facebook pages of **yourtown** and Kids Helpline and advertised in the newsletters and websites of organisations related to unemployment and youth. In addition, organisations linked to long-term youth unemployment (e.g. organisations that are funded to work with young people in long-term unemployment through the Empowering YOUTH Initiatives) were approached to disseminate the survey with their clients.

Data analysis

Altogether, 616 survey responses were received. The data cleaning process involved removing respondents that were from overseas and/or aged below 15 years or older than 29 years. Responses judged to be 'pranks' were also removed. Of the 506 remaining responses, 221 respondents were removed because they indicated they were in short-term unemployment (under six months) or unemployed for between six and 12 months. In total, 285 responses from young people were used in the main analysis of this report because they indicated that they were aged between 15 and 29 years and they had been looking for work for at least 12 months, that is, they fit the definition of being in long-term unemployment.

Descriptive analyses were run on the demographic variables and the variables measuring the barriers of young people in the survey tool. Analyses were run on the cohort of young people in long-term unemployment as well as comparing their barriers to responses from young people in short-term unemployment, that is, young people in unemployment for less than six months. Comparisons were also looked at regarding gender differences. In addition, post hoc analyses were also run on specific cohorts of respondents in long-term unemployment such as Indigenous and CALD groups of young people. Further post hoc analyses were conducted with data from young people in metropolitan cities and those in regional and remote areas.

Participants

Survey participants

Of the 285 research participants in long-term unemployment, 50.9% identified as female, 47.7% male, 1.1% as intersex, trans or gender diverse, and 0.3% were unknown. The average age of this group ranging from 15 to 29 years was 21 years. Of the 285 survey respondents, 11.9% identified as Indigenous. In addition, 16.5% identified as being from a CALD background.

Postcode data was received from 275 participants enabling the state or territory of respondents to be determined. Altogether, 38.6% were from Queensland, 20.4% from New South Wales, 15.4% from Tasmania, 14.4% from South Australia, 4.6% from Victoria, 2.8% from Western Australia, and 0.4% from Northern Territory.

In addition, the postcode data enabled the use of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard to determine if respondents were in metropolitan cities or regional and remote areas. In terms of remoteness, 62.5% were located in metropolitan cities while 37.5% were in regional and remote areas. Specifically, 33.1% of respondents were in regional areas and 4.4% were in remote areas.

Data was recorded on other demographic and situational variables such as employment history, where 42.5% stated they never had a job, 33.0% had previously been in part-time or casual work, and 12.6% had experienced full-time work. Of the long-term unemployed participants, 46.7% had been looking for work for between one and two years and 53.3% had been in looking for work for more than two years, that is, they were in very long-term unemployment. Intergenerational unemployment was also present, where 17.2% indicated that they grew up in a home where the main income earner did not work.

In relation to formal schooling, 37.2% had completed Year 12, 30.2% Year 10, while 14.9% had left school in Year 9 or lower. Two-in-five (39.6%) participants indicated that they had no accredited qualifications, 4.2% a Certificate I, 21.8% a Certificate II, 21.1% a Certificate III, 2.5% a Certificate IV, 4.2% a diploma, and 3.2% an undergraduate degree.

Data on housing showed that 34.4% were living in a private rental situation, 19.6% in their parent's home that was owned, 17.9% in unstable accommodation, 16.1% in public housing, and 4.9% in community housing. In terms of offending, 5.6% have been in juvenile or adult detention.

Focus group and interview participants

Twenty-one staff members provided feedback through participation in face-to-face focus groups or individual interviews. Most of these interviews held over the phone. Staff members who were unable to attend an interview were given the questions for their feedback to be provided via email.

Research is lacking on Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment. In addition, ABS data in Indigenous long-term youth unemployment is not available. Therefore a concerted effort was made to not only gather the voices of Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment but also Indigenous staff members. This was done by conducting two focus groups with Indigenous staff members who have expertise in working with Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment.

Tools

Survey

The survey tool aimed at young people in long-term unemployment consisted of demographic and situational questions, such as age, gender, postcode, housing situation, detention history, personal work history, work history of main income earners when growing up, and time spent looking for work. The survey items, 'age' and 'time spent looking for work', were mandatory in the online survey. The options for responses to this question were in line with the ABS measurement of time in unemployment, that is, under

one month, between one month and three months, between six months and one year, between one year and two years, more than two years, and other.

The survey also measured the barriers to employment. The literature review in the Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment Discussion Paper uncovered a number of different issues associated with long-term unemployment. Most of these studies were conducted in research projects overseas dating back to 2003. In an effort to ascertain the types of barriers experienced by young people in long-term unemployment in a contemporary Australian context, these barriers from international and Australian studies were presented in the survey for young people to select if they were relevant to their situation. The barriers under their broader categories were:

- Vocational issues of limited work history and low work skills;
- Educational issues of low levels of formal schooling and qualifications and low literacy and numeracy;
- Contextual issues of intergenerational unemployment and lack of available jobs;
- Practical issues of not possessing a driver licence, no vehicle, limited transport options, and limited access to social and institutional support;
- Cognitive-motivational issues of low motivation due to negative experiences, low self-esteem and confidence, lack of future outlook and goals, and difficulty making decisions;
- Psycho-social issues of poor mental health, alcohol misuse, drug misuse, and homelessness; and
- Antisocial issues of offending history and poor anger management.

Participants were also given the option in an open-ended question to describe other barriers to employment. Open-ended questions were used for respondents to describe strategies that they thought were or could be effective in assisting them to gain employment. In addition, questions were asked about strategies that were not effective in assisting young people in long-term unemployment.

Focus groups and interviews

The focus group and interview questions with staff members were conducted using a presentation of the discussion paper findings. The findings of the discussion paper were used to introduce the research questions throughout the sessions to stimulate discussion among the participants. Twelve participants were in the focus groups. Two of the focus groups comprised six staff in total identifying as Indigenous. These focus groups were conducted so that the questions and discussion were specifically in relation to Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment. The focus groups ran for approximately one hour and ten minutes while the interviews usually ran for about 40 minutes.

Barriers experienced by young people in long-term unemployment

Data from the young people in long-term unemployment who completed the survey indicated that vocational, educational and practical issues are the main barriers to employment. Limited work history was rated as the most common barrier to employment with 73.1% of respondents saying it was an issue for them. Other common barriers revolved around educational issues such as low levels of qualifications (66.0%), practical issues such as a lack of a driver licence (66.1%) and not enough available jobs (61.4%), and psycho-social issues such as low self-esteem (46.9%). The perceived barriers to employment by young people in long-term unemployment are shown in Figure 4.

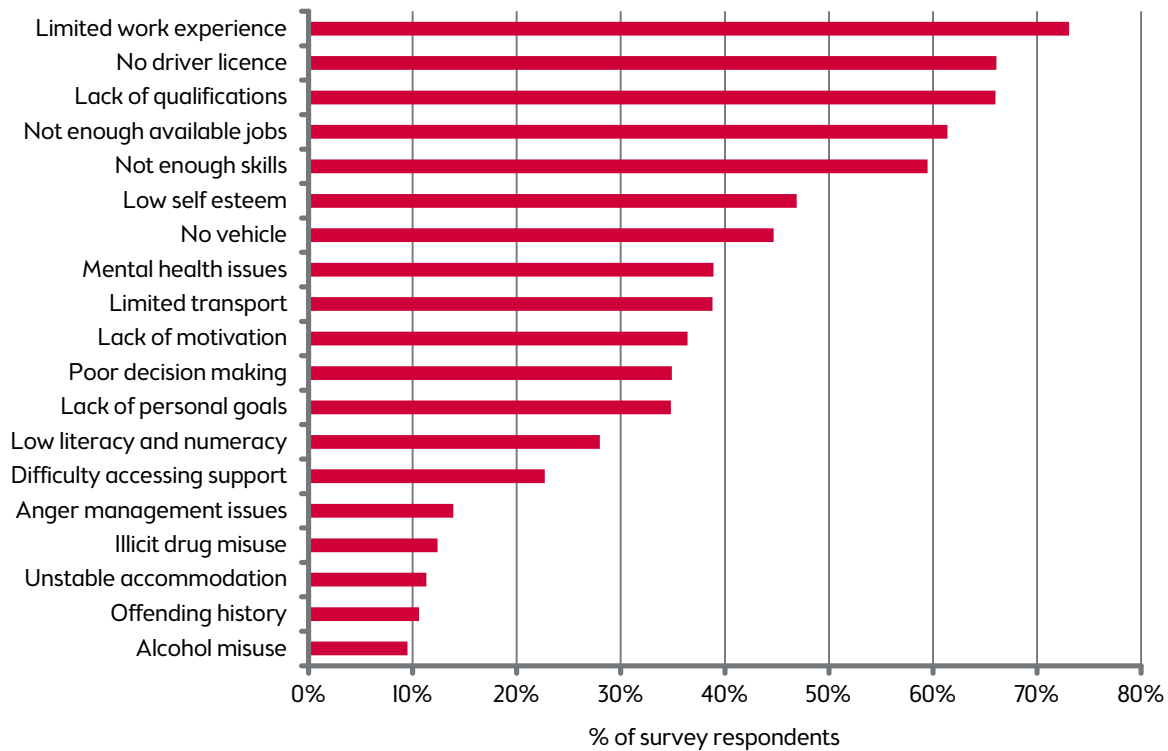


Figure 4. Perceived barriers to employment by surveyed young people in long-term unemployment.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide details about other barriers to employment that were not provided as options in the survey. One of the key themes that came out from this open-ended question was respondents naming specific mental illness such as anxiety and depression. The other key theme that arose from the answers of young people was the lack of confidence when having to approach employers and talk to people that they had not met previously. Many of these responses also described the anxiety that was experienced in these situations.

Staff in the focus groups and interviews stated that it is important to address the vocational, educational, and practical barriers to employment. However, they placed higher importance in comparison to young people on addressing the psycho-social, cognitive-motivational and anti-social issues associated with long-term youth unemployment.

While addressing the vocational, educational and practical barriers may assist young people to eventually find work, staff stated that the sustainability of employment outcomes was dependent on how well the non-vocational needs were supported. In particular, they mentioned that substance misuse was usually not acknowledged by young people as an issue for them even though it stopped them from engaging in programs. Furthermore, young people did not take their illicit drug use seriously even though it stopped them from gaining work with employers that have drug-testing as part of their recruitment processes.

Mental health was another key theme in the focus groups and interviews where participants observed young people going through their lives without a formal diagnosis because they did not acknowledge it as an issue due to the stigma attached to having a mental illness. In addition, many young people may not have had a formal diagnosis because of the difficulties they face when attempting to navigate on their own the complicated pathways to assistance for mental health.

Long-term unemployment compared to short-term unemployment

Out of the 506 responses to the survey from young people aged between 15 and 29 years, 158 were from respondents who indicated that they were looking for work for less than six months. These young people

are defined by the ABS as being in short-term unemployment. The survey responses regarding barriers to employment of these 158 young people were compared to the responses of the 285 young people in long-term unemployment. The findings are displayed in Figure 5.

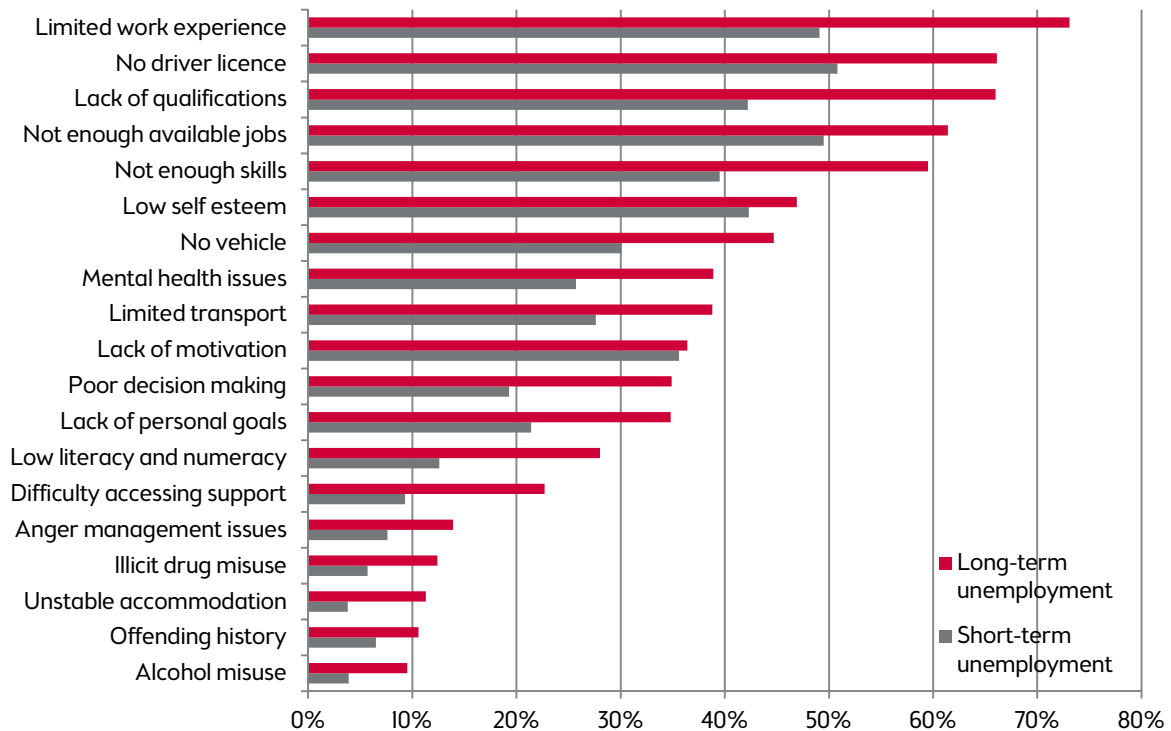


Figure 5. Perceived barriers to employment by young people in long-term unemployment compared to young people in short-term unemployment.

As expected, young people in long-term unemployment experience stronger and more complex barriers to employment than young people in short-term unemployment. On average, young people in long-term unemployment rated six issues as being barriers to employment, whereas young people in short-term unemployment rated only three issues as being barriers to employment. Furthermore, higher proportions of young people in long-term unemployment, in comparison to young people in short-term unemployment, rated each issue as a barrier to employment. The differences in experiences of barriers by young people in long-term unemployment compared to young people in short-term unemployment were particularly prevalent regarding:

- Vocational issues such as limited work experience (73.1% versus 49.1%) and low work skills (59.5% versus 39.5%),
- Educational issues such as low levels of qualifications (66.0% versus 42.2%) and poor literacy and numeracy skills (28.0% versus 12.6%),
- Practical issues such as a lack of a driver licence (66.1% versus 50.8%) and limited access to social and institutional support (22.7% versus 9.3%),
- Cognitive-motivational issues such as poor decision-making (34.9% versus 19.3%) and lack of personal goals (34.8% versus 21.4%), and
- Psycho-social issues such as mental ill health (38.9% versus 25.7%) and unstable accommodation (11.3% versus 3.8%).

Female and male young people

Analysis of ABS data shows that males compared to females have experienced higher rates of long-term youth unemployment since the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008 where the long-term unemployment rates for both males and females stood at 0.9%. The male long-term youth unemployment rate continued to increase to its highest point of 2.9% in 2014-2015 while the female rate peaked at 2.0% in this same financial year. The largest difference between the female and male long-term unemployment rates occurred in 2015-16 when the female long-term youth unemployment rate (1.6%) was 1% lower male long-term youth unemployment rate (2.6%). This difference in these rates over a ten year period is shown in Figure 6.

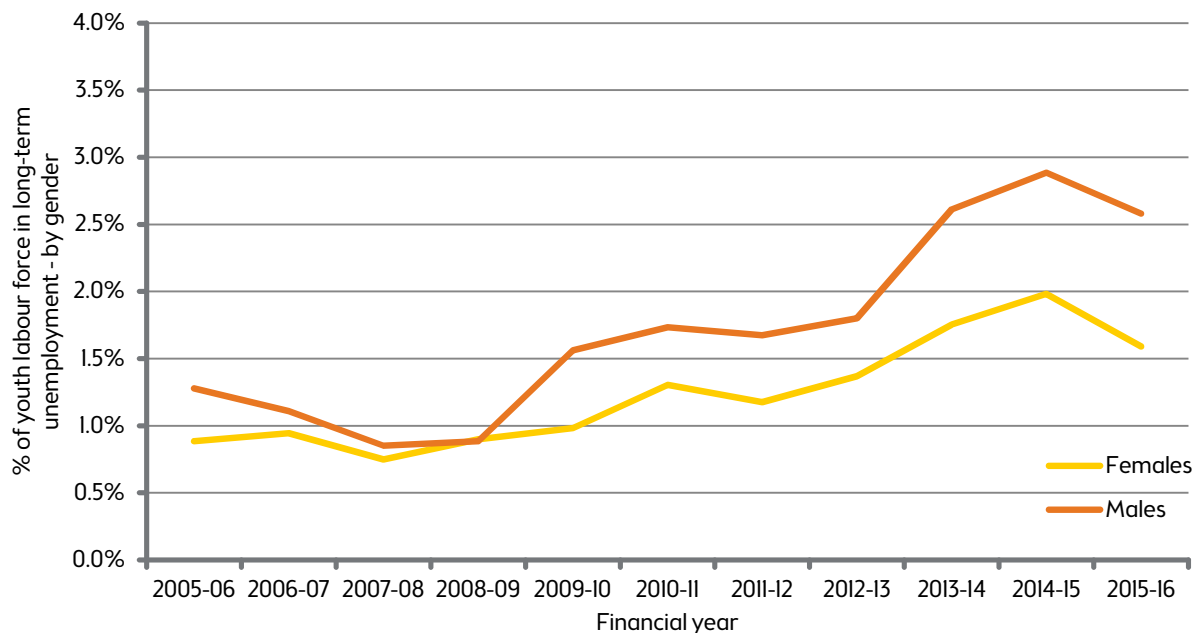


Figure 6. Comparison of trends in long-term youth unemployment rates among males and females.

Focus groups with people who work with young people in long-term unemployment have provided some insight into the differences in these rates between male and female young people. Two key themes from the focus groups were that the lower long-term youth unemployment rates were due to young female parents who were not actively looking for work or available to work and these young females relied on their partners to provide an income for their families. These themes are consistent with the findings of Kelly et al.'s (2002) study looking at the characteristics of young people in long-term unemployment in Ireland.

The other themes from the focus groups looked at the lack of emotional maturity and future outlook and increased risk-taking behaviours among males when compared to females. This is consistent with research looking at the differences in males and females when it comes to decision-making and risk (Cazell, Li, Lin, Patel, & Liu, 2012). When presented with an opportunity to gain skills through training and employment programs, female participants have been observed early on by staff to have developed an outlook for the future which influenced their engagement in the program, job-seeking behaviours, and work ethic once in the open labour market. Male participants on the other hand were observed to be more likely to lack the maturity to engage with the program and focused more on the present rather than the future. In addition, this lack of maturity meant that they were more likely to have poor anger management skills and participate in risk-taking behaviour such as illicit drug use and physical altercations. These themes of males being more likely than females to participate in risk-taking behaviours are consistent with research investigating gender differences regarding decision-making and risk-taking behaviours (Charness & Gnezzzy, 2013). In addition, these themes are consistent with the survey findings comparing males and females young people in long-term unemployment.

In **yourtown's** survey of young people in long-term unemployment, 144 were female ($M = 20.5$ years) and 135 were male ($M = 21.7$ years). In terms of work history, 32.6% of male respondents had never worked while 41.0% of female participants had never worked. One-in-five (20.0%) male participants and 13.9% of female respondents grew up in a home where the main income earner did not work. In addition, 6.7% of males and 3.5% of females had been in juvenile or adult detention. Survey participants were asked to indicate from a list of issues which ones were barriers to them gaining employment. The perceived barriers of the female and male survey respondents in long-term youth unemployment are shown in Figure 7.

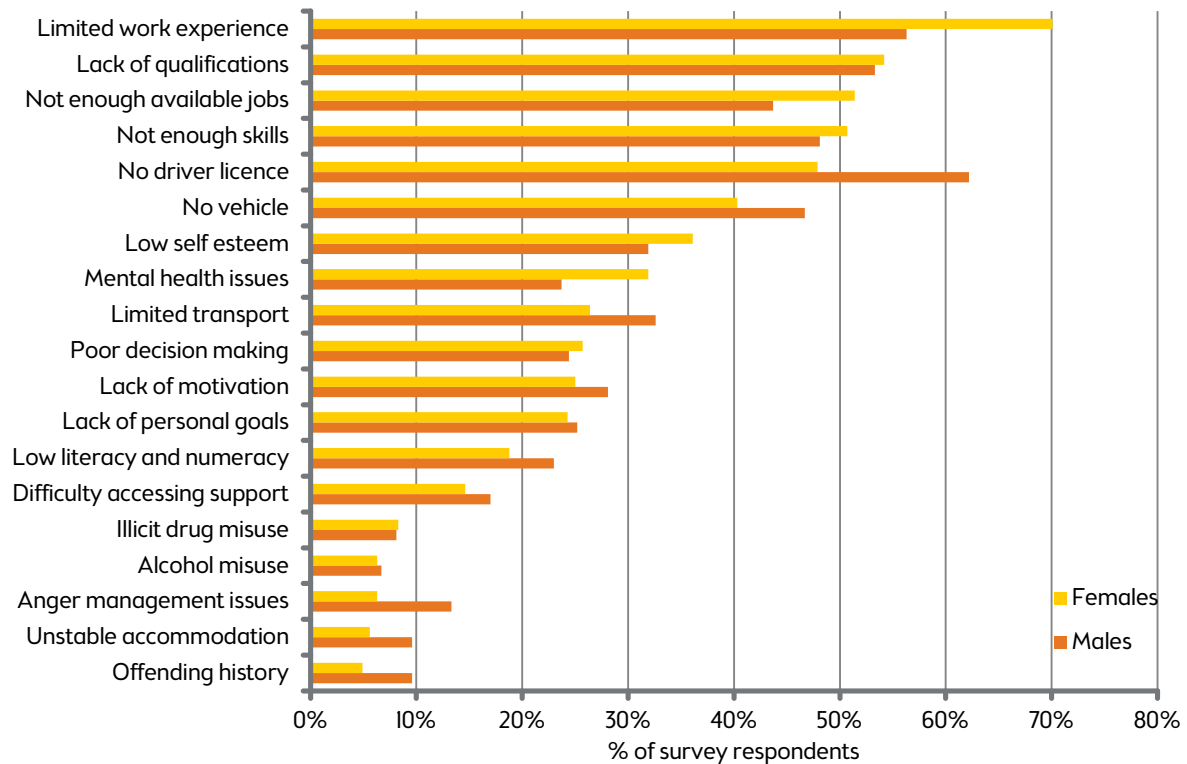


Figure 7. Comparison of perceived barriers to employment by males and females.

Seven-in-ten female respondents rated limited work experience as a barrier to employment, making it the highest rated barrier among females in long-term unemployment. In comparison, 56.3% of male respondents rated limited work experience as a barrier, making it the second most common barrier to employment.

Lack of qualifications (54.2%), not enough available jobs in their industry (51.4%), not enough skills (50.7%), and no driver licence were in the top five rated barriers for female young people in long-term unemployment. Female respondents were more likely than males to rate lack of available jobs (51.4% versus 43.7%), low self esteem (36.1% versus 31.9%) and mental health issues (31.9% versus 23.7%) as barriers to employment. Data from the focus groups indicated that females are more emotionally mature than males and are therefore more likely to be aware of issues such as low self esteem and mental health and the impact of these issues. This findings is consistent with research that shows female are more likely than males to be self-aware and display help-seeking behaviours when it comes to mental health and its associated issues (Clement, et al., 2015; Henderson, Evans-Lacko, & Thornicroft, 2013).

For males in long-term unemployment, the most common barrier to employment was a lack of a driver licence, with 62.2% of male respondents indicating that it was a concern for them. In comparison, only 47.9% of female respondents rated this issue as a barrier to employment for them. This could be linked to the types of industries that male young people are more likely to be employed. Analysis of ABS labour force and industry data (2016) show that in the areas that **yourtown** deliver employment services, males

are more likely to be employed in the construction, and transport, postal and warehousing industries, where employers are looking for workers with driver licences. Females on the other hand are more likely to be employed in the industries of health care and social assistance, retail trade, and education and training.

Limited work experience (56.3%), lack of qualification (53.3%), not enough skills (48.1%), and no vehicle (46.7%) comprise the rest of the top five rated barriers for male young people in long-term unemployment. The low work skills and limited work history as barriers to employment for males is consistent with Dockery and Webster's (2002) Australian study showing that young males in long-term unemployment were the most deprived group in the labour force.

Male respondents were more likely than females to rate no driver licence (62.2% versus 47.9%), no vehicle (46.7% versus 40.3%), limited transport (32.6% versus 26.4%), low literacy and numeracy (23.0% versus 18.8%), anger management issues (13.3% versus 6.3%), unstable accommodation (9.6% versus 5.6%), and offending history (9.6% versus 4.5%) as barriers to employment. The lack of maturity and future outlook as well as the risk-taking behaviours among males that were raised in the focus groups could explain the higher ratings of anger management and offending history by male respondents. This link between risk-taking behaviour and anger management has been established in research (Rice, Fallon, Aucote, & Moller-Leimkuhler, 2013).

Indigenous young people

In **yourtown's** survey of young people in long-term unemployment, 34 respondents identified as Indigenous. Of these Indigenous respondents, 61.8% were female and 38.2% were male. Their ages ranged from 15 to 25 years ($M = 19.3$).

In terms of location, 58.8% were in metropolitan cities, 23.5% in regional areas, and 17.6% in remote areas. Two-in-five (38.2%) were from Queensland, 29.4% from New South Wales, 17.6% from Western Australia, 5.9% from South Australia, 5.9% from Tasmania, and 2.9% from the Northern Territory.

Half of the participants had been in unemployment for between one year and two years while the other half were in very long-term unemployment of more than two years. Intergenerational unemployment was experienced by 38.2% of respondents who grew up in a household where the main income earner did not work.

In relation to formal schooling, 14.7% had completed Year 12, 14.7% Year 11, 20.6% Year 10, and 32.4% left school prior to completion of Year 10. Two-thirds (64.7%) indicated that they did not have any accredited qualifications. Certificate I was the highest qualification for 2.9% of Indigenous survey respondents, Certificate II for 11.8%, and Certificate III for 17.6%.

Data on housing showed that 51.9% were living in public housing and 35.3% in community housing. In terms of offending, 25.0% had been in juvenile or adult detention.

Survey participants were asked to indicate from a list of issues which ones were barriers to them gaining employment. The perceived barriers of Indigenous survey respondents in long-term youth unemployment are shown in Figure 8.

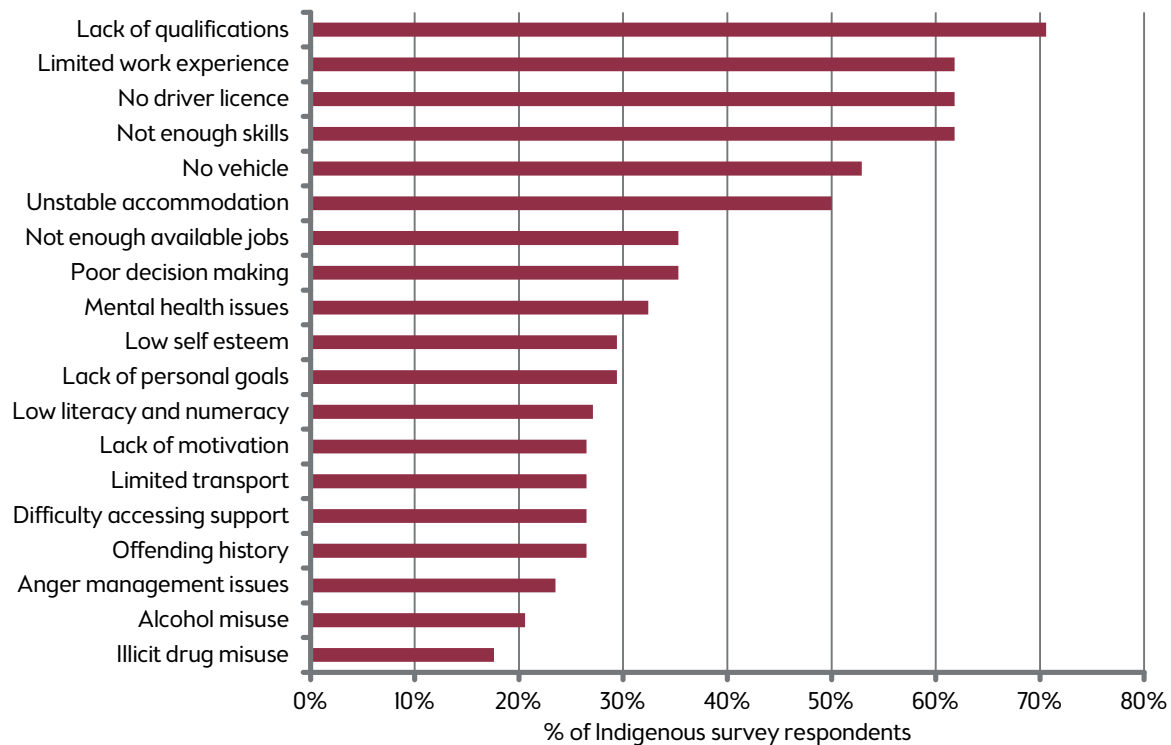


Figure 8. Perceived barriers to employment by Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment.

Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment appear to experience stronger and more complex barriers to employment. On average, Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment rated nine issues as being barriers to employment, whereas the overall group of young people in long-term unemployment rated six issues as being barriers to employment. While there is a similar trend to all survey respondents regarding vocational, educational, and practical issues being seen as more prevalent barriers to employment than the other types of issues, Indigenous survey respondents were proportionally more likely in comparison to the overall long-term youth unemployment group to rate the cognitive-motivational, psycho-social, and anti-social issues as barriers to employment. Offending history was raised in the focus groups as a barrier to employment. In addition, health and mental health and their link to hidden suicidal ideation were raised as specific concerns in the focus groups.

The survey data indicated that Indigenous young people had higher rates of not possessing accredited qualifications. The respondents in long-term unemployment have indicated that this is their greatest barrier to gaining employment. Vocational issues of limited work experience (61.8%) and low work skills (61.8%) and transport issues such as not possessing a driver licence (61.8%) and no access to a vehicle (52.9%) made up the rest of the top five barriers to employment as rated by Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment. The lack of relevant qualifications and driver licence aligns with themes from the focus groups with Indigenous staff about barriers to employment.

Unstable accommodation was seen as a key barrier to employment for Indigenous young people (50.0%) in long-term unemployment. This is higher when compared to all respondents (11.3%) in long-term unemployment. One of the themes to come out of the focus groups with Indigenous staff was that 'couch-surfing', where young people move from home to home of people in their social network, is a major issue for Indigenous young people. This type of secondary homelessness derived from uncertainty and a lack of stability and safety will be more of a focus for Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment than finding employment.

The severity and ongoing nature of these issues play a significant role in Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment not being able to focus on employment. Altogether these findings are tied into one of the focus group themes that Indigenous young people are not aware of the support that is available specifically to them to address their barriers.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse young people

In **yourtown's** survey of young people in long-term unemployment, 47 respondents identified as being from a CALD background. Of these CALD respondents, 61.7% were female, 36.2% were male, and 2.1% identified as intersex, trans or diverse. Their ages ranged from 16 to 29 years ($M = 21.4$).

In terms of location, 87.2% were in metropolitan cities, 10.6% in regional areas, and 2.1% in remote areas. Two-in-five (42.6%) were from Queensland, 38.3% from New South Wales, 14.9% from South Australia, 2.1% from Victoria, and 2.1% from Western Australia.

More than half (55.3%) were in very long-term unemployment (more than two years in ongoing unemployment) while 44.7% were in unemployment for between one and two years. Half (50%) of the respondents said that they had never had a job. Intergenerational unemployment was experienced by only 13.3% of respondents who grew up in a household where the main income earner did not work.

CALD survey respondents had higher levels of formal schooling completion where 40.4% had completed Year 12. In addition, 27.7% Year 11, 25.5% Year 10, and 6.4% left school prior to completion of Year 10. Two-in-five (40.9%) indicated that they did not have any accredited qualifications. Certificate II was the highest qualification for 25.0% and Certificate III for 20.5%.

In terms of offending, 4.9% had been in juvenile or adult detention. This rate is lower compared to other cohorts of survey respondents except for females in long-term unemployment.

Survey participants were asked to indicate from a list of issues which ones were barriers to them gaining employment. The perceived barriers of CALD survey respondents in long-term youth unemployment are shown in Figure 9.

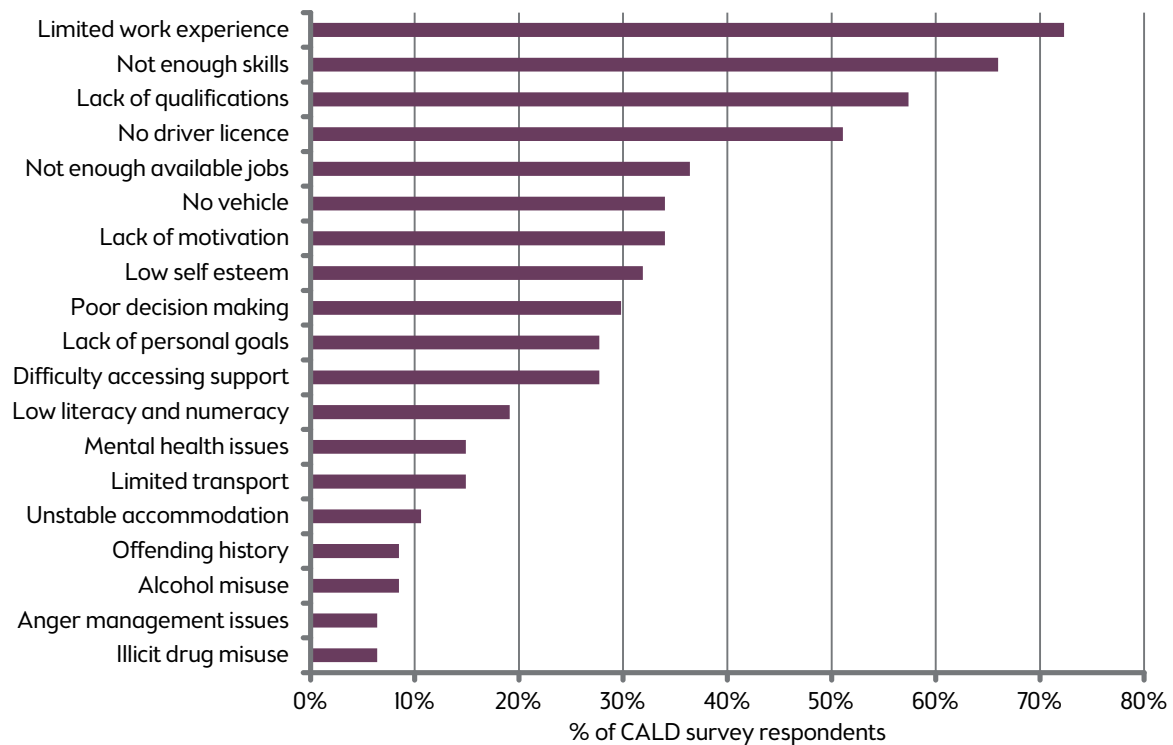


Figure 9. Perceived barriers to employment by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse young people in long-term unemployment.

The top five barriers rated by CALD young people in long-term unemployment were limited work history (72.3%), not enough skills (66.0%), lack of qualifications (57.4%), no driver licence (51.1%), and not enough available jobs (36.4%). The issues that CALD young people in long-term unemployment, in comparison to other cohorts, rated more highly as barriers were lack of motivation (34.0%) and difficulty accessing social and institutional support (27.7%). Analysis of the qualitative responses from CALD young people showed that these two barriers were linked because some respondents due to their residency status in Australia were eligible only for limited support from employment services such as jobactive. This difficulty in accessing support was linked to a sense of hopelessness that then influenced the low levels of motivation from respondents. This finding has consistently been shown in the literature to be key barriers to migrants seeking help in Australia (Kearney, 2015; Sawrikar & Katz, 2008).

Young people in metropolitan cities and regional and remote areas

In **yourtown's** survey of young people in long-term unemployment, 172 respondents were from metropolitan cities, 91 from regional areas, and 12 from remote areas. Of the respondents from metropolitan cities, 53.2% were female, 45.0% were male, 1.2% identified as intersex, trans or gender diverse, and 0.6% were unknown. For regional and remote areas, a higher proportion of respondents were male (55.3%), 43.7% were female, and 1.0% identified as intersex, trans or gender diverse.

The ages of both cohorts ranged from 15 to 29 years. The average of respondents in metropolitan cities was 21.0 years while the average age of respondents in regional and remote areas was 21.1 years.

The majority of respondents from metropolitan cities were from Queensland (54.1%) and New South Wales (30.8%). The rest were from Victoria (4.7%). The majority of respondents from regional areas were from Tasmania (42.7%), South Australia (22.3%), and Queensland (16.5%). The rest of the responses from regional and remote areas were from Western Australia (7.8%), New South Wales (4.9%), Victoria (4.9%), and the Northern Territory (1.0%).

Intergenerational unemployment was more prevalent among young people in regional and remote areas, where 23.8% of respondents grew up in a household where the main income earner did not work. In comparison, only 14.3% of respondents in metropolitan cities grew up in a home where the main income earner did not work.

Respondents in regional and remote areas were more likely to be without qualifications. Specifically, 52.9% of respondents in regional and remote areas had no qualifications in comparison to 35.2% of respondents in metropolitan cities. Respondents in metropolitan cities in comparison to those in regional and remote areas were more likely to have a Certificate II (24.2% versus 19.6%) or Certificate III (24.2% versus 17.6%) accredited qualification.

In terms of offending, 7.3% of respondents in regional and remote areas had been in juvenile or adult detention. Proportionally this was higher than the 5.9% of respondents in metropolitan cities.

Survey participants were asked to indicate from a list of issues which ones were barriers to them gaining employment. The comparison of perceived barriers by survey respondents in metropolitan cities and regional and remote areas is shown in Figure 10.

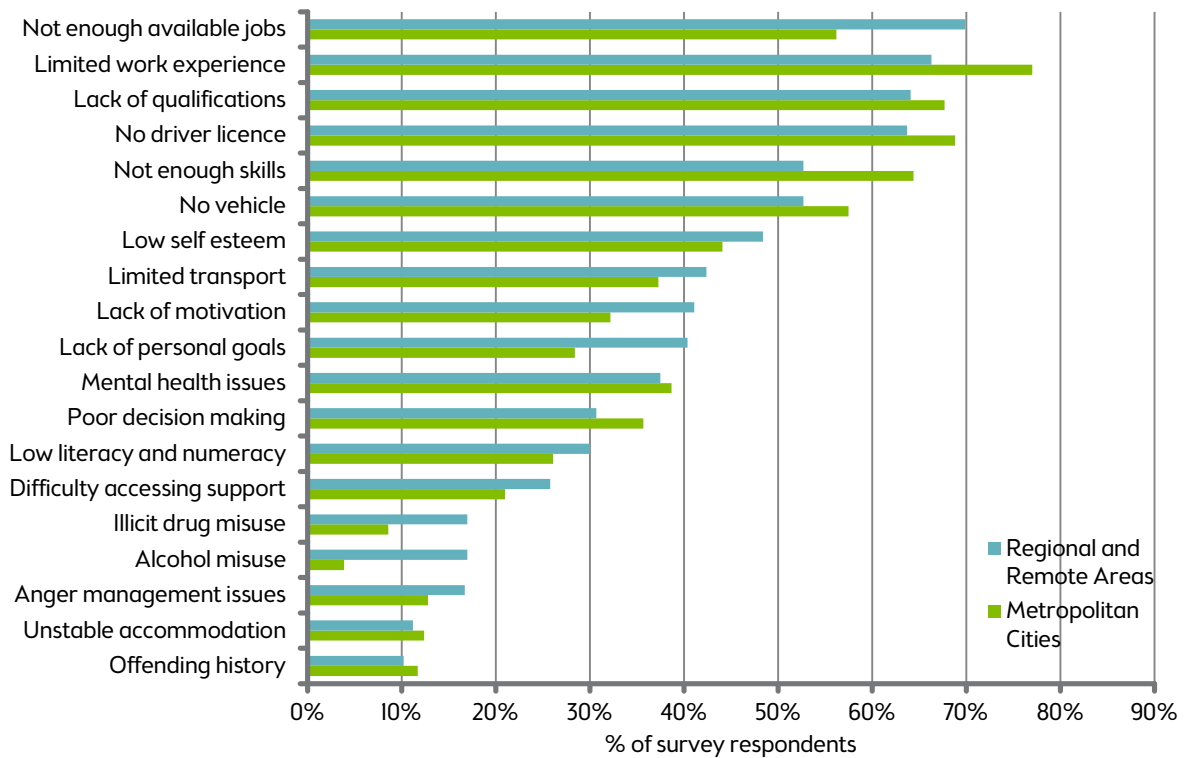


Figure 10. Comparison of perceived barriers to employment by young people in metropolitan cities and young people in regional and remote areas.

The top five barriers to employment for young people in long-term unemployment living in regional and remote areas was not enough available jobs (69.9%), limited work experience (66.3%), lack of qualifications (64.1%), no driver licence (63.7%), and low work skills (52.7%). For young people in long-term unemployment living in metropolitan cities, their top five barriers were limited work experience (77.0%), no driver licence (68.8%), lack of qualifications (67.7%), low work skills (64.4%), and no vehicle (57.5%). Marked proportional differences were seen between respondents in metropolitan cities and those in regional and remote areas when it came to rating limited work experience (77.0% versus 66.3%), low work skills (64.4% versus 52.7%), and no vehicle (57.5% versus 52.7%) as barriers.

The top issue that was rated by survey respondents in regional and remote areas as a key barrier to employment was the lack of jobs. Ratings from respondents in metropolitan cities showed that lack of available jobs (56.2%) was the sixth most prevalent barrier to employment. This is indicative of the slower labour markets in regional and remote areas in comparison to metropolitan cities. As previously stated, the lack of jobs in regional and remote areas means that the definition of long-term youth unemployment does not measure the true nature of unemployment in these areas. While young people may be available for work, they may not consistently be looking for work when there is no jobs growth and they do not have a driver licence to get to those areas where there may be new jobs. The lack of jobs and opportunities in regional and remote areas may be linked to low self esteem (48.4% versus 44.1%), low motivation (41.0% versus 30.2%), and lack of personal goals (40.4% versus 28.4%) being rated more highly as barriers in these areas compared to metropolitan areas. Respondents in regional and remote areas in comparison to those in metropolitan cities were also more likely to rate illicit drug misuse (17.0% versus 8.6%), alcohol misuse (17.0% versus 3.9%), and anger management (16.7% versus 12.8%) as barriers to employment. This is consistent with research showing higher rates of substance misuse in regional and remote areas (Miller, Coomber, Staiger, Sinkiewicz, & Toumbourou, 2010). Furthermore, structural disadvantage such as lack of jobs and difficulty accessing institutional support have been linked to mental health issues and increased rates of risk-taking behaviours such as substance misuse and anger management issues (Quine, Bernard, Booth, Kang, Usherwood, Alperstein, & Bennett, 2003).

Strategies to address long-term youth unemployment

A number of common themes arose from the open-ended questions in the survey of young people and the focus groups and interviews of service delivery staff and management regarding strategies that address the issues of long-term youth unemployment. Young people in long-term unemployment and staff were particularly focused on the areas of training, work experience, and personalised support. Staff members also approached the issue from a broader perspective where interventions will need to take into account other factors such as employers, communities, local labour markets, and Government policies.

Job search

The responses from young people in long-term unemployment in relation to job search as an effective method of finding work was mixed. On one hand, some young people felt they had success with 'cold canvassing' more than 'cold calling' or searching for jobs online because they could talk face-to-face with employers and people who are working.

"All the jobs but one I've had have come from interactions with employers directly in person." Male job seeker, 21 years old

"Looking for jobs online has not been as useful as opposed to physically handing in resumes to viable options." Female job seeker, 19 years old

Others were disheartened by the process of searching and applying for jobs because they did not hear back from employers about whether or not they were successful in their application.

"I have applied for jobs, online, handed in resumes and I hear nothing back." Female job seeker, 20 years old

"I have not found any strategies to be of help to me. I have done cold canvassing, online emailing updated and changed resume repeatedly attended appointments, workshops and even attended skills workshops and completed two Cert II qualifications. Nothing works." Female job seeker, 24 years old

While job search may be viewed as an essential component of finding work, as a standalone technique it has been found to be more successful with people in short-term unemployment than with those in long-term unemployment (Campbell, 2010). This is because people in short-term unemployment do not require more interventions and added support like people in long-term unemployment to assist with their complex issues (Dockery & Webster, 2002; Soukup, 2011).

Training

Training is an important role for young people in long-term unemployment to acquire skills and gain accredited qualifications (Dolado, Felgueroso, & Jensen, 2003). Young job seekers mentioned that they needed training qualifications that would help them on a pathway to a job. However, some respondents mentioned that they were being offered places in courses that were not aligned with their interests or aptitudes. In many cases, young people stated they were being pressured by jobactive staff to go into courses because places were available rather than because the course would be a beneficial step in gaining employment. A common theme was that participation in these courses was not useful for young people gaining employment because they had not found employment returned to jobactive as job seekers.

"Being pressured into participating in courses has not been useful as these courses have not helped me secure employment after the course." Female job seeker, 20 years old

Employment experience and programs

Lack of work experience was a key theme in the survey's quantitative and qualitative responses from young people as a barrier to employment. While young people were looking for opportunities to gain

relevant experience, they noted that Work for the Dole was more about compliance so that they could get their benefits rather than gaining key skills for work. The general theme from young people was they were being put to the side during this time where they did not have to receive active support from employment services.

"Work for the Dole - being put in an activity that will not give me experience in the fields of work I am looking for and only being made to do it to receive my payment." Male job seeker, 24 years old

Staff members involved in delivering Work for the Dole and other employment programs stated that young people in long-term unemployment were more likely to be in the Work for the Dole initiative than other work preparation programs. However, the Work for the Dole model does not allow for the assistance and support required to address the needs of this cohort that stem beyond lack of work experience, that is, the cognitive-motivational, psycho-social and anti-social issues.

"It has not been useful to have to be sent out to work voluntarily by the government in order to be paid. This is not right or tailored to each individual circumstance." Female job seeker, 26 years old

"Work for the Dole in Non For Profit places. There is no potential for a job nor does it give a reasonable skill set." Female job seeker, 28 years old

Another common theme from young people about Work for the Dole was the effect of the scheme on their lives and the way they felt about themselves.

"No reliable transportation for everyone, hours given and so many days to go per week. Extra \$20 a fortnight doesn't cover transport costs." Female job seekers, 21 years old

"Work for dole program - being forced into a role lessens enthusiasm and is detrimental to enthusiasm, confidence, and self-esteem." Male job seeker, 27 years old.

"Work for the Dole - the terminology is disheartening and makes you not care anymore." Female job seeker, 21 years old

Research on work-for-benefit strategies in the United Kingdom has shown that these schemes do not improve the employment outcomes for unemployed people (Davidson, 2014). Furthermore, specific research on Work for the Dole has shown that participants did not have better employment outcomes than those who do not take part in the scheme (Borland & Tseng, 2003). The limited periods of employment and lack of specific focus on skills means that these programs do not facilitate skill development or employability.

Staff commented that other employment program models such as social enterprises have added support from the Youth Trainer and Youth Worker that can assist young people in long-term unemployment with their multifaceted barriers. The true model of social enterprises involves real-life work environments where young people can gain paid work experience to address their vocational barriers and have access to added Youth Work support to address their non-vocational barriers (Bartlett, Dalgleish, & Mafi, 2012; Spear & Bidet, 2005; Thompson & Doherty, 2006). The various types of vocational and non-vocational barriers raised by young people in the survey could be addressed in a social enterprise setting.

*"I remember doing work experience through **yourtown** but with lower wages (\$16) that worked and its real work job so I was learning and gaining experience in something I could do later." Male job seeker, 25 years old*

Active support

The complex nature of the barriers experienced by young people in long-term unemployment means that this cohort requires specific responses to their needs. Young people spoke about getting more specific help with their vocational issues rather than the generalised approach they were encountering in employment

services. At one end of the spectrum, young people in long-term unemployment commented that they were put through general workshops and told to search for jobs and fix their resumes but they wanted to be shown how to develop a resume and answer job selection criteria. The foundation for these comments was that the service the young people receive is underpinned by theory but they need the added step of being shown how to apply the theory. The feedback in staff focus groups provides support for young people who want more assistance with their resumes and job applications.

"I'm more a hands on person so if someone explains the instructions and doesn't show me I will not understand." Male job seeker, 20 years old

"Telling me how to do something but not showing me how to do it is not helpful." Male job seeker, 21 years old

"I get stuck when I am they are giving me information and expecting me to learn from it without assistance." Male job seeker, 23 years old

At the other end of the spectrum, young people commented that they were already actively looking for work and knew how to develop a resume so they wanted more assistance to help them stand out from other job seekers when applying for jobs.

"Services which offer to help with resume writing, life skills etc are aimed at people much less experienced/qualified than me. I can dress myself and write a killer cover letter, but that doesn't magically make there be more jobs available. There needs to be higher level services targeted to unemployed professionals and graduates. There are many of us." Female job seeker, 28 years old

The other key theme from young people was that the various aspects of jobactive were more about compliance than about active assistance from staff to help young people find jobs. This applied to the workshops and job search elements of jobactive, as well as the overall perceived lack of support from staff. In addition, young people were looking for more contact from their jobactive provider regarding job opportunities that were arising.

"Classes are not helpful at all and are continually dull and feel like a punishment. Treat clients as clients, not another jobseeker who has to be pushed on to the next level because of a computer system." Female job seeker, 25 years old

"Applying for jobs online never worked for me, rarely ever got a call from any jobs I applied for online." Male job seeker, 22 years old

"I have honestly received no assistance from any of the 5+ agencies I have been traded through over 2+ years in the system despite being completely capable and highly employable person apart from lack of experience, but I get shown job ads sometimes so there's that." Female job seeker, 24 years old

The perception of young people that jobactive has a heavy compliance focus was also linked to receiving pressure rather than encouragement from staff to find jobs. This had negative effects on some young people in long-term unemployment regarding their anxiety.

"Being pushed and forced makes my anxiety a lot lot lot worse. I become physically sick. Also constantly they're changing my job provider person it's not helpful it seems like every week there changing." Female job seeker, 23 years old

"jobactive providers do nothing except stress me out with constant arbitrary requirements which keep me away from my job search. Work for the dole makes me very stressed and tired which stops me sending out as many job applications and disrupts my independent attempts to learn new skills which might make me more employable." Female job seeker, 28 years old

Young people who held positive views about jobactive discussed working collaboratively with staff to find employment.

"Been helped out a lot by getting stuff done at appointments, applying for jobs with my consultant, going through different scenarios if I happened to get an interview." Female job seeker, 21 years old

"Explaining all my options to me and listening to what I'm looking for, helps to find the right fit for my life specifically." Female job seeker, 18 years old

Personalised support

Young people also spoke about their specific issues that required more long-term assistance from staff. These issues included homelessness, drug misuse, social anxiety, driver licences, low self-esteem, and anger management. The theme of working with staff continued in relation to receiving assistance from a Youth Worker role that would be able to provide individualised support.

"They should comprehensively interview and get to know you on a real level and investigation into understanding what the causes are and to provide the pathway to resolve the issues stopping persons from working or looking for work." Male job seeker, 21 years old

"Youth worker support. They help identify goals and set plans to achieve them. It also tailors the job hunting experience to suit individual needs." Male job seeker, 22 years old

Staff members agreed that these types of multifaceted barriers require personalised and intensive assistance from suitably qualified workers. They also mentioned that there is no scope for this type of intensive assistance in the jobactive and Work for the Dole service delivery models due to time constraints and cost. Ideally, this support would comprise Youth Work support in the form of case management, group workshops, and post-placement support. This post-placement support would take the form of regular face-to-face contact to ensure that the young person is progressing well in employment and determine other forms of support that may still be needed. The flow-on effects for this would be higher employability and sustainable employment outcomes.

Local inductions to employers, communities, and local labour market needs

The discourse on youth unemployment has increased in focus on meeting employer needs. It is recognised that community and local labour market factors need to also be taken into account when developing job and employability skills of young people (Campbell, 2010). However, the discussions on these needs have not been filtered to young people in terms that they understand. Young people commented that they wanted to hear about what employers were looking for in their recruitment process.

"Explain what employers are looking for." Male job seeker, 21 years old

"I would like the ability to meet with Managers/Store Owners to see what makes them a successful person." Male job seeker, 20 years old

The opportunities to employers to communicate with young job seekers are sparse, where job applicants who are unsuccessful in the recruitment process are rarely contacted by employers. Staff also commented that finding opportunities for young people in long-term unemployment to hear from employer would assist them with their focus and future outlook. Another key theme from staff was that people assisting young people in long-term unemployment need to have knowledge of the local community and labour market needs. This knowledge should be part of the tailored assistance for young people to ensure that any job pathways are relevant and sustainable. Another suggestion from the staff focus groups and interviews was that informal group conversations with employers would be a useful way of engaging young people as well as imparting knowledge about the needs of employers operating within the local labour market. In addition, staff suggested bringing in previous program clients who are now working for

the informal group conversations. Young people may relate to these speakers and will be able to learn from their knowledge and experiences in an informal setting.

Active policies

While a large focus of this paper is from a demand perspective, it is also important for active policies to address the supply side of long-term youth unemployment (Carney, 2006; Marston & McDonald, 2008). The current employment policy landscape is starting to recognise that strategies need to look beyond the broader issue of youth unemployment and focus specifically on addressing long-term youth unemployment through schemes such as the Empowering YOUTH Initiatives. However, the policy approach does not take into account the intensive and individualised support that is required to adequately assist young people in long-term unemployment on a wide scale if these strategies are to reach the more than 50,000 young people across Australia in long-term unemployment.

Indigenous-specific strategies

The focus groups with Indigenous staff yielded similar themes to the strategies that have been detailed so far, specifically, in relation to the themes revolving around individualised interventions, training, employment programs, and employer, community, and labour market needs. However, the specific needs of Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment means there are specific strategies that can be looked at to assist this group.

Individualised interventions were a key theme of the focus groups with Indigenous staff. Delving further into the main points, post-placement support was seen essential in ensuring that young people would have the best chance of achieving sustainable employment outcomes. This post-placement support would need to occur for at least 26 weeks. In addition, the support would be face-to-face and occur as workplace visits. This would then allow support to be provided not only for the young person but also the employer who could benefit from learning how to best understand and support their employee. Ideally, post-placement support would be conducted by an Indigenous Mentor who not only can relate to the young person on a cultural level but also have the right balance of addressing the non-vocational needs of a young person as well as having an employment-focus to understand the vocational needs of the young person, the local labour market and the needs of the employer. In addition, the caseload would have to be smaller to be able to deliver intensive support. This is consistent with research conducted by Hawke (2015) on a **yourtown** Indigenous Mentoring Pilot. A key component of providing support to Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment is that suitable people are employed and retained as staff members to engage young people.

Due to the higher rates of offending among Indigenous young people and its potential link to long-term unemployment, stronger working links could be developed with courts (e.g. Murri Court, Koori Court) specifically for sentencing Indigenous offenders who have plead guilty to an offence which is able to be heard by a Magistrate. These settings can be less intimidating than the Magistrates Court with the assistance of Indigenous Elders who will facilitate the healing and learning process.

Because of the complex nature of barriers experienced by Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment, a key theme in the focus groups was that early interventions in schools would be appropriate if a holistic approach is used. Another key theme was that engagement among the community with support services could be higher. This could be linked to a lack of knowledge of the available services or how to access the services.

Concluding remarks

In this Advocacy Paper, the key elements to addressing the issue of long-term youth unemployment have been identified through research. The process was grounded in a critical review of relevant literature from Australia and overseas with a specific focus on young people in long-term unemployment and formed

yourtown's Discussion Paper on this topic. The findings of that paper informed this research process with young people in long-term unemployment and service delivery and management staff with expertise in working with this cohort. The model of response and key elements are presented in Figure II.

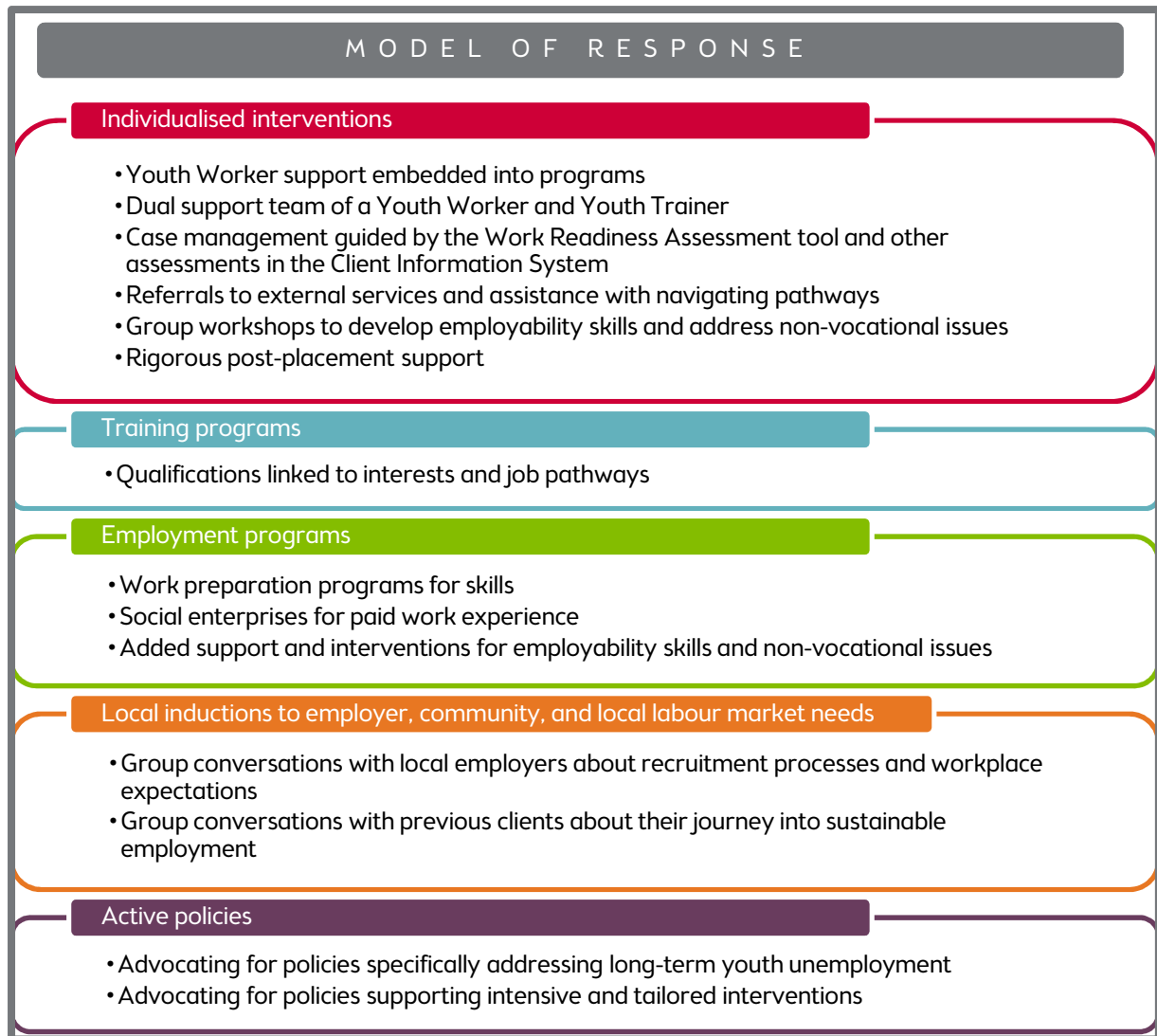


Figure II. Model of response and key elements for addressing long-term youth unemployment.

The main theme is that tailored interventions are required for young people in long-term unemployment. Driven by this overarching theme, there are also a number of key specific elements to assisting young people in long-term unemployment. These key elements are as follows:

- **Individualised Interventions** that support the needs and address the specific barriers of individuals.
Youth Worker support would be embedded into program and occur on a consistent basis. The support would consist of ongoing case management using the Client Information System to identify goals and develop strategies to address issues. This would be guided by the results of the Work Readiness Assessment tool and would also involve referrals to relevant external services. Group workshops would also be used to go through employability skills and non-vocational issues based on issues identified in intake and assessment. Face-to-face post-placement support would be conducted for six months to assist the achievement of sustainable outcomes.
- **Training Programs** for acquiring skills and gaining accredited qualifications.
Referrals and participation in these courses should be based on interests and aptitudes of young people. In addition, potential pathways to jobs should be evident from these courses.

- **Employment Programs** for gaining vocational skills and work experience through experiential learning while receiving added support for non-vocational issues.

Referrals to these work preparation and social enterprise programs would be based on the needs and interests of the young person. While these programs can provide work experience and skills for young people, the key component is the added support for non-vocational issues associated with long-term unemployment.

- **Local Inductions to Employer, Community and Local Labour Market Needs** to determine the specific job and employability skills required by employers and for delivering approaches that recognise community and local labour market factors.

While it is commonly understood within the employment sector that the needs of employers should be taken into account when preparing young people for work, this information is not necessarily being passed onto young people. An engaging way for young people in long-term unemployment to learn about the needs of employers, communities and local labour markets is through informal group conversations with employers to discuss the key components of their recruitment process and criteria. In addition, these conversations could also be the format for young people to hear from former clients who are now employed.

- **Active Policies** that specifically address the needs of young people in long-term unemployment.

Employment policies have a limited focus on long-term youth unemployment. Not only should there be policies to address long-term unemployment specifically of young people, but also for the additional resources required for the tailored and intensive support required to address the complex and ongoing issues associated with long-term youth unemployment.

Recommendations

The barriers associated with long-term youth unemployment are multifaceted and ongoing and are experienced by individuals to varying extents. Therefore, tailored and individualised interventions and support are required across all areas of service delivery such as training, job interests, and when addressing vocational and non-vocational issues. To support the tailored approach to young people in long-term unemployment, Youth Work support should be embedded into programs with high prevalence of long-term youth unemployment. An important part of this support is ongoing collaborations between Youth Workers and Youth Trainers to provide the best interventions for young people. This Youth Work support should be intensive so that case management and group workshops can occur on a consistent basis where these types of sessions are specifically scheduled into the program rather than on an ad hoc basis. This may also include looking at caseload numbers to ensure that intensive support can be provided during programs as well as post placement.

In relation to programs for Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment, staff members will need to be able to provide that intensive support for non-vocational issues while having a good understanding of vocational issues and of the local labour market situation. This will enable staff to provide support for the young person in the workplace as well as the employer on how to understand and support the young person.

The key strategies revolve around intensive and tailored support and these elements form a model of response for specifically assisting young people in long-term unemployment. The research provides support for the various aspects of the model at a general level. The voices of young people have been used to detail specific elements and then put together an overall model of intervention. This model would need to be trialled and would require action research and evaluation to determine its effectiveness.

Recommendation: That the proposed intensive and tailored model of response to be implemented in programs assisting young people in long-term unemployment.

The current employment policy landscape has a strong focus on the broader topic of youth unemployment but limited focus on long-term youth unemployment. The focus on long-term youth unemployment is on innovation, however, effective strategies emphasise intensive support which may not be seen as an

innovative approach. The implications revolve around advocating for change using the voice of young people.

Recommendation: That policies are developed to allow for the proposed model of responses and its key elements of intensive and tailored interventions in programs assisting young people in long-term unemployment.

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Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment



Foreword by Tracy Adams, **yourtown** CEO

Increasing numbers of young people are experiencing long-term unemployment. Long-term youth unemployment is defined as young people aged between 15 and 24 years who have been unsuccessful in securing work for any period longer than two weeks, for at least one year. In 2006-07 over 44,000 young people were in long-term unemployment. This rose to over 51,000 young people in 2016-17.

yourtown works with more than 7% of these young people through our employment support programs. Subsequently, we have an extensive knowledge of the barriers young people face when trying to access sustainable work as well of the enduring detrimental impact that long-term unemployment can have on young lives.

What we know

Long-term unemployed young people deal with a range of highly complex and multifaceted issues, unlike those who are in short-term unemployment, which can increase their risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market. These barriers and their consequences are compounded as time spent in unemployment is prolonged, further impeding their opportunities in acquiring long-term sustainable work. However, current difficulties in accessing suitable longitudinal data for young people means there is a lack of specific research in how to best support these young people and tackle this ongoing issue. Furthermore, rigorous evaluations of current responses to alleviate long-term youth unemployment are scant.

To help address this gap in knowledge, **yourtown** undertook a survey of nearly 300 young people in long-term unemployment across Australia. Through this research, young people told us that the following issues prevented them from finding and sustaining employment:

- **Educational** - such as low levels of formal schooling, literacy and numeracy
- **Vocational** - such as limited work history and low work skills
- **Practical** - such as not having a driver's licence and limited access to support through social/familial networks or services
- **Contextual** - such as intergenerational unemployment and living in low socio-economic areas
- **Psycho-social** - such as mental health concerns, substance use and homelessness
- **Cognitive-motivational** - such as low self-esteem and poor decision-making skills
- **Anti-social** - such as offending history and poor anger management

A diverse group with diverse needs

Our survey also showed that young people in long-term unemployment are not a homogenous group and different youth cohorts have varying experiences of long-term unemployment – critical insight when developing effective interventions. For example, young men, who have a higher rate of long-term youth unemployment than their female counterparts, told us that not having a driver's licence, limited transport, low literacy and numeracy, anger management issues, unstable accommodation, and offending history were more important barriers to employment. Young women, on the other hand, told us that they more often experience a lack of available jobs, low self-esteem and mental health issues as employment barriers.

Indigenous young people ranked a lack of qualifications as the main barrier to employment, whilst young people with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds rated difficulties in accessing social and institutional support due to their residency or citizenship status as a principal work barrier. The top issue for young people in regional and remote areas was the lack of jobs, whereas young people in metropolitan cities were more likely to view limited work experience, low work skills and having no car as barriers to employment.

A new model of support

In this position statement, we have used our research with young people alongside other existing research into tackling youth unemployment to develop a model for support services to effectively assist long-term unemployed young people to engage in sustainable employment. It is a model designed to meet a range of different needs throughout the life of a long-term unemployed young person's journey into work. Given the extensive evidence that shows that it can work, it is also a model to which **yourtown** is fully committed; we are funding pilots of the model in Elizabeth in South Australia and Caboolture in Queensland – two areas of high disadvantage and high rates of long-term youth unemployment. **yourtown** is also funding the Centre for Social Impact (University of New South Wales) to provide an independent evaluation of these pilots to ensure that the effectiveness and impact of these pilots on young people and the community is thoroughly tested and measured.

We are sharing this model as it is our hope that other services and communities will use it or elements of it to better support long-term unemployed young people. Indeed, using this insight, we hope to work with government, our peers, a broad range of support services and the families and young people affected by long-term unemployment to help ensure young people have the start in life that they deserve.



yourtown's Position on Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment

Young people in long-term unemployment are not a homogenous group and have varying experiences. They require tailored, individualised and intensive assistance. Driven by this overarching theme, a number of key elements have been identified in research literature to assist young people in long-term unemployment. These elements have then been further expanded through yourtown's own research with young people in long-term unemployment and stakeholders with expertise in working with this cohort to develop a model of response to best support long-term unemployed young people transition into work.

The key elements in our recommended model of response are as follows:

Individualised Interventions that respond to the needs and address the specific barriers of individuals. Each young person would be supported by a youth worker who focuses on the non-vocational barriers and a youth specialist trainer/employment consultant who would implement an individualised plan to address vocational needs and facilitate job placements. These positions would act as a team that works with the young person to ensure a coordinated response.

The youth worker would have a particular responsibility to ensure that the young person benefited from a 'joined-up' case management response involving all providers of support which would also be informed and guided by evidence-based work readiness assessment tools. The youth worker would also be responsible for the development and implementation of group workshops, and post-placement support to both the young person and the employer.

Training Programs for acquiring skills and gaining accredited qualifications. Referrals and participation in these courses should be based on the interests and aptitudes of each young person. In addition, potential pathways to jobs should be evident from these courses prior to enrolment. Training programs to address the literacy and numeracy needs of young long-term unemployed people should also be provided where required.

Employment Programs for gaining vocational skills and work experience through experiential learning while receiving added support for non-vocational issues. Referrals to these work preparation and social enterprise programs would be based on the needs and interests of the young person. While these programs can provide work experience and skills for young people, the key component is the added support to resolve or to lessen the impact of non-vocational issues associated with being in long-term unemployment.

These programs should be centred on providing participants 'real mainstream work' opportunities. To be viable these programs need to secure a consistent flow of work opportunities. The government and private enterprise sectors have a role in supporting these employment programs through social procurement policies and purchasing behaviours whereby a proportion of their procurement budgets would be sourced from social enterprises and/or employment programs supporting long-term unemployed youth participants.

Local Inductions in Employer, Community and Local Labour Market Needs to determine the specific job and employability skills required by employers and for delivering approaches that recognise community and local labour market factors. While it is commonly understood within the employment sector that the needs of employers must be taken into account when preparing young people for work, this information is not necessarily being passed onto young people. An engaging way for young people in long-term unemployment to learn about the needs of employers, communities and local labour markets is through informal group conversations with employers to discuss the key components of their recruitment process and criteria. In addition, these conversations could also provide opportunities for young people to hear from former program clients who have transitioned into mainstream employment.

Active Policies that specifically address the needs of young people in long-term unemployment and that increase the availability of jobs for youth. Current employment policies only place a limited focus on long-term youth unemployment. These policies need to be recalibrated to account for the additional investment needed to provide the tailored and individualised intensive support and the other elements of the recommended model to all young people experiencing long-term youth unemployment to enable their transition into sustainable employment.

More detail about this service model and its evidence-base is outlined in our full Advocacy Paper on the issue available on our website.



Model of response

Individualised interventions



Youth Worker support embedded into programs



Dual support team of a Youth Worker and Youth Trainer/Employment Consultant



Case management guided by evidence-based Work Readiness Assessment tools



Case loads of no more than 25 young people at any one time to ensure the provision of intensive customised support



Referrals and assistance with navigating pathways to specialised support



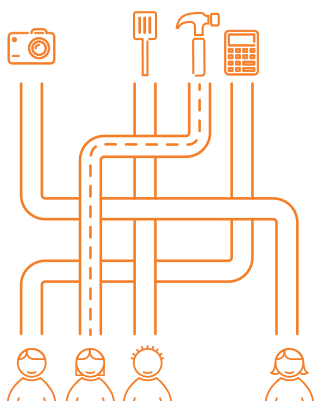
Group workshops to develop employability skills and address non-vocational barriers



Rigorous post-placement support to both the young person and the employer

Training programs

Qualifications linked to interests and job pathways



Employment programs



Work preparation programs for skills



Social enterprises for paid work experience



Added support and interventions for employability skills and non-vocational issues

Local inductions to employer, community and local labour market needs



Group conversations with local employers about recruitment processes and workplace expectations



Group conversations with previous clients about their journey into sustainable employment

Active policies



Advocating for policies specifically addressing long-term youth unemployment



Advocating for policies supporting intensive and tailored individualised interventions



Evaluation of this model of response to inform further service innovation

About us

yourtown is a charity with services young people can access to find jobs, learn skills, become great parents and live safe happy lives. For over 56 years, we've been tackling the issues impacting young people in Australia – like youth unemployment and mental health, and taking on issues like domestic and family violence.

We aim to be part of the solution by delivering programs that tackle grass root issues affecting our community. These include:

- **Counselling and Support** via Kids Helpline's 24/7 service for Australia's children and young people, Parentline for parents and carers, face-to-face support and Kids Helpline @ School.
- **Family and Community services** that help young families learn positive parenting and strengthen connections with the community.
- **Education and Engagement services** that support young people to remain in school and offer other positive pathways.
- **Job Training and Employment services** that give young people extra life choices and gets them jobs.
- Services specifically for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples** that create job options and education opportunities.
- **Accommodation services** that support families facing homelessness and/or domestic and family violence.
- **Advocacy** that is informed by the issues impacting children, young people and families accessing our services and which seeks to initiate systemic social change to assist these children and people to achieve brighter futures.

The services of **yourtown** are 75% funded through the organisation's own independent fundraising activities. This provides **yourtown** with independence to both directly shape our services to meet the most critical needs of children, young people and their families and to speak-out on issues of primary concern to them.



OUR VISION

young lives transformed,
communities strengthened.

OUR MISSION

To enable young people, especially those
who are marginalised and without voice,
to improve their quality of life.

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yourtown
let's create brighter futures

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The path to sustainable employment for young people at risk of lifetime income support

Every young person has the right to a brighter future. **yourtown** aims to be part of the solution, getting results.

yourtown works with young people to find jobs, learn skills, become great parents and live safe happy lives. We tackle issues like youth unemployment and mental health, and take on issues like domestic and family violence.

Last year, yourtown helped over 19,000 young people gain vital skills to get a job.

The issue

The rate of long-term unemployed (LTU) young people has doubled over the last decade.

yourtown advocates for employment services spending to be directed to those least able to find their own employment, who are young, unemployed and at high risk of permanent detachment from the labour market and lifetime income support.

The solution

your job your way targets young people aged 15-21 years who have been unemployed for over 52 weeks and are at high risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market.



your job your way is an initiative of
yourtown in conjunction with:



MAX Employment



an Australian
Government Initiative



The program is designed to complement **jobactive** services by:

- ▶ delivering intensive services to a small 'pre-employment' caseload of approximately 25 young people
- ▶ providing a dual support team of a qualified case manager (Pathways Coach) and Employment Mentor working with the young person using:
 - delivering a strengths-based, trauma informed best practice model of employment services
 - targeted employer engagement; and
 - intensive 'in-work' mentoring to 26 weeks, including employer liaison.

The model is informed by **yourtown's** internal and external research and over 15 years of experience in delivering federally-funded youth specialist employment services and other youth services.

The program is underpinned by Program Theory and will be formally evaluated in conjunction with the Centre for Social Impact to include a cost benefit analysis. We anticipate it will result in significant savings for the Commonwealth through increased outcomes for this cohort and negating the risk of them remaining on income support for life.

The benefits

Young people aged 15-21 who are long-term unemployed are in this high risk group and are capable of being employed with effective, intensive support and assistance. Therefore, saving the Commonwealth significant money, breaking cycles of unemployment and increasing young people's wellbeing and positive contribution to the community.

yourtown anticipates that **your job your way** will achieve much higher 26 week employment outcome rates for long-term unemployed young people, when compared to standard **jobactive** outcomes (similar cohort in 23 **yourtown jobactive** sites/contracted to MAX Employment). Everyone benefits – young people at risk of lifetime welfare benefits gain work, local communities are strengthened, employers can access job ready young people, and the Commonwealth saves significant money in reduced welfare payments.

How will 'your job your way' complement 'jobactive'?

your job your way is specifically designed for long-term unemployed young people aged 15-21 receiving a Youth Allowance benefit payment. **yourtown** is funding two demonstration pilots over a 24 month period from 1 July 2018 in Elizabeth (SA) and Caboolture (QLD) within the framework of **jobactive** and **yourtown's** contract with MAX Employment. **yourtown** funds the additional staff and resources not available in **jobactive** to deliver an intensive, youth-focused approach. Young people eligible for the program will be registered with **jobactive**, classified as long-term unemployed and benefit from existing resources available in **jobactive**, such as wage subsidies, PaTH Internships and Employment Fund (to support interventions and training).

The cohort referred to **your job your way** will reflect the profile of long-term unemployed young people represented in the current youth long-term unemployed caseload in the above **yourtown jobactive** sites. With just under half of the youth caseload in these areas classified as long-term unemployed, the need for an intensive approach is evident.

The model is also designed to meet the needs of local employers, using an account management approach to engage and understand individual employer needs and requirements as well as training and supporting young people to build capacity to match those needs. Employment Mentors support both the employer and young person to sustain employment to 26 weeks and beyond.



‘your job your way’ key program features

- Intensive pre and post-employment support and coaching via a dual support team: the Pathways Coach (case manager) is qualified to deliver incidental counselling and mental health support. The Employment Mentor combines the roles of employability and job search trainer, employer account manager and in-work/post-employment mentor.
- Specific motivation and engagement strategies reduce reliance on compliance frameworks to support and maintain program engagement.
- A collaborative approach in every aspect – for the young person and the employer.
- Time and staff resources foster accelerated trust and rapport necessary to achieve lasting change for young people.
- Strategies include a milestone-based approach to working with young people in employment services to include activities and interventions to create and build capacity for resilience and personal agency.
- Intensive employer and community engagement strategies to improve access to available jobs and increase community commitment to employing young people.
- Intensive in-work mentoring to reduce drop-out rates in key post-employment milestones up to 26 weeks.
- Formal evaluation including a cost benefit analysis in partnership with the Centre for Social Impact.



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