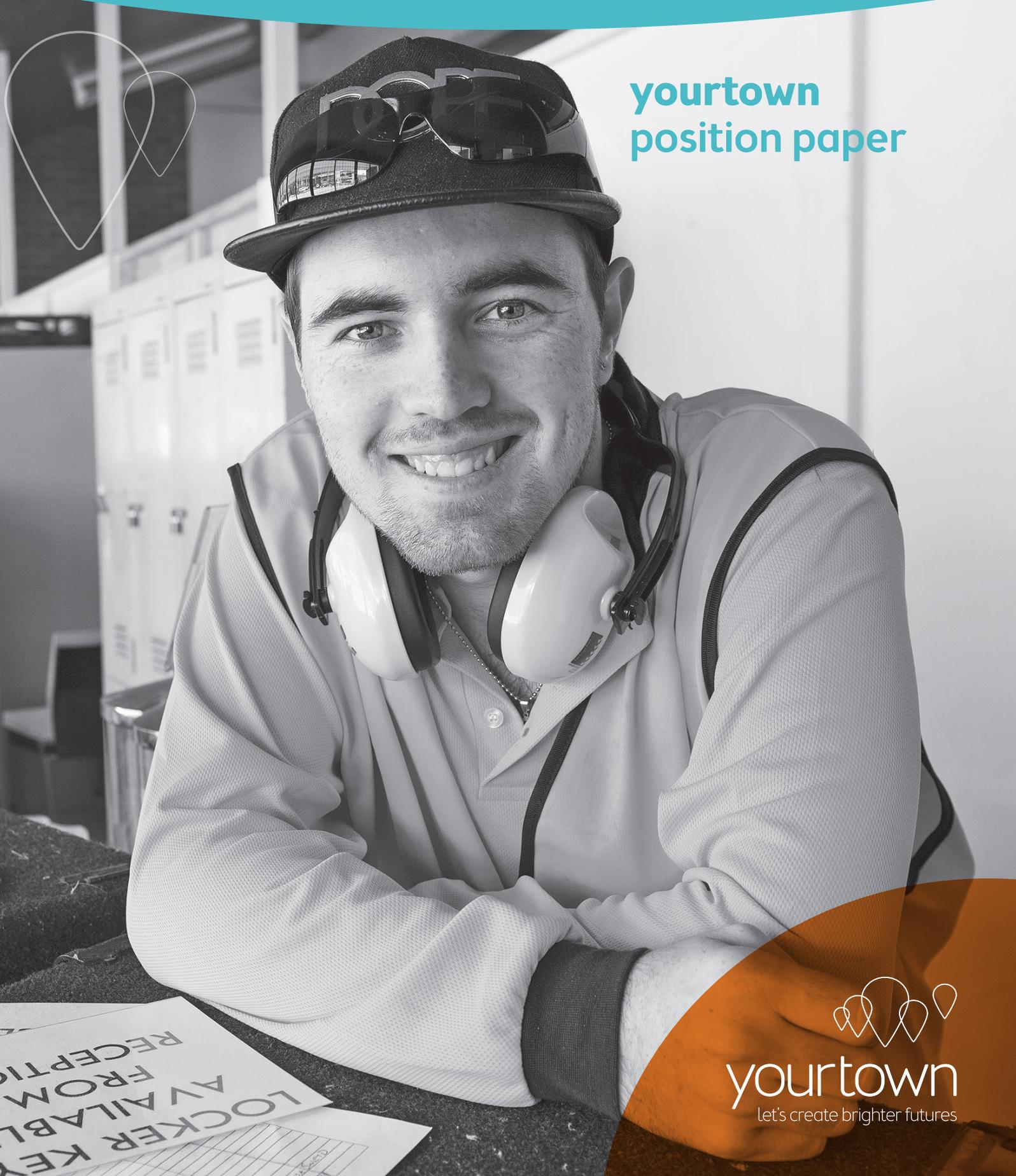


# Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment

yourtown  
position paper



yourtown  
let's create brighter futures

## ABOUT US

**yourtown** is a charity providing services that 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 gets 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, and face-to-face support for our services' clients
- **Family Refuges** that give families safer, temporary homes and/or domestic violence support
- **Parenting and Family Services** that teach young families positive parenting and connect families with community and;
- **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 its 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.

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## 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** Strategy and Research

# 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



Referrals and assistance with navigating pathways to specialised support



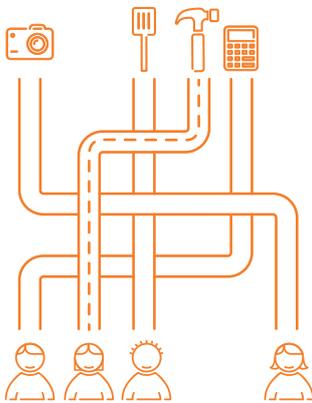
Group workshops to develop employability skills and address non-vocational barriers



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 including literacy and numeracy development

## 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

# 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.

The key elements in the 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 with '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 spend 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. 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.



# SUPPORTING INFORMATION



More than 50,000 young people across Australia aged between 15 and 24 years were in long-term unemployment in the financial year of 2015-16, that is, they had been looking for work for at least one year.

The prevalence 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 in our employment support programs and subsequently has an extensive knowledge of the issues they face.

**The rates and incidences of long-term youth unemployment continue to remain at high levels, and the negative consequences are experienced by individuals, as well as their families and communities.** 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. Due to the way in which data is collected nationally, while data on long-term youth unemployment is accessible for males and females, it is not readily available for Indigenous young people, young people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, or for remote regions.

**The issues faced by young people in long-term unemployment are multifaceted and can potentially add to the risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market.** The consequences of these barriers become exacerbated as the time spent in unemployment is prolonged. The longer the 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.

The research exploring the characteristics that are specific to young people in long-term unemployment goes beyond looking at demographic details. The characteristics range from educational and vocational issues to more severe and ongoing issues. Specifically, these characteristics can be grouped around vocational, educational, contextual, practical, cognitive-motivational, psycho-social, and antisocial behavioural issues.

Through a **yourtown** survey of 285 young people in long-term unemployment across Australia, their barriers to employment have been identified as:

- **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 driver's licence and limited access to social and institutional support
- **Contextual issues** such as intergenerational unemployment, living in low socio-economic areas, and a lack of available jobs
- **Psycho-social issues** such as mental health concerns, substance misuse and homelessness
- **Cognitive-motivational issues** such as low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness and poor decision-making skills; and
- **Anti-social issues** such as offending history and poor anger management.

Limited work history was rated as the most common barrier to employment with 73.1% of survey respondents saying it was an issue. 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%), not enough available jobs (61.4%) and psycho-social issues such as low self-esteem (46.9%).





It should be noted though that people in long-term unemployment are not a homogenous group.

Further analyses of the survey data indicate that different youth cohorts have varying experiences of long-term unemployment. For example:

- **Young people in long-term unemployment experience stronger and more complex barriers to employment than young people in short-term unemployment.**

The differences in experiences of barriers by young people in long-term unemployment compared to young people in short-term unemployment were more prevalent regarding vocational issues such as limited work experience and low work skills, educational issues such as low literacy and numeracy skills, practical issues such as a lack of a driver's licence and limited access to institutional support, cognitive-motivational issues such as poor decision-making and psycho-social issues such as mental health.

- **Males compared to females have a higher rate of long-term youth unemployment and experience the associated issues differently.** Young males are more likely than females to rate having no driver's licence, limited transport, low literacy and numeracy, anger management issues, unstable accommodation and offending history as barriers to employment. Young females on the other hand were more likely than males to experience a lack of available jobs, low self-esteem and mental health issues as barriers to employment.

- **Indigenous young people rate a lack of qualifications as their most prominent barrier to employment.**

Indigenous young people in long-term unemployment show a similar trend to all survey respondents regarding vocational, educational and practical issues being seen as more prevalent barriers to employment than other types of issues. However, they are more likely to experience cognitive-motivational, psycho-social and anti-social issues as barriers to employment.

- **The key issues that CALD young people in long-term unemployment, in comparison to other cohorts, rated more highly as barriers were difficulties in accessing social and institutional support and low motivation due to ongoing negative experiences in seeking assistance to find work. Their limited access to support was linked to their residency or citizenship status.**

- **The top issue for young people in regional and remote areas was the lack of jobs, whereas young people in metropolitan cities rated this issue as only the sixth most prevalent barrier to employment.** This may be indicative of the slower labour markets in regional and remote areas. Low self-esteem, lack of personal goals and substance misuse were also experienced more as barriers in these areas compared to metropolitan areas. Young people in metropolitan areas were more likely to view limited work experience, low work skills and no vehicle as barriers to employment.