

Workforce Coordination Project



Youth Job Strategy Discussion Paper - Submissions Support.

Although the Workforce Coordination Project does not directly work with young people, this cohort does form part of our strategic thinking. From a workforce lens of recruiting and retaining youth in the Community Services industry, this paper is a collation of anecdotal evidence gathered over the past 12 months of the project to inform and support the Community Services sectors in their submissions to the Youth Job Strategy Discussion Paper. This paper will be provided to Community Services industry peak bodies and Jobs Tasmania.

Young people play a critical role in our industry, and their voices and workforce experiences need to be heard and actioned. The industry sectors have provided insight into their workforce needs, challenges and priority areas for collaboration and focus, which have included youth pipelines and pathways into employment opportunities. Key themes emerge throughout this document from data gathered from various sources including:

- Workforce Coalition Network Meetings
- Anecdotal evidence documented by the Workforce Ready Team (WRT) in their conversations across the Community Services Industry including sector partners, workplaces and other relevant stakeholders.

The themes highlight the importance of workplace supportive culture and onboarding practices, and opportunities to engage in practical pre-employment and training experiences. To create supportive and positive career exploring and work experiences, workplaces require sufficient resourcing and the capacity to provide time, support and mentoring to young people reviewing career pathways and entering the workforce. Housing and living expenses also continue to arise as core barriers and challenges for people entering and continuing to work in the Community Services Industry.

Workforce Coalition Network Meeting – November 2022

At this meeting, the following question was posed

“**Who do you want to attract to your sectors if we ran targeted campaigns?**”. The responses included:

- **26% - youth specific – school students, school leavers and unemployed youth**, another
- **14% - other cohorts - university students, people not participating in work and people from other service industries.** Young people also make up a portion of these additional cohorts.

Workforce Coalition Network Meeting – March 2023

At this meeting, participants were asked a set of questions about retention, including:

1. What are some possible retention strategies?

Feedback received in order of highest priority - better pay, conditions and benefits, **positive workplace culture**, communication and feedback, recognition and rewards, flexibility, leadership and **good onboarding practices**.

2. What are the biggest barriers to implementing retention strategies?

Feedback received in order of priority: **Resource constraints**, leadership, **poor culture**, **lack of training opportunities**, service delivery requirements.

3. What key retention priorities should be the focus at the next network meeting?

Feedback received in order of priority: **Sharing resources and knowledge**, workforce planning, remuneration and benefits, leadership, change management, recruitment, **employee development and support**, **workplace culture**.

Workforce Coalition Network Meeting – September 2023

During the most recent Coalition Network Meeting, participants worked in focus groups to identify ways to collaborate as an industry including opportunities for collaboration and the constraints on collaboration. Each group's three main opportunities and constraints were put onto a poster and shared. Participants then took dots and put them on any of the posters for the opportunities or constraints they highly agreed with.

Across the four industry sectors (aged care, disability services, education and care (childcare), and social services), several opportunities for collaboration were identified. Three areas of opportunity that resonate for this document (with higher proportions of dots), were:

Areas of opportunity:

Immersive recruitment processes – 11 dots

Participants in the room rated this concept strongly. This related to a focus on providing potential employees with pre-employment commencement with 'real-life' experiences and situations that they may encounter in the workplace. This creates more realistic role expectations and guidance about the role. This is especially valuable for young people who may not have a lot of work experience and can feel overwhelmed entering into demanding roles in the community services industry.

Shared pre-employment programs – 7 dots

In line with the above, a further 7 dots were given specifically to pre-employment programs supporting entry preparedness into the workforce. This could also benefit people transitioning from casual roles to permanent positions (for example, moving towards taking on a traineeship).

Resourcing – collective approaches – 15 dots (across different resourcing concepts)

Industry participants in the room saw value in collaborating towards better resourcing opportunities, including managing resources across organisations through a coordinated and driven approach.

Areas identified as continued constraints:

Training and qualifications – 36 dots

The greatest barriers identified by participants involved training and qualifications. This ranged from the capacity to release staff for both in-service training and to attend training outside of the service. Staffing shortages creates significant challenges for organisations who acknowledge the importance of training and professional development of their employees, however struggle with meeting regulatory requirements and operating needs for their clients and services. This also includes the ability to support trainees – availability of other staff to coach and mentor people in training, industry understanding of traineeship models, and collaboration models between training organisations and industry.

The other area identified was cross sector skills recognition, and more diverse skill set training pathways.

Anecdotal Evidence

Senior Officers collect anecdotal evidence data through conversations with sector services and other stakeholders as part of the project. The following data was collected between November 2022 and August 2023 and has an emphasis on youth and workforce themes that have impact or influence for young people.

Training and work placement/pre-employment opportunities:

- Issues with insurance for volunteering and placements for young people exploring entering the sector, which schools, VET etc. may not cover. Can be prohibitive for some who need to earn while they learn. It's a process that will reduce the capacity of agencies to provide career pathways for the whole sector workforce.
- A college teacher indicated that it was difficult to find work-based traineeships for college students, due to connection and engagement by industry employers. Optimally, employers would have a mentoring program to sit alongside, taking on young trainees to enhance the experience, and set the cohort up for success to stay in the sectors, and see the roles as valued. However due to workloads and necessity of organisations to have workers 'hit the ground running' it is difficult to resource mentors.
- The students coming through the door (Cert III VET courses) are often very young, and have lots of other challenges, such as low levels of language and literacy, anxiety, and other mental health issues.
- There is a challenge for young people who are required to have a full certificate III qualification before entering the workforce. This does not necessarily give them the opportunity to try first (eg work experience), or gain the practical skills needed. Traineeship options are not always available or the best fit for a young person.
- Young people want a chance to try (work experience), but workplaces are not resourced to support this.

Work culture shift to ways of working:

- A better understanding of the characteristics of young people needs to be addressed to support youth considering entering the sector workforce.
- An employer recently had to shift their thinking about younger generations entering the workforce, acknowledging their organisation and leaders had to change their mindset – "we can't just do as we have always done and be frustrated with their different ways of working."
- The optimal would be that employers have a mentoring program to sit alongside taking on young trainees to enhance the experience and set the cohort up for success to stay in the sectors, seeing the roles as valued.

Housing and cost of living challenges:

- Housing and cost of living is a significant issue. So while being curious about the industry, they need money now to live. (*This issue came up 7 times in the anecdotal evidence*).
- The hours being offered (casual or low part-time hours) do not cover the cost of living.
- The biggest impact on our staff retention over the past two years has been economic conditions in Tasmania, in particular the cost of housing, compared to mainland states. This issue accounts for over 50% of staff departing our organisation over this time.
- People looking to enter the industry, young and old, in many cases, do not have the capacity to support themselves to gain the qualification (when on benefits) – they often need a job to sustain themselves. (This was mentioned in line with training that isn't the earn and learn model – e.g., traineeships).

Accessibility - travel

- With no license, travel to multiple work sites is not achievable, and regional reliance on public transport makes the ability to work too difficult.

Workplace resourcing and support challenges

- The services are only offering casual hours due to the variation in work demand across the whole year in the region. The dilemma is that they can't keep staff when they can only offer casual hours, but also need to sustain their business.
- One workplace indicated a need for more staff but found the traineeship model stressful - to complete the paperwork and get the required government incentives. They also highlighted the ability to support trainees - "How many can the service take on, when no one has time or capacity to support them in the setting?"
- Young people want a chance to try (work experience), but workplaces are not resourced to support this. (**same anecdote noted above under training*)

Industry and Sector Anecdotal Evidence Summary Report - highlighting needs and opportunities.

50 significant conversations with industry leaders were documented by the WRT between January and April 2023. These were coded into main themes:

- Training,
- Shortage Impacts,
- Retention,
- Recruitment.

A summary is provided below - **key points that have relevance to the Youth Job Strategy discussion paper and align with themes throughout this document are highlighted in bold.**

Training	
Issues Identified	Emerging Solutions
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Questionable quality of RTO training.2. Drop-out rates among Allied Health students are high.3. Doubling up and inefficiencies in training provided by community services organisations.4. Further conversation is needed about what training is actually needed, compared to what new recruits are told is needed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. There needs to be a full assessment of where the inefficiencies exist, which includes the quality and content of training provided by RTOs.2. Mentoring of new staff by experienced staff is needed to set up a younger cohort of recruits for industry success.3. Traineeships are being called for by industry.4. Local, informal, organic, online and in-person groups are needed for current staff to explore and build their practice.5. There could be an opportunity to share resources across services and collectively offer training, whilst also saving money.

Shortage Impacts	
Issues Identified	Emerging Solutions
<p>1. Workforce shortage impacts are now being experienced in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No back-up staff when other staff are absent. • Agencies won't meet upcoming compliance standards due to lack of staff. • Staff are working multiple roles (including outside their scope) to cover workloads. • Staff can't attend meetings, including the Coalition Network Meeting. <p>2. Current workloads don't leave room for future Workforce Development focus, especially recruitment and retention.</p> <p>3. Staff should not be burdened by more government enquiries about this issue as research has already been done.</p> <p>4. Funding issues are directly impacting on workforce shortages.</p>	<p>1. Direct action on workforce issues is now needed instead of further reviews.</p> <p>2. Online, informal non-specific debriefing / networking sessions for place-based staff. Focus on contacts, support, ideas for working well, new information from own services. Principle is to provide means for debriefing and mutual support through the workforce crisis.</p> <p>3. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is problematic. Industry needs to take a systems approach and raise review of the testing – standard, cost and locations, to provide greater options for migrants to work in the industry.</p>
Retention	
Issues Identified	Emerging Solutions
<p>1. Getting staff in is not hard, but they leave for better pay and conditions elsewhere.</p> <p>2. Established staff feel tired and burnt out from extra work. Current economic conditions mean they feel they can't leave the industry.</p> <p>3. A related issue to retention is the housing crisis.</p>	<p>1. Move staff from casual to part time for the purpose of retention.</p> <p>2. Fee-free study for job seekers in regional areas is needed.</p> <p>3. Revise recruitment strategies to gain and keep 'right fit' people. Cover letters may not be the main indicator of suitability of applicants.</p> <p>4. Need to have career talks soon after appointment, to retain staff.</p>

Recruitment	
Issues Identified	Emerging Solutions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment in remote regions is challenging. 2. 'Experience required' in advertisements puts off potential candidates. 3. Housing, travel, cost of fuel, cost of living, shift work hours and family needs are all barriers to recruitment of staff and volunteers. 4. Poor quality of training from RTOs providing Cert III and IV. 5. Potential candidates demanding higher wages and better conditions. 6. Highly competitive unregistered providers. 7. Lack of suitable candidates for management positions. 8. Job ready candidates who are referred to care sector are not getting positions. Mismatch between what industry say is needed and reluctance to take candidates from employment services. 9. Migrant language requirements and time frames hindering entry into the industry. 10. Not an employer's market but a job seekers market. 11. Application process issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work far more closely with employment service providers and VET sector. 2. Promote working in sectors to potential cohorts through visits to Residential Care facilities, Mini Expos, Resident/Job Seeker programs. 3. Have now engaged recruitment companies to find candidates for leadership roles. 4. Rethink volunteer roles and options, e.g., prison pre-release and mental health integration programs to build lived experience workforce and help with integration and inclusion into the community for these volunteers. 5. Conduct taster sessions for the industry to provide information and opportunities for personal conversation. 6. Marketing mediums must be targeted and aligned to audience.