



Who gets what where

Review of government-funded youth employment programs across Australia

Miranda Cross

2020



The Brotherhood of St Laurence is a non-government, community-based organisation concerned with social justice. Based in Melbourne, but with programs and services throughout Australia, the Brotherhood is working for a better deal for disadvantaged people. It undertakes research, service development and delivery, and advocacy, with the objective of addressing unmet needs and translating learning into new policies, programs and practices for implementation by government and others. For more information visit <www.bsl.org.au>

The Youth Employment Study (YES) is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and aims to better understand the barriers and facilitators to purposeful work for young people and the role played by employment programs. The research is being led by researchers at the Disability and Health Unit within the School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne. YES brings together researchers and experts from Monash University, Deakin University and the University of New South Wales; and from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, National Disability Services, VicHealth and Disability Employment Australia. For more information, visit <www.yes-study.org.au>.

This report was written by Miranda Cross, a Research Officer in the Brotherhood's Research and Policy Centre, as a component of the Youth Employment Study (YES) led by the University of Melbourne.

Published 2020

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Suggested citation: Cross, M 2020, *Who gets what where: review of government funded youth employment programs across Australia*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy, Vic.

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The YES researchers wish to acknowledge and honour the memory of lead investigator Associate Professor Allison Milner, whose intellect, quirk, drive and vitality will never be forgotten.

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1 Introduction

For the last decade, the Australian youth unemployment rate has remained consistently high. At September 2019, the unemployment rate for young people aged 15–24 years in the labour force sits at 11.7 per cent, 6.4 percentage points higher than the national unemployment rate (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2019a). These rates vary across the states and territories, with Tasmania (14.6 per cent) and South Australia (13.9 per cent) experiencing the highest average of youth unemployment rates over the last 12 months (October 2018 to September 2019) (ABS, 2019b). In 2018, research (Dhillon & Cassidy, 2018) indicated that four per cent of the youth labour force had been unemployed for between three and 12 months, with a further two per cent unemployed for over a year.

Young people are also disproportionality affected by high rates of underemployment, with 18.2 per cent of employed young people wanting and available to work more hours (ABS, 2019a). On average, younger underemployed workers would prefer to work an additional 11 hours per week (Dhillon & Cassidy, 2018). For many young people in this group their employment is casualised, with limited stability in the number of hours worked each week and without paid leave entitlements (Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015).

Combining the rates of unemployed young people and underemployed young people, nearly a third (29.9 per cent) of young Australians are underutilised in the labour market. This underutilisation of young people in the labour force not only negatively impacts their mental health (Phillip & Mallan, 2015), but further denies their ability to fully participate in society.

Factors influencing young people's ability to participate in the labour market

Industry shift

In recent decades, Australia has experienced a fundamental shift in the types of industries that form the labour market. This shift is characterised by the stark decline of production, or 'blue collar' type roles, and the ever-increasing service-based economy (Bowman et al., 2015). Three decades ago, manufacturing was Australia's largest employing industry, accounting for 15 per cent of all employment (Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business [DESSFB], 2019a). Today, with increased automation and competition from overseas manufacturers, employment in manufacturing only represents eight per cent of Australia's workforce (Department of Jobs and Small Business [DJSB], 2019a).

Despite the waning of manufacturing and other production type industries over the last 30 years, employment opportunities have continued to grow in Australia. This increase has been dominated by service industries, notably health care and social assistance

(DESSFB, 2019a). Health care and social assistance is currently Australia's top employing industry, employing 13 per cent of all workers (DJSB, 2019a). With the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Australia's ageing and growing population, the industry is projected to grow another 7.7 per cent over the next five years (DJSB, 2019a).

While there has been a vast increase in service type employment, the increase of opportunities for young people has only been marginal, with the bulk of the employment being taken up by jobseekers 25 years or older (Bowman et al., 2015). For example, in health and social assistance young people only represent nine per cent of the workforce (DJSB, 2019a). So not only have young people experienced a decline in opportunities in production-type roles, they are further underrepresented in Australia's largest and fastest growing industry.

Increase in professional occupations

With the shift towards service-based industries, employment growth has been stronger in higher skilled occupations. Over the past three decades, occupations that are categorised as usually requiring a bachelor's degree or higher have accounted for 45.1 per cent of the total employment growth. In contrast, lower skilled occupations that generally require only Certificate I or secondary education has accounted for 9.4 per cent of employment growth (DESSFB, 2019a).

Professional occupations, such as nursing, accountancy and teaching, employ nearly one in four workers, forming Australia's largest occupation group (DJSB, 2019a). Over the next five years, this occupation group is expected to grow another 10.9 per cent (DJSB, 2019a). Currently, approximately three-quarters of existing professional occupations require a bachelor's degree or higher, while only eight per cent do not require a post-school qualification (DJSB, 2019a).

Despite this large growth in the professional area, young people only make up seven per cent of professional occupations in the Australian economy (DJSB, 2019a). This is despite recent surveys indicating that 46 per cent of Australians aged under 25 years hold a bachelor's or postgraduate degree (National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2019). The DJSB (2019a) sees the low proportion of young people in professional occupations as a reflection of the time it takes to gain the relevant qualifications.

Tasmania, the state or territory with the highest youth unemployment rate and a higher than average overall unemployment rate, also has the lowest rate of bachelor's degree or higher education attainment, as well as a higher than national average rate of no post-school qualifications (DJSB, 2019a).

Employer demand for employability skills and work experience

With the ongoing growth of service-based employment and the effects of technology improvements, workers are increasingly required by employers to hold transferable

employability skills (DJSB, 2019a). According to the DESSFB (2019a), such skills significantly increase an individual's prospects of gaining employment across all occupations and skill levels. Employability skills are generally harder to replace with a machine and cover a broad range of attributes, including communication, relationship building and collaboration (DESSFB, 2019a).

Further, three-quarters of employers require applicants to hold previous work experience (DJSB, 2019a). This means young people's ability to participate in the workforce is restricted. Employers are more reluctant to hire or retain younger workers due to their limited experience and lower skills during periods of cyclical weakness (Dhillon & Cassidy, 2018).

Rise in part-time employment

With the rise of service industries, Australia's workforce has also experienced an increase of part-time employment (working 35 hours or less a week). Whereas in 1989, 20.4 per cent of the workforce was employed part-time, in 2019 nearly a third (31.7 per cent) of workers are in part-time employment (DESSFB, 2019a). Though this shift can in part be explained by the increase of women's participation in the workforce and young people remaining in education longer, the underemployment ratio¹ has more than doubled in the last 30 years (DESSFB, 2019a).

In 2019, the two industries with the largest share of part-time employment are retail trade (51 per cent) and accommodation and food services (60 per cent) (DJSB, 2019a). These two industries also have the largest shares of employees aged 15 to 24 years old (retail, 32 per cent; accommodation and food services, 45 per cent) (DJSB, 2019a). These statistics indicate that the jobs available to young people commonly offer fewer hours, precarious employment and reduced economic security (The Smith Family, 2014; Skattebol, Hill, Griffiths & Wong, 2015).

Workforce ageing

Another key characteristic of today's labour market is the dramatic increase in the share of older workers. While Australia has had uninterrupted employment growth over the last three decades, the employment share of mature-aged persons (55 years and over) has increased from 9.1 per cent in May 1989 to 19.3 per cent in May 2019 (DESSFB, 2019a). While changing labour market dynamics have impacted population groups differently, young people have been particularly vulnerable. They have failed to benefit from employment growth as other groups have (Denny & Churchill, 2016).

Structural barriers and the employment services system

While Australia's changing economy has impacted young people's ability to participate in the labour market, existing structural barriers and the mainstream employment

¹ The underemployment ratio is defined as the number of underemployed expressed as a percentage of the total employed. By contrast the underemployment rate is measured as a percentage of the labour force (employed plus unemployed).

services system further marginalise some groups of young people. These groups facing increased barriers to employment include young people with a disability or experiences of mental ill health (Yu, 2010; Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, 2014), young people living on the urban fringes, or remote and regional areas (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2019a), young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, 2017), young refugees and recent migrants (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2019), young people without family support or experiencing homelessness, and early school leavers (Brown, James et al., 2017).

2 This research

This paper was produced to support the Youth Employment Study (YES). The YES research is funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and led by the School of Population and Global Health at the University of Melbourne.

Most past research on the employment of marginalised young people with disabilities or disadvantage looks at the short-term social and economic consequences of programs or policies and ignores longer-term health outcomes. This is problematic as employment is a critical determinant of future health and wellbeing. Working with partner organisations², the YES research will:

- 1 Identify the range of policies and programs available to help marginalised young people with disabilities or disadvantage obtain meaningful employment
- 2 Investigate predictors of meaningful, sustainable employment among marginalised young people with disabilities or disadvantage
- 3 Establish evidence for the specific aspects of employment for marginalised young people with disabilities or disadvantage that lead to health benefits. These health benefits include more positive health behaviours, lower health service use and an improved quality of life
- 4 Identify the cost-effectiveness of current disability employment support policies and service delivery initiatives by examining how well they achieve positive employment outcomes and promote the health of marginalised young people with disabilities or disadvantage.

This paper, which supports aims 1 and 4 of YES, sits alongside a spreadsheet resource that maps government-funded employment programs across Australia which are accessible to young people (as at July 2019). The purpose of both resources is to understand the scope of investments by Australian, state and territory governments..

Structure of this paper

Understanding that youth unemployment is a multidimensional problem, Brown and Mallett (2017) argue that a multilevel solution is needed. In this context, this paper aims (in parts 4 to 8) to identify the range of current Australian Government funded employment programs for which young people are eligible to participate. It describes the inputs and program design of each program, and the discourses that have informed their policy solutions. Where possible, the paper also describes program outcomes, evidence from evaluations and the identified barriers to implementation.

The paper also outlines (in part 9) the policy and program approaches implemented by state and territory governments to address youth unemployment, together with inputs, design and outcomes where available. However, because the public information for

² Brotherhood of St Laurence is a partner organisation

these is much more limited and the approaches are much more varied, the programs are presented in less detail.

Methodology

This paper is a snapshot reviewing the federal and state and territory government funded employment programs that young people aged 15 to 25 years can access at one point of time. The review was primarily undertaken through a desktop search of public government resources and publications available online, during the period April 2019 to July 2019. It was supplemented by informal consultation with stakeholders. In November 2019 some data about program outcomes and evaluations was updated.

'Employment programs' could include an element of accredited training, though most programs that focused on apprenticeships and traineeships as a pathway to employment were excluded. There are some exceptions in the state and territory section (part 9), since some governments' training and employment policies were so intertwined that they could not be distinguished as discrete approaches.

The programs were categorised in three types according to active employment strategies as identified in existing literature. As many of the programs shared attributes from diverse active employment strategies, the categorisation process was based on a program design's most prominent feature. An existing typology of youth employment programs was also used to analyse the programs' components and their underlying problem formation ideologies.

Though the review of online resources was wide-ranging, the reliance on public information poses a limitation for the research. Also, the categorisation of the programs into three broad active employment approaches is a simplifying and generalising process which may not capture all elements of the program designs.

3 Background to current employment programs

Active labour market approaches

In the mid-1980s, the Hawke government commissioned the Social Security Review, a three-year review of Australia's social security policy. The review's findings endorsed reform of Australia's existing 'passive', entitlement-based employment services and unemployment benefits, recommending the introduction of a more conditional and 'active' system, with a stronger focus on employment, training and labour market services (Bennett, Dawson, Lewis, O'Halloran & Smith, 2018).

According to by Carter and Whitworth (2017), active labour market approaches can broadly fall into two categories: 'work first' and 'human capital development' approaches.

Work first approach

- 'Work first' approaches aim to produce a quick return to the labour market, irrespective of the quality or suitability of the job. Interventions often include job-searches and basic skills training that focus on rapid transitions into jobs. Work experience in 'work first' approaches is generally characterised as being limited, mandatory and unpaid.

Human capital development approach

- 'Human capital development' approaches aim to improve jobseekers' employability and achieve sustained employment transitions. The approaches often target those who are 'harder to help' and attempt to reduce the distance to the labour market. The interventions include more intensive, personalised and longer-term training and supports which focus on upskilling for long-term labour market prospects.

While the initial implementation of the Hawke Government's 1988 active employment strategy largely adopted a 'human capital development' approach, over the decades Australia's employment policies have shifted to prioritise a 'work first', compliance-driven model of employment services (Bennett et al., 2018).

James, Brown and colleagues (2017) have suggested a third useful category for active labour market approaches: the 'human capabilities' approach.

Human capabilities approach

Based on the theoretical work of Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000), the 'human capabilities' approach aims to address unemployment through focusing on what people can be, rather than on their limitations or problems (Brown, James et al., 2017). In line with Nussbaum's framework, the 'human capabilities' approach is built on the

foundation that public policies must both promote the individual's internal capabilities, and provide supportive external and material conditions (Brown, James et al., 2017).

In relation to employment programs, this logic underlines the importance of context in building and consolidating capability; without effective opportunities and resources, jobseekers are effectively denied the freedom and ability to develop their capabilities for economic and social participation (Brown, James et al., 2017). To provide these conditions and opportunities for jobseekers, effort is required across multiple sectors.

In applying the 'human capabilities' approach to service delivery, the Brotherhood of St Laurence has noted that the concept of place is core to effective employment service responses (Brown, James et al., 2017). Therefore, opportunities and networks must be grounded in their local community context for jobseekers to be able to access them effectively (Brown, James et al., 2017).

Typology of youth employment programs

In further understanding the types of strategies used by governments to address youth 'disengagement' and unemployment, Strathdee (2013) identifies three broad approaches in policy and services. These approaches are 'motivational', 'punishing' and 'bridging'.

- 'Motivational' strategies frame youth unemployment as the result of young people lacking skills, and therefore are designed to improve their employability through training and upskilling activities. 'Motivational' strategies, such as work experience programs, encourage young people to adopt dispositions and build their human capital in ways that meet the needs of the labour market.
- 'Punishing' strategies frame the problem of youth unemployment as the result of young people being lazy and not having a strong work ethic. 'Punishing' strategies are designed to force young people into paid employment by making benefits harder to gain and/or reducing welfare support when mandated activities are not undertaken.
- 'Bridging' strategies frame youth unemployment as the result of young people's lack of social capital and networks. In understanding that young people with social networks are advantaged in the labour market, 'bridging' strategies are designed to act as a link, or broker, between young people and employers.

While Strathdee's typology offers a relatively pessimistic point of view (Bowman et al., 2015) and a simplified schema, it offers a useful framework to chart the beliefs behind youth employment policy, program design and problem solutions.

4 Overview of Australian Government employment programs

The review found 16 large, multisite Australian Government funded employment programs. Six of these programs include mandatory participation and financial disciplinary approaches as part of their program design. The programs collectively cover Australia, though predominantly servicing metropolitan or regional areas. All programs are funded through a marketised approach, in which the Australian Government has contracted [competing] not-for-profit and private organisations to deliver the program on its behalf.

Half of the reviewed programs are only open to, or prioritise, jobseekers receiving government income support. Twelve of the reviewed initiatives target specific cohorts, including people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, migrants, and people at risk of long-term unemployment or 'welfare dependence'. Six programs solely target young people or include young people as a key target cohort.

The Australian Government funds a complementary program which helps financially support eligible jobseekers with the costs associated with relocating for a job. It also provides wage subsidy incentives to employers to hire participants from employment programs. The employment offered by employers can be full-time, part-time, casual or in the form of an apprenticeship or traineeship. The wage subsidy program targets specific groups of jobseekers, including young people aged 15 to 24 years old.

Ten evaluations of the national programs were found (two being for the same program). Of these evaluations, seven used exits from income support as an indicator for program effectiveness. Five measured sustainable employment outcomes (26-week employment outcomes or more).

5 Australian Government ‘work first’ approaches

jobactive

Program

In June 2014, the Australian Government agreed that a reform of employment services was needed to address the identified weaknesses of the previous Jobs Services Australia model (Australian National Audit Office [ANAO], 2017a). This was also in line with the government’s pre-election commitment to ‘reinvigorate the Work for the Dole program, so that unemployed people on income support are active, engaging in mutual obligation work activities and building skills to ensure they are work ready’ (Liberal Party of Australia, 2013, p. 16).

As a result, the jobactive program was introduced on 1 July 2015 and remains in operation (ANAO, 2017a). Over five years as Australia’s mainstream employment service it had a projected cost of \$7.3 billion (ANAO, 2017a). Like its Jobs Services Australia predecessor, jobactive adopts an externalised and marketised system, in which employment services are delivered by contracted private and not-for-profit organisations. Across 51 Employment Regions Australia-wide as at 28 October 2019, jobactive has a caseload of more than 609,000 jobseekers (DESSFB, 2019b). Approximately 18 per cent of this caseload are young people aged 15–24 years (DESSFB, 2019b).

Jobactive’s program objectives are i. delivering quality services; ii. helping jobseekers find and keep a job; iii. helping jobseekers move from welfare to work; and iv. helping jobseekers meet their mutual obligations (Senate Education and Employment References Committee, 2019). To meet these objectives, jobactive comprises a range of general and targeted employment programs which broadly fall into Carter and Whitworth’s (2017) ‘work first’ or ‘human capital development’ categorisations of active labour market strategies. These programs are:

- ‘Work first’
 - jobactive employment services
 - Work for the Dole (see p. 20)
- ‘Human capital development’
 - Youth Jobs PaTH (see p. 34)
 - National Work Experience Program (see p. 36)
 - New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (see p. 37)

(ANAO, 2017a; Department of Employment, 2017a)

Jobactive also connects and provides seasonal harvest work through the National Harvest Labour Information Service and Harvest Labour Services, which predominantly targets tourists and jobseekers travelling around Australia.

Participation in jobactive services is compulsory for unemployed individuals who are receiving income support, such as Newstart, and have been deemed able to actively look for work (ANAO, 2017a). Compulsory participation (otherwise known as mutual obligation) requirements range from entering into a Job Plan agreement, attending appointments with the Department of Human Services and jobactive employment service providers, acting on job referrals and undertaking minimum job searches, to completing a set number of hours in approved activities for those who have been in the jobactive program for a prolonged period (DJSB, 2019b). According to the DJSB (2019b, p. 1), these mutual obligation requirements will ‘help a jobseeker into paid work and reduce reliance on income support as quickly as possible’, and further allow the jobseeker ‘to contribute to the community that supports them while they are unemployed’.

Jobactive participants are organised using the Jobseeker Classification Tool. This tool assesses an individual’s relative disadvantage in the labour market, which forms the basis of which ‘Stream’ the jobseeker is allocated (DJSB, 2018a). The compulsory activities and their expected hours are then dependent on the individual’s allocated ‘Stream’, and how work ready they are assessed to be (Department of Employment, 2016a).

To monitor jobseekers’ participation in their assigned mutual obligations, the government introduced the Targeted Compliance Framework. Commencing in July 2018, the new framework was designed to ensure jobseekers ‘take personal responsibility’ and penalise those who are ‘are persistently and wilfully non-compliant’ (DJSB, 2018b, p. 1). Depending on the jobseeker’s non-compliance behaviours, the penalties range from payment suspensions to financial penalties.

Service providers are paid for successfully placing jobseekers in employment (and off welfare) measured as outcomes at four, 12 and 26 weeks (ANAO, 2017a). They also receive higher outcomes payments for jobseekers with increased barriers, such as jobseekers in Stream C, jobseekers living in regional areas, and the long-term unemployed (ANAO, 2017a). Factoring in administration fees, outcomes payments and other employment support expenditure, in the 2018–19 financial year, the average cost per employment outcome (employed three months after participation) was \$2,410 (DESSFB, 2019c).

Active labour market approach

As described in Carter and Whitworth’s (2017) categorisation of active labour market approaches, ‘work first’ approaches aim to force jobseekers into the labour market, regardless of job quality or suitability. The program design of jobactive and its employment services are very much reflective of these ‘work first’ ideals, in which the

interventions are shallow and emphasise a quick transition into the workforce. The limited range of activities does not acknowledge the jobseeker's interests or skillsets, nor do they actively reduce the jobseeker's distance from the labour market. In this way, the government frames unemployment as the responsibility of the individual, and positions its own role as compelling, or 'helping', the individual to make greater efforts to find work (Morris & Wilson, 2014).

Strathdee's (2013) typology of government policy and service approaches used to target 'disengaged' youth, also identifies the 'punishing' approach. 'Punishing' approaches frame the individual's unemployment as the result of a lack of work ethic and the abuse of the welfare system and use disciplinary methods to force them into work. This problem formation and regulatory solution is equivalent to that of jobactive's ethos and program design, in which the program targets those individuals 'reliant' on income support and uses the disciplinary Targeted Compliance Framework to forcibly change their attitudes and behaviours. Strathdee (2013) notes that in economic contexts with increasing economic inequality, such as Australia, the 'punishing' approach is more likely to reproduce, if not strengthen, existing inequalities.

Evaluation

In 2019, an interim evaluation (Backhouse et al.) of jobactive commissioned by the Australian Government was released. It focused on the effectiveness of jobactive in its first year of operation (that is, 2015-16). The evaluation aimed to understand how effective jobactive had been in engaging jobseekers to participate in services, as well as how effective it was in assisting jobseekers to obtain employment outcomes. The evaluation also explored the regulatory and administrative burden experienced by jobactive providers.

The evaluation's scope included the impact of jobactive employment services and procedures, though did not include the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme, Harvest Labour Services and, the National Harvest Labour Information Service. It also does not include the impact of the Targeted Compliance Framework, which was introduced in 2017. A more comprehensive evaluation examining the overall program outcomes, the sustainability of achieved outcomes, the impact of program components and the program's cost effectiveness is planned for future release.

The interim evaluation compared jobactive population data with data from its predecessor employment service model, Jobs Services Australia (JSA). The jobactive data was taken from two groups of participants: new entrants to jobactive who commenced between 1 October 2015 and 31 December 2015, and participants who were already on the jobactive caseload as at 1 October 2015. The data from new entrants was used to examine the outcomes for short-term unemployed jobseekers and the caseload data was used to understand the effect of the program on long-term unemployed jobseekers. Surveys and qualitative fieldwork conducted with jobseekers and providers were also used to assess their experiences and perspectives of jobactive.

In terms of jobseeker engagement, the evaluation found that both the time it took from registrations to commencement in services and the number of jobseekers failing to attend an appointment without a valid reason fell with the introduction jobactive. Similarly, the attendance rates of jobseekers for their allocated appointments increased under jobactive. The evaluation attributed these changes in jobseekers' behaviour, particularly attendance, to the increased mutual obligation requirements and (pre-TCF) compliance framework under jobactive. These new procedures included immediate suspensions of income support for non-attendance at appointments and a 'no show, no pay approach' for jobseekers who fail to participate in an activity or attend a job interview.

With jobactive, participation in Work for the Dole, employment and work experience activities increased, whereas participation in training and education activities decreased. Analysis indicated that the increase of work-related activities was influenced by the stronger mutual obligation policy setting under jobactive, and the reduction of training was broadly in line with the tightening of access to funding for non-accredited training.

Despite the increased engagement with jobactive, the evaluation found the program's effectiveness in achieving employment outcomes for jobseekers was mixed and minimal. For caseload jobseekers, who represent the long-term unemployed, jobactive achieved increased rates of exits from income support (1.7 percentage point) and from the employment service program (4 percentage points) in comparison to JSA. The evaluation linked these changes to the new incentive structure under jobactive, in which providers received substantially higher outcome payments for jobseekers who are 'disadvantaged' or longer-term unemployed.

For new entrant jobseekers, the analysis indicated that overall jobactive was less effective than JSA in achieving income support exits or program exits. On average, new entrant jobseekers had higher income support dependency (2.4 percentage points increase) in jobactive; jobseekers aged 50 years or above had the largest increase (5.3 percentage points), while young jobseekers (aged under 25 years) had a smaller increase (1.1 percentage points).

The evaluation also explored jobseekers' barriers to employment and the ability of the jobactive service to address them. The majority of participants (89 per cent) surveyed reported having barriers that made it difficult for them to find or stay in a job, with physical or mental health condition/s (18 per cent), insufficient jobs in the local labour market (16 per cent) and caring responsibilities (10 per cent) the most frequently reported barriers. Of the young jobseekers (under 22 years old) who were surveyed, 17 per cent believed that their lack of work experience was the main factor stopping them from gaining employment.

When providers were asked about their ability to address jobseekers' barriers to employment under the jobactive contract, fewer than one-fifth (18 per cent) agreed it was easier than the previous JSA contract and nearly half (45 per cent) believed it was

more difficult. Most jobseekers (72 per cent) reported discussing some or all of their barriers to employment with their jobactive provider. Of this group, only one-third believed that anything was done to help address the barriers.

In addition to the interim evaluation published by DESSFB, a Senate inquiry also examined the appropriateness and effectiveness of the objectives, design, implementation and evaluation of jobactive. The inquiry included submissions and hearings with key stakeholders and the general public. The final report (Senate Education and Employment References Committee, 2019, p. xix) concluded that jobactive was not achieving its objectives, and that program participants were 'gaining employment in spite of jobactive, not because of it'. The four key themes that emerged in the inquiry were:

- i. improved services and support arrangements are needed
- ii. the mutual obligation requirements are poorly designed and often inappropriate
- iii. the Targeted Compliance Framework is punitive and discriminates against certain communities
- iv. the funding has inbuilt disincentives for jobactive providers both to secure jobseekers long-term, sustainable employment and to work with jobseekers with the most disadvantage.

Work for the Dole

Program

Within jobactive, a key component is the Work for the Dole (WfD) program. The WfD program, introduced in the late 1990s, has continued in Australian employment service models in various forms (Bennett et al., 2018). Before being elected to govern in 2013, the Abbot-led Opposition promised to 'reinvigorate the Work for the Dole program' (Liberal Party of Australia, 2013, p. 16). This 'reinvigoration' of the program, which was eventually introduced in the 2014–15 Budget, included increased activity requirements and a more rigid compliance framework (Bennett et al., 2018).

The objective of the current WfD program is to 'help jobseekers gain the skills, experience and confidence needed to move from welfare to work as soon as possible' (DJSB, 2019c, p. 3). The program is delivered across Australia through a vast range of host organisations, mostly not-for-profit organisations and government agencies. Supported financially by the Australian Government, host organisations provide either individual or group activities that may help improve a jobseeker's ability to find a job (DJSB, 2018c). An allowance of \$20.80 per fortnight is also given to participants to help cover the costs, such as travel, which can be up to 90 minutes each way (DJSB, 2018c). The total associated costs of delivering the WfD program are unclear.

The WfD program targets jobseekers who are over the age of 18 receiving income support and have Annual Activity Requirements as part of their jobactive Job Plan. WfD is the default approved activity for jobseekers who have been in the jobactive program for more than 12 months (DJSB, 2019c). These jobseekers are expected participate in WfD, or a similar activity, for six months of every subsequent year they remain unemployed.

Active labour market approach

Like its overarching jobactive service, the WfD program adopts a ‘work first’ approach to employment service provision, in that work experience interventions that are limited, often mandated and typically unpaid. WfD offers basic skills training that encourages quick turn-around of program participants into the labour market (and off income support). This emphasis on rapid transitions ‘pushes’ jobseekers into any job available, rather than aiming to ‘pull’ them in through building employability and offering higher quality job opportunities (Carter & Whitworth, 2017).

Like jobactive, the WfD program can be seen to fit Strathdee’s (2013) ‘punishing’ policy strategy. Though WfD claims to help jobseekers gain the skills, experience and confidence, the activities involved lack any personalised or long-term training or support that would address existing structural barriers and foster sustainable employment. Instead the WfD program design and its rigid compliance framework leans towards a disciplinary measure for those who are on income support for an extended period (Strathdee, 2013).

Strathdee (2013) adds that ‘punishing’ approaches in government policy understand the problem to be caused by the individual’s pathology and are therefore designed to change the individual’s mindset and encourage them to develop a basic work ethic and increase their usefulness to the labour force. The focus of WfD on increasing the pool of employable labour does not take into account whether enough feasible options for sustainable employment exist for long-term unemployed jobseekers.

Evaluation

In 2015, researchers (Kellard, Honey, McNamara, Biddle & Gray) examined the phase-in period of the newly ‘reinvigorated’ WfD program. Through the analysis of administrative data and quantitative and qualitative information from program stakeholders, they aimed to understand how the model and overall program design could be improved. Initially the reformed WfD program was introduced into 18 priority employment areas and targeted jobseekers aged 18–29 years. The findings from the evaluation were intended to inform the national, all-ages WfD program that was rolled-out on 1 July 2015.

With the evaluation period only being six months (December 2014 – May 2015) of a recently introduced program, the evaluation was unable to determine post-program employment outcomes for participants. The evaluation, however, did explore the short-term impact on job placements and moving off income-support. It estimated that the

WfD program resulted in a two-percentage points increase in the probability of jobseekers having a job placement, and a two-percentage point increase in the probability of jobseekers moving off income support. Using difference-in-difference estimates from the administrative data, the evaluation further found an increased rate of part-time/casual paid employment by seven-percentage points, though it acknowledged that the increase might be in part due to previously unreported employment (Kellard et al., 2015).

In the absence of data to ascertain post-program outcomes of WfD, the evaluation focused on areas of improved employability. As a result of the program, more than two thirds of participants felt that their 'soft' skills had increased, a skillset identified by host organisations as being the most important. However, despite this increase, only just over half (54 per cent) of the participants believed the program had increased their chances of finding work (Kellard et al., 2015).

The evaluation identified a range of factors that influenced the program implementation and outcomes. These include the stigma associated with the WfD program and its disciplinary approach, unsuitable types of placements, high rates of participant non-compliance, location of activities and transport issues, associated costs for host organisations and the hosts' inability to suitably supervise jobseekers with available skills and resources, especially when working with jobseekers with complex needs (Kellard et al., 2015). Since the evaluation there has been an increase in funding for host organisation, and increased compliance measures and penalties (DJSB, 2018b).

During the evaluated phase-in period, the WfD jobseekers were expected to participate in an activity for 15 hours per week for six months a year. When surveyed on the requirements of the program, 69 per cent of participants believed the hours were about right (Kellard et al., 2015). When further questioned about an increase to 25 hours per week, nearly three quarters (74 per cent) of participants answered that this was too many (Kellard et al., 2015). Despite these findings, the 2015 national roll-out of the WfD program increased the hours for jobseekers aged under 30 years to 50 hours per fortnight (Bennett et al., 2018).

Disability Employment Services

Program

Disability Employment Services (DES) are the main Australian Government funded employment services for people whose disability is assessed as the main barrier to them gaining employment. They are delivered in non-remote areas throughout Australia by a mix of contracted not-for-profit and for-profit organisations (Department of Social Services [DSS], 2017a). At 30 September 2019, there were 259,981 jobseekers on the active caseload, with 15 per cent of these aged 24 years or younger (DJSB, 2019d). The vast majority (89 per cent) of this caseload receive some sort of government income allowance (DJSB, 2019d).

DES acts as an alternative employment service to jobactive, though still targeting jobseekers receiving income support and deemed by the government as able to work. For most people in the caseload, participation is mandatory to receive their income support (DSS, 2018a). They are generally required to participate in active labour market type activities, such as job searching, attending regular meetings, and training (DSS, 2018a). Under the Targeted Compliance Framework, continued non-attendance without a valid reason can result in the individual's income support payments being suspended, reduced or cancelled entirely (DJSB, 2018b).

DES are delivered through two main types of services, the Disability Management Service (DMS) and the Employment Support Service (ESS), which share the objective to 'help individuals with disability, injury or health condition to secure and maintain sustainable employment in the open labour market' (DSS, 2018b, p. 64). The DMS is for people with a temporary or permanent disability who are not expected to require ongoing support, whereas the ESS supports people who have a permanent disability and need ongoing support (flexible, moderate or high) to maintain employment (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2014). Both services offer jobseekers initial assistance in building capacity for employment and finding a job, post-placement support and flexible ongoing support (DSS, 2017a).

For delivering DES services, contracted organisations receive a 50:50 split of service fees and varied outcome payments (DSS, 2017a). The outcome payments are paid out at four, 13, 26 and 52-weeks of consecutive employment (DSS, 2017a). The hours per week required to achieve an employment outcome depends on the individual's circumstance (DSS, 2017a). Outcome payments can also be paid to providers that achieve approved education outcomes for jobseekers (DSS, 2017a).

Active labour market approach

Despite acknowledging that individuals with disability face increased barriers to workforce, DES adopt the same 'work first' approach as that of jobactive, Australia's mainstream employment service. As described earlier, 'work first' approaches, as outlined by Carter and Whitworth (2017), aim to swiftly 'push' the jobseeker into the workforce, regardless of the suitability or quality of the role. This shallow intervention fails to provide personalised training or supports that would help assist genuine long-term labour market prospects.

According to Strathdee's (2013) youth policy typology, the DES can be characterised as a 'punishing' approach, in which disciplinary methods are used to drive rapid transitions into the workforce. This 'punishing' approach frames unemployment and the receipt of income support as the consequence of the individual's attitudes and behaviours, and in turn, ignores the realities of jobseekers with disability and the structural inequalities they face in the labour market (Honey, Kariuki, Emerson & Llewellyn, 2014; Darcy, Taylor & Green, 2016; Hemphill & Kulik, 2016).

Evaluation

To determine how efficient the DES programs were in achieving employment outcomes, an evaluation covering the term of the initial Disability Employment Services Deed (1 March 2010 to 30 June 2012) was commissioned. It found that 23 per cent of DMS participants and 22 per cent of ESS participants obtained a 26-week employment outcome within 18 months of initial commencement. Jobseekers without recent work experience, with less than year 10 education, in receipt of income support payments and who had less than 8 hours per week work capacity were all groups found to have fewer employment outcomes (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2014, p. 67). The evaluation also found that participants under 21 years of age had 24 per cent lower odds of getting a job than a comparator group (p. 66).

Jobs, Land and Economy Program

In 2014, the Abbott Government introduced the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), an overarching Federal Indigenous Framework that saw 27 programs consisting of 150 administered items, activities and sub-activities from eight separate entities all move under the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (ANAO, 2017b; Strakosch, 2019). These diverse programs and activities were then consolidated into five broad strategies with a shared outcome to 'improve results for Indigenous Australians including in relation to school attendance, employment and community safety, through delivering services and programs, and through measures that recognise the place that Indigenous people hold in this nation' (ANAO, 2017b, p. 17).

Of the five IAS strategies, the Jobs, Land and Economy Program³ focuses on employment outcomes and the economic development of Indigenous people and communities. Its desired outcomes range from increasing rates of employment and participation rates, to communities utilising their land and sea assets to generate economic and social benefits (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet [PM&C], 2016).

In terms of increasing rates of work readiness and workforce participation, the Jobs, Land and Economy Program includes 'demand-side' initiatives, such as the Employment Parity Initiative and the Tailored Assistance Employment Grant, which encourage and support businesses to employ Indigenous Australians. The program further includes the national network of Vocational Training and Employment Centres (VTECs), an opt-in program which supports jobseekers through work readiness support, vocational training, and guaranteed job and postplacement support (PM&C, 2017). VTECs also engage with the community to ensure their services are responsive to community needs (PM&C, 2017). As there are no public evaluations, it is unclear how effective VTECs are in placing individuals in sustainable employment.

³ The National Indigenous Australians Agency is now responsible for the Jobs, Land and Economy Program

Community Development Program

Program

The largest, most expensive initiative within the Jobs, Land and Economy Program is the Community Development Program (CDP). The CDP is designed to reduce welfare dependency in jobseekers in remote communities, through increasing workforce participation and skills, and facilitating sustainable work transitions (ANAO, 2017c). While it is not specifically targeting Indigenous people, the majority of CDP participants identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (PM&C, 2018).

The CDP was first implemented in July 2015, replacing the Remote Jobs and Community Program (RJCP). While individuals in RJCP could meet participation requirements through flexible and alternative activities, such as health or counselling programs, the obligations of CDP participants are much more limited to the participation in Work for the Dole (WfD) (see p. 20) (Fowkes, 2018). This emphasis on work-like activities in CDP design differs from Australia's mainstream employment service, jobactive, in which there is a greater focus on job searching activities (PM&C, 2018).

The CDP is delivered in 60 remote regions across Australia, targeting jobseekers who are receiving income support and have mutual obligation requirements (ANAO, 2017c; PM&C, 2018). From the start, CDP participants aged 18–49 years are required to engage with a WfD activity for 20 hours a week, year-round (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a; Department of Human Services, 2018). CDP jobseekers under the age of 18 are not compelled to take part in WfD, but are expected to participate in at least 20 hours per week of an approved activity, generally in training or education. All participants under 49 years are required to engage in monthly appointments with their CDP provider (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a). If CDP participants fail to meet their mutual obligations, their income support payments can be suspended or reduced (PM&C, 2018).

Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face increased barriers to the workforce and experience and experience nearly double the unemployment rate of their non-Indigenous counterparts (Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee, 2017). In January 2016, 39 per cent of the CDP caseload were aged less than 29 years, with 16 per cent of all participants aged between 18 and 22 years (PM&C, 2018).

Like jobactive, the CDP seeks to achieve employment outcomes, and accordingly CDP service providers are paid under an outcome-payment model. Providers also receive base payments for enrolling and monitoring individuals in WfD activities, as well providing basic services for participants not participating in WfD (PM&C, 2018). In addition, eligible employers can also receive wage subsidy funding for employing a CDP jobseeker, with additional bonus payments based on their employment retention (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018).

Active labour market approach

Under Carter and Whitworth's (2017) classification of active labour market approaches, the strategy taken by the CDP program design very much reflects a 'work first' approach. Rather than offering the jobseeker personalised training or supports, the program's shallow and mandated WfD activities emphasis rapid transition into jobs, regardless of the job suitability or jobseekers' needs. This disciplinary design attempts to 'push' the jobseeker into employment through undesirable obligatory conditions, rather than build the individual's employability that will allow them higher quality job opportunities.

In compelling jobseekers to undertake work-like activities in return for their income support the program design fits within Strathdee's (2013) 'punishing' policy approach. This 'punishing' approach used in the CDP frames rates of unemployment as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dysfunction (Jordan, 2018a). This individual deficit narrative is highly problematic, as it fails to acknowledge the underlying structural causes of unemployment, including the entrenched effects of colonisation, labour market discrimination and the lack of mainstream employment opportunities in remote areas (Jordan, 2018b; Staines, 2018).

Strakosch (2019) further notes that Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy is unjustly framed in a settler colonial context. In the CDP, the types of employment which are deemed 'worthy' are underpinned by Western market ideals. Through making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ability to fully participate in society conditional on Western, settler terms, Walter (2010) argues that Indigenous specific culture and values are completely undermined.

Evaluation

In addition to the pervasive critiques of the CDP and Indigenous employment services' ideological approaches, a recent analysis was undertaken to understand the effectiveness of CDP in improving employment outcomes. The evaluation (PM&C, 2018) over the first two years of the CDP's implementation found that the program has led to only a marginal increase (1.2 per cent) in 26-week consecutive employment outcomes, with participants with low barriers to employment having the highest estimated increase. There was no conclusive evidence that job placements or 13-week outcomes improved as result of the program.

The evaluation (PM&C, 2018) also explored the participation rates in the CDP program and identified barriers. It found that at any given time between 20 and 30 per cent of participants were not attending their WfD required activity without a valid reason. Sub-groups, including younger people (under 35 years), people who had been unemployed for one month or longer, people with a prior sentence or conviction and people who were not contactable by phone, had lower rates of attendance and higher rates of invalid non-attendance. High rates of illness among people identifying as Indigenous living in remote locations and the low rate of approved CDP medical exemptions were also identified as contributing to invalid non-attendance.

In conjunction with this PM & C 2018 evaluation, a fieldwork evaluation (Winangali & Ipsos, 2018) explored the effectiveness of the CDP program from the perspective of community members, jobseekers, stakeholders and service providers from eight remote communities. The findings were mixed in terms of program design strengths and challenges. Overall, the feedback indicated a good alignment with community members' employment aspirations to participate in work-like activities as a pathway to employment. These activities were more impactful for participants if they were developed, designed and led by the community, meaningful to the individual, and in line with their capabilities and interests.

In contrast, feedback indicated that that the 'one-size-fits-all' program design was not appropriate for some groups of participants, or for the context of the place in where the program is delivered. Some CDP providers added that the focus on demand-driven employment opportunities and the insufficient funding for community development activities made it difficult to provide quality, meaningful activities that would both benefit the community and support the individual to gain the skills needed for employment.

Most stakeholders also shared the view that social problems for the remote communities had increased since the intensified use of financial penalties. These social issues include family violence, mental health problems and feelings of shame by jobseekers, women having babies to avoid mutual obligations and to secure an income for their family, and increased 'break and enters' to steal food, predominantly by young people. In general, most CDP providers believed that the financial penalties in the program design had negatively affected jobseeker engagement, rather than incentivising attendance.

ParentsNext

Program

Introduced in the 2015–16 Budget, the ParentsNext program is a pre-employment initiative with the objective to 'help eligible parents plan and prepare for employment by the time their youngest child reaches school age' (Henderson et al., 2018, p. 16). It aims to improve the participant's 'work readiness' by identifying education and employment related goals and collaboratively creating a participation plan of activities and local services connections that will help them achieve these goals (Henderson et al., 2018). Though eligible parents can volunteer to take part, the ParentsNext caseload mostly involves compulsory participants (Henderson et al., 2018).

The ParentsNext program began in April 2016 and was delivered across 31 Projects in 10 local government areas with high socioeconomic disadvantage around Australia (Henderson et al., 2018). During the initial 15-month implementation, 16,792 individuals commenced ParentsNext, 98 per cent of them compulsory participants (Henderson et al., 2018). Across the 31 Projects the average expenditure per participant ranged from

\$571 to \$1700. Projects with larger caseloads had lower expenditure per participant. Unlike other Australian Government outcomes-based employment programs, such as jobactive employment services or Transition to Work, the ParentsNext Project providers are funded through a grant-based funding model (Henderson et al., 2018).

In July 2018 the ParentsNext program was expanded nationally. This expansion coincided with the introduction of the Targeted Compliance Framework, a tool that was designed for employment services to ensure 'jobseekers who are persistently and wilfully non-compliant incur financial penalties while providing protections for the most vulnerable' (DJSB, 2018b, p. 1). Despite ParentsNext being promoted as a 'pre-employment program' and targeting marginalised individuals from some of Australia's most disadvantaged areas, participants are subject under the Targeted Compliance Framework to financial punishment for not managing and meeting their appointed mutual obligation requirements.

Active labour market approach

Though the initial design of ParentsNext largely fitted Carter and Whitworth's (2017) 'human capital development' approaches, in which jobseekers receive longer-term interventions that focus on personalised training and supports to foster sustainable employment, with the introduction of the Targeted Compliance Framework the program's principles shifted towards a 'work first' approach. With mandatory and monitored participation, ParentsNext policy expressed a decreased emphasis on supporting the group's diverse needs, and in its place an increased prioritisation of rapidly returning participants to the labour market.

This mandatory approach adopted by the national expansion of ParentsNext is also in line with the 'punishing' approach of Strathdee's (2013) policy typology, in which the program is designed to reduce welfare dependence by making benefits harder to claim. This conditionality approach deems the disadvantaged status of ParentsNext participants as a function of their flawed individual psychology and seeks to enforce certain social norms and attitudes (Taylor, Gray & Stanton, 2016).

Evaluation

In 2018, an evaluation report (Henderson et al.) was released to provide an assessment of the early impact of the support provided through the preliminary 31 ParentsNext Projects. Although the reporting of the methodology was not transparent (Community Affairs References Committee, 2019), the evaluation found that ParentsNext participants reported an increased sense of wellbeing, likelihood and urgency to undertake training or study, and perceived increased chances of getting a job as result of the program. Impact analysis further found that the ParentsNext Participants had higher proportions of reported incomes, and involvement in study and training than comparable non-participants.

ParentsNext Project providers and participants also described factors that negatively impacted participants or acted as barriers to program implementation. A recurring theme was the rigid criteria for participation selection. These includes setting the age of the youngest child at six months old for compulsory participants, which was regarded as too young for parents to successfully engage in the program. The swift exiting of a participant once their youngest child turns six was also regarded as detrimental for those who were engaged in education or an activity. The Jobseeker Classification Instrument that was utilised to assess a participant's labour market disadvantage was also regarded as too narrow to address the broad range of pre-vocational barriers that affect the cohort's ability to plan and prepare for employment.

Despite the evaluation period of April 2016 to 30 June 2018, and the findings not being published until September 2018, the Australian Government announced in May 2018 that it would allocate an additional \$263 million over four years to expand ParentsNext nationally (Henderson et al., 2018). The expanded program included a more intensive service in both the existing sites and an additional 10 local government areas with high levels of disadvantage or a high proportion of Indigenous Parenting Payment recipients. The program would also be rolled out to the most disadvantaged parents in all jobactive Employment Regions (Henderson et al., 2018).

Following concerns raised about design and execution of the ParentsNext program, an inquiry into ParentsNext was referred to the Community Affairs References Committee. The committee heard from a wide range of stakeholders, including participants, in reviewing the appropriateness of the aim, design and implementation of ParentsNext and the accompanying use of the Targeted Compliance Framework. The inquiry concluded that the 'program is causing anxiety, distress and harm for many of its participants', and may in fact be causing more harm than good (Community Affairs References Committee, 2019, p. 71).

A central concern from the inquiry was the use of the Targeted Compliance Framework to monitor and record participation, and in turn, control participants' lives. Since the introduction of the framework to ParentsNext, it was estimated that one in five participants had been subject to a payment suspension (Community Affairs References Committee, 2019). The inquiry determined that immediate changes to the ParentsNext program were needed and considered the limitations the program imposed on individual rights to social security and an adequate standard of living as unacceptable (Community Affairs References Committee, 2019).

An additional reoccurring issue that emerged from the inquiry was the appropriateness, or lack thereof, of ParentsNext's design in addressing the needs of a number of vulnerable populations, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability and people who have experienced family violence. Many stakeholders added that without the specialist knowledge and training to provide services that are safe and supportive for diverse groups of people, ParentsNext

providers risk harming parents and further entrenching their disadvantage (Community Affairs References Committee, 2019).

In considering the program's design to specifically target areas with high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recipients of the Parenting Payment, stakeholders not only critiqued the program for its inefficiency in meeting the various communities' needs, but further regarded the targeted approach as discriminatory (Community Affairs References Committee, 2019). Human rights experts involved in the inquiry believed that the specific targeting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a scheme that limits their rights to social security is direct racial discrimination and does not have a rational connection to the program's aims (Community Affairs References Committee, 2019).

6 Australian Government ‘human capital development’ approaches

Transition to Work

Program

In 2015, the Australian Government released its fourth Intergenerational Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015a), a ‘point-in-time’ assessment of the long-term sustainability of current government policies and approaches. Based on detailed analysis of recent trends and future projections, the Report also produced recommendations on what the government can do to address future economic challenges. The need to increase workforce participation to produce economical and societal benefits was a key theme. More specifically, the report identified that policies which removed barriers for young people in attaining employment and promoted higher workforce participation could generate gains in gross domestic product and income growth, reduce the fiscal pressures associated with providing welfare support and further serve social inclusion and equity goals (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015a).

In response to the Report’s findings, the Liberal government announced a suite of new programs that would encourage increased participation of those outside the workforce (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015b). These included the Transition to Work (TtW) program, which aimed to ‘assist young people who have disengaged from work and study and are at risk of long-term welfare dependence’ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015b, p. 25). The program was budgeted \$212 million over four years and is currently delivered through 43 organisations across 51 Employment Regions Australia-wide (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015b; DESSFB, 2018a).

TtW targets young people aged 15–21 who are not engaged in employment or education (Department of Employment, 2017b). In line with economic imperatives that informed its development, the program specifically targets young people most likely to be welfare-dependent, including: early school leavers, ‘disengaged’ young people, and jobactive referrals (Department of Employment, 2017b). Participants in TtW include young people who are and are not receiving income support (Department of Employment, 2017b).

The TtW service operates separately from the government’s mainstream jobactive service, and aims to provide ‘intensive, pre-employment support to improve the work readiness of young people and to help them into work (including apprenticeships or traineeships) or education’ (Department of Employment, 2017b, p. 1).

Activities and components of TtW include:

- helping young people to understand what is expected in the workplace and to develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours expected by employers

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- development of practical skills to get a job
 - connection with education or training
 - participation in work experience opportunities
 - linkage with employment opportunities in the local area
 - connection with relevant local community services. (DJSB, 2018d)

Active labour market approach

As described by Carter and Whitworth's (2017) broad categorisation of active labour market strategies, the TtW program principally adopts a 'human capital development' approach. Carter and Whitworth (2017) explain that 'human capital development' approaches aim to achieve sustained employment transitions through more-intensive, longer-term interventions that include personalised training and supports. The 'human capital development' approach 'pulls' the individual into employment through building employability and opportunities, rather than focusing on 'pushing' the young person into whatever jobs are available at the time.

Within Strathdee's (2013) typology of policy strategies used to target 'disengaged' young people, the TtW program can be classed as utilising both 'motivational' and 'bridging' approaches. Through work experience and skills training, TtW adopts a 'motivational' approach, in which activities target the employability of participants and encourage young people to adopt characteristics that are desired by employers. In line with 'bridging' strategies, the program also offers linkages and connections with employers

Unlike other Australian Government provided employment services, such as jobactive, Disability Employment Services and the Community Development Program, TtW does not take a disciplinary approach in enforcing program participation. A participant may be required to move into jobactive as a consequence of not meeting program expectations, such as attending individual appointments or activities. However, young people in TtW do not incur financial penalties or supported income suspensions as the result of 'inadequate' participation.

Though the program does not punish young people for not participating in activities that promote employment, it should also be noted that the introduction of the TtW program coincided with a new four week waiting period for young people accessing income support, with the intention to 'set the clear expectation that young people must make every effort to maximise their chances of successfully obtaining work' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015b, p. 27). This new condition, alongside the upskilling-type activities of the TtW program, demonstrates that the prevailing discourse surrounding unemployment puts the onus on the individual. The problem is framed as the fault of the young person for being either unmotivated or unemployable, rather than acknowledging the entrenched structural factors influencing youth unemployment.

Evaluation

Commissioned by the DESSFB, an interim evaluation (Jankovic et al., 2019) of the TtW program was recently released. It focused on the initial roll-out and early referrals up to 31 July 2016. The aims were to determine the extent in which service implementation and operational processes enabled effective and efficient service delivery, how efficiently and effectively the service engaged and retained participants, and the early impacts of the TtW service.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, drawing on quantitative administrative data, survey data from TtW service providers, in-depth interviews with TtW stakeholders and focus group discussions with TtW participants. The scope of the evaluation does not include the changes that have since been made to TtW, such as the uncapped funding and the expansion of the eligibility criteria. A final evaluation with a more robust assessment of outcomes, the cost-effectiveness of the program and service quality is planned.

Overall, the evaluation found that TtW providers were generally satisfied with departmental support they received during implementation, the funding structure and provider performance targets. Nearly all providers strongly agreed or agreed that the TtW program design was appropriate for the target group (97 per cent) and helped participants at risk of long-term unemployment improve their chances of finding and keeping a job (96 per cent).

The evaluation found that a key issue during early implementation was the recruitment of Group Two ('disengaged young people', whom the provider is responsible for recruiting) and Group Three participants (young Stream C jobactive participants who are referred from jobactive). In engaging Group Two participants, 71 per cent of providers strongly agreed or agreed that there was too much 'red tape' involved—for example in gathering of documentary proof that a young person has not attended school for 13 weeks. However, once engaged, the evaluation showed that this group had a high level of commitment to, and retention in, the TtW service.

Both the referrals from jobactive providers of Group Three participants and the utilisation of allocated Group Three funded spaces were below what was expected. Some TtW providers attributed these low numbers to the jobactive funding system, which they believed disincentivised jobactive providers from referring participants who attract higher outcome payments. Some providers also believed that the Group Three participants who were referred were already disengaged and non-compliant.

Despite the less strict compliance requirements of TtW, the evaluation found that TtW had a higher rate of attendance at the initial appointment (77 per cent) than that of young people in a jobactive comparison group (69 per cent). The rate of attendance at subsequent contact appointments was slightly lower (3 percentage points) for young people in TtW, though the median number of appointments attended by TtW

participants (seven) was more than double that of the jobactive comparator group (three).

The evaluation also compared the participant exit rates over the first six months of service commencement: the exit rate was higher for a jobactive comparator group (52 per cent) than for TtW participants (45 per cent). However, the reasons for exiting were rather different: young jobactive participants were most likely to exit due to not being fully eligible (i.e. no longer receiving income support payments), whereas TtW participants were most likely to be exited for not being contactable by their provider. The evaluation linked the varying reasons for program exit to the differences in the sanctions and disciplinary methods used between programs.

Though the interim evaluation did not determine a clear link between program participation and employment and/or education outcomes, it did explore perceptions of the early impacts of the TtW service. Both providers and participants commented on how the program provided the opportunity for early identification of personal and financial problems. The young participants also welcomed the 'goal setting' component of TtW, and added it was something they had not previously had the opportunity to consider or discuss. The young people surveyed also appreciated the tailored support offered.

jobactive

Youth Jobs PaTH (Prepare-Trial-Hire)

Program

Youth Jobs PaTH program is the newest component of jobactive, announced in the 2016 Budget as part of the \$840.3 million Youth Employment Package. That package is a four-year investment, with the aim to 'give young people the employability skills that employers want, opportunities for work experience and the support to move from welfare to work' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016a, p. 1). In determining what skillsets young people need to make them more employable, the government drew on direct feedback from businesses (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).

First implemented in April 2017, the Youth Jobs PaTH is a \$752 million, four-year investment in jobseekers under 25 years of age, with an emphasis on those who are at risk of becoming long-term unemployed and welfare dependent (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b). The program understands Australia's high rate of youth unemployment as the result of a mismatch between the skills that young people possess, and the employability skills needed for successful participation in the labour force (Department of Employment, 2017c). These employability skills are non-technical skills, such as communication, collaboration and self-management (Department of Employment, 2017c).

To meet its objective to help young people gain the skills and work experience they need to get and keep a job, the Youth Jobs PaTH consists of three components: Prepare, Trial and Hire (Department of Employment, 2017c).

- The Prepare component involves two 3-week blocks of intensive employability skills training. The blocks were developed by industry and focus on behaviour expected by employers and job search skills. Though some young people are eligible to volunteer in the Prepare component from day one in jobactive, the training becomes compulsory for young people who have been in jobactive for five months.
- The Trial component is a voluntary internship of four to 12 weeks for jobseekers aged 17 to 24 who are engaged with jobactive, Transition to Work or Disability Employment Services. Depending on the employer's needs, these internships can be between 15 and 25 hours per week. Young people participating in internships receive an extra \$200 per fortnight, in addition to their existing income support payments. Businesses and jobactive employment service providers also receive payments for hosting the internship and achieving 'Internship Outcomes' respectively.
- The Hire component involves a financial incentive for businesses to employ young people in an ongoing job. Wage subsidies up to \$10,000 over six months are available to employers who hire eligible young people for a minimum of six months, and an average of at least 20 hours a week.

Active labour market approach

The design of Youth Jobs PaTH is more difficult to classify in Carter and Whitworth's (2017) categorisation of active labour market strategies than other government approaches. While the problem formation of the program largely adopts a 'human capital development' approach, focusing on the 'skills mismatch' of young people and recognising a targeted, intensive intervention is needed, the problem solutions put forward at the various program components vary greatly. It is important to note that many participants will only have exposure to one component of the program.

For example, young people participating in the Prepare component are subject to a 'work first' approach, which Carter and Whitworth (2017) describe as focusing on a rapid transition into the workforce through basic skills training. For many young people engaged in the Prepare component, their receipt of income support payments depends on their participation in the training.

Like the Prepare component, the Trial component also has a supply-side policy focus on creating a more 'employable' individual; however, it implements a 'human capital development' approach in its aim to upskill the individual through paid (albeit low-paid) work experience. Participation in the Trial component is not compulsory and focuses on 'pulling' the young person into the labour market via higher work experience and job quality opportunities (Carter & Whitworth, 2017)

Strathdee's (2013) typology of targeted 'disengaged' youth strategies describe approaches such as the Trial component as 'motivational' strategies. Motivational strategies acknowledge that the current labour market has an increased skill demand and seeks to build young people's human capital in ways that suit the needs of the economy. While this approach acknowledges some of the structural barriers a young person faces in attaining employment, it fails to acknowledge the broader structural issues, such as job availability, that are beyond a young person's control. This supply-side, deficit approach puts the onus on the individual and their labour market demanding 'abilities' (Dyer, Redus, Stahl & Freed, 2018), and in turn, shifts the responsibility off the government to foster a more inclusive workforce.

In contrast to supply-side approaches of the Prepare and Trial components, which aim to transform the individual to be attractive to the current labour market, the Hire component seeks to improve the demand-side of the labour market. This approach acknowledges that the shortage of employment opportunities, particularly entry-level positions, is a significant barrier to young people. The program's focus on 'incentivising' employers to hire young people recognises an existing attitude that deters employers from hiring young people, or people new to the labour market.

Evaluation

According to the department's 2018–19 annual report (DESSFB, 2019c), there were 35,575 commencements in a PaTH Employability Skills Training course. Some 41 per cent of jobseekers went on to achieve a job or internship within six months of undertaking the employability training. Between April 2017 and 30 June 2019, the program supported the commencement of 10,349 internship placements, with 6,464 successfully completed. Of the young people who completed an internship, 65 per cent gained employment. In the 2018–19 financial year, the Australian Government spent \$82.3 million under the Youth Bonus wage subsidy to support 14,811 young people to gain employment. While Youth Jobs PaTH comprises three components, from the results reported it appears that not all participants undertake all three.⁴

The National Work Experience Program

Program

The National Work Experience Program (NWEPP) was introduced in the 2015 Budget as part of the Department of Employment's (2015a, p. 17) efforts to 'foster a productive and competitive labour market' and 'assist jobseekers into work, meet employer needs and increase Australia's workforce participation'. The Australian Government allocated \$18.3 million to the program over five years from 2014–15 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015c).

⁴ An evaluation of Youth PaTH was published in February 2020 after the compilation of this report.

The NWEP is delivered Australia-wide through for profit and not-for-profit organisations and government agencies, with some organisations receiving a \$300 incentive per placement (DJSB, 2018e). It involves unpaid placements of up to 25 hours for a maximum of four weeks (DJSB, 2018e). According to the DJSB (2018e), an NWEP placement should ideally result in paid employment post program, though there is no obligation for employers to hire the participating jobseeker.

To be eligible for the NEWP, jobseekers must be 17 years and older, receiving income support, and registered in jobactive, Transition to Work or Disability Employment Services (DJSB, 2018e). Though participation is voluntary, the NEWP placement is an approved activity for jobseekers 18 years and older with mutual obligation requirements (DJSB, 2019b).

Active labour market approach

In Carter and Whitworth's (2017) categorisation of labour market approaches, the NEWP leans more towards a 'human capital development' approach than other government work experience programs such as Work for the Dole (WfD). Though the program is relatively short-term and lacks personalised training or supports, there is a greater focus on in-work progression than in WfD. Rather than undertaking work experience for the sake of obligatory participation, NEWP's aims appear more geared towards reducing an individual's distance from the labour market and providing higher quality job opportunities.

Evaluation

Both the annual throughput of jobseekers in the NWEP and the program's effectiveness to place jobseekers in employment are unclear.

New Enterprise Incentive Scheme

Program

Variations of the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) have been a consistent component of Australia's employment services since the late 1980s. Like its predecessors, the current NEIS is a voluntary program which aims to support jobseekers 18 years and older to establish and run their own small business (DJSB, 2018f). It offers jobseekers, both on and off income support, a suite of services, including accredited business training, professional mentoring and financial support (DJSB, 2018f). The financial support includes an income allowance and short-term rental assistance and is only for individuals who are eligible to receive government income support (DJSB, 2018f).

The NEIS is delivered across 23 Entrepreneurship Facilitators locations in all states and territories except the Australian Capital Territory (DESSFB, 2019d). Three of these locations (Cairns, Hunter Valley/Newcastle and North-East Tasmania) have been specifically chosen due to their high rates of youth unemployment and lower than average business activity (Commonwealth of Australia, n.d.-a). To assist young

Australians to start their own small business and utilise the NEIS, the government introduced the Encouraging Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment Initiative in the 2016–17 Budget (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b). This Initiative includes two-week workshops and information guides about planning a self-employment idea (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016b).

Active labour market approach

Unlike the other jobactive programs which frame individuals as either unmotivated, or lacking skillsets that are desirable to the workforce, the NEIS acknowledges and fosters jobseekers' existing entrepreneurial capabilities. While it's far from simple, the alternative approach has shown to be particularly valuable for those who experience barriers to mainstream employment (Mulvey, Kelly & Lewis, 2002). Though the NEIS does view unemployed people through a more positive lens, it has a competitive application process and is limited to 8,600 places per year (DJSB, 2018f), a small fraction of the current jobactive caseload. During the 2017–18 financial year, 6,869 individuals were assisted through the NEIS (DJSB, 2018g).

Evaluation

The most recent public evaluations of the NEIS were released in 2002 (Dockery) and 2008 (Crooks, Cameron & Asgari). The Dockery (2002) evaluation, which focused on short-term outcomes, found that 80 per cent of participants were in employment (predominantly self-employed) three months after cessation of assistance and 70 per cent were no longer receiving unemployment benefits both three and six months after completion of NEIS. Crooks and colleagues (2008) found that sixteen months after cessation of assistance, 83 per cent of participants were employed, with 46 per cent of this group being self-employed in their established NEIS business.

Though these findings of NEIS employment outcomes for jobseekers are very positive, the evaluators acknowledge that the participants (having been selected) are generally less disadvantaged and often likely to achieve positive employment outcomes irrespective of the intervention (Dockery, 2002; Crooks et al., 2008). Given the changes made to the program since these evaluations, the outcomes reported may not reflect the current NEIS program.

Empowering YOUth Initiatives

Program

As part of the Youth Employment Strategy, the Australian Government announced \$50 million over four years for funding Empowering YOUth Initiatives in the 2015–2016 Budget (DESSFB, 2019e). The purpose of these initiatives is to support young people at risk of long-term unemployment into finding and sustaining employment, identify approaches which best improve employment outcomes for young people at risk of unemployment and welfare dependency and promote learning from these approaches to inform current and future service delivery (Department of Employment, 2016b).

Unlike the youth-targeted Transition to Work program, which is characterised by being delivered in allocated places, with a set servicing period, and defined outcomes, the Empowering Youth Initiatives vary in their design, delivery methods and defined outcomes. Thirty-nine initiatives were funded for a maximum of two years over two funding periods. Initiatives were selected on the basis they met the program's objectives and did not replicate existing government funded employment services (Department of Employment, 2016b).

The funded initiatives targeted groups of young people aged 15 to 24 years old who are deemed at risk for long-term unemployment. These groups include young people in regional Australia, especially in areas that are undergoing structural change or have high levels of social disadvantage, Indigenous young people, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, early school leavers, young people with a history of offending, young people with a disability or illness, young people who are homeless and young people who are leaving out-of-home care (Department of Employment, 2015b; Department of Employment, 2017d). Participation is voluntary and open to both young people who receive and do not receive income support. They are also an approved activity for young people who have mutual obligation requirements.

Active labour market approach

The Empowering Youth Initiatives vary in how they understand youth unemployment, and in turn, their program designs. However, there is a consistent theme that youth unemployment is a much more complex issue than simply the young person lacking employability skills or being unmotivated to work. For example, in addition to the provision of practical and employability skills, the Karingal Inc's Youth Community initiative offers young people emotional support, linkages to community supports or health services, and access to peer-support networks (DESSFB, 2018b).

Evaluation

An evaluation of the consolidated learnings from all Empowering Youth Initiatives in their efficiency and effectiveness to support young people is expected by December 2019 (Department of Employment, 2016b).

Try, Test and Learn Fund

Program

In 2013, the DSS commissioned a review of Australia's welfare system to ensure it was sustainable, effective and encouraging of workforce participation. This McClure Review (2015) suggested that Australia's welfare system should identify and invest in groups who are at risk of long-term welfare dependence but have the capacity to work. The McClure Review further suggested that this investment should include supports and intervention that would allow these groups to become self-reliant through employment. In response to these recommendations, the Try, Test and Learn Fund was developed.

This Fund is a \$96.1 million investment over four years to finance innovative programs which aim to improve workforce participation or capacity for groups deemed most at risk of long-term welfare dependence (DSS, 2017b). The groups targeted (2016 to 2018) were: young carers, young students (students at risk of moving to long-term unemployment or unemployed former students), young parents, 'at risk' young people, working age carers, older unemployed people, and working age migrants and refugees (DSS, 2019a; DSS, 2019b). Generally, participation is voluntary, though TTL activities can also act as an approved activity for those with mutual obligation requirements.

The Fund was open to organisations and individuals Australia-wide with the central aim to new insights and evidence on 'what works' to reduce long-term welfare dependency (DSS, 2017b). It was guided by core principles of innovation, collaboration and user-focused design and a focus on outcomes (DSS, 2017b). The successful submissions varied in funding allocated and trial duration, with no program funded for longer than 28 months.

Active labour market approach

In contrast to the 'one-size-fits-all' approaches to employment services, such as jobactive or the Community Development Program, the successful Fund programs understand that tailored interventions are needed to support jobseekers' varied needs. For example, the 'your job your way' employment program for long-term unemployed young people understands that certain young people, such as those experiencing mental ill health, face increased barriers to the workforce and require more support than that offered by existing labour market programs (DSS, 2019c). The 'your job your way' program design therefore includes multifaceted support, such as intensive and frequent client-centred support, engagement with vocational and non-vocational services, networking and employment opportunities, and engagement with non-vocational activities in partnership with the community (yourtown, n.d.).

Despite the funded initiatives adopting a more rounded understanding of the causes of unemployment, the Fund shared the same underlying policy motive as most of Australia's employment services: to get individuals off welfare and into employment. There is a risk that funded programs that add value to a young person's life may be scrapped in favour of programs that produce more government savings given the strong economic motive steering the Fund's program design.

Evaluation

The Australian Government has commissioned a \$3.7 million evaluation of the program, led by the University of Queensland. The evaluation is expected to run until mid-2020 (University of Queensland, 2018).

Closing the Gap employment initiatives

In the wake of Kevin Rudd's historic national apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were forcibly removed from their families and communities, the Closing the Gap policy was introduced (Harrison, 2012). The policy, implemented in 2009, aims to 'close the gap' on Indigenous disadvantage in six target areas, including employment (Harrison, 2012). While the policy was introduced to address the damage caused by colonisation, many have critiqued the policy and its implementation as constructing Aboriginal 'dysfunction' as the cause of social problems and reducing complex Aboriginal disadvantage to a technical problem with no acknowledgement of history or community differences (Altman, 2009; Harrison, 2012; Fogarty, Lovell, Langenberg & Heron, 2018; Strakosch, 2019).

The Closing the Gap policy has adopted many approaches over the last decade, with the most recent reform, the \$55.7 million Closing the Gap – Employment Services package, announced in the 2017–18 Budget. This package, implemented from January 2018, consists of strategies to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce participation, including increasing wage subsidies for employers, encouraging jobactive providers to establish Indigenous specific, community-based Work for the Dole projects, expanded access to the Transition to Work program for all young Indigenous people aged 21 years or under and up-front intensive employment services to Indigenous jobseekers (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017a; DJSB, 2018g).

The same policy announcement included the introduction of the Time to Work Employment Service and the Yarrabah Employment Services Pilot.

Time to Work Employment Service

Program

The Time to Work Employment Service is a \$17.6 million, five-year initiative in direct response to recommendations made in the Prison to Work report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017b). That report found that current employment systems lacked cultural competency and timely, coordinated and quality engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners and ex-prisoners (Council of Australian Governments, 2016).

The service targets self-identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, aged 18 and over, who are within three-to-four months of being released from prison. It includes support in developing a transition plan while in prison and post-release support (DESSFB, 2019f). The transition plan can include access to education and services addressing employment barriers both in-prison and post release (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017b). Providers have been contracted to deliver the service across 70 non-remote prisons Australia-wide (DESSFB, 2019f). Managed by the Prime Minister and Cabinet under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the service will also be delivered in 10 remote prisons (DESSFB, 2019f).

Active labour market approach

Carter and Whitworth (2017) describe ‘human capital development’ approaches as including more intensive and personalised supports that aim to improve the employability of jobseekers who are ‘harder to help’. This description is very much in line with the Time to Work Employment Service, an initiative that was specifically designed and implemented in the knowledge that mainstream employment supports were inadequate for the target cohort. With its voluntary nature and timely support for participants throughout their transitions, the service offers a longer-term intervention that attempts to produce sustainable labour market prospects.

Evaluation

In the 2018–19 financial year, 885 eligible participants commenced in the service. Of that number, 77 completed an approved transition plan and 689 participants were still on the active caseload (the remainder had exited the program before completion). Reasons for participants’ early program exit include being no longer eligible (because they were denied parole), choosing to withdraw, being transferred to another prison and early release from prison (DESSFB, 2019c).

The Time to Work Employment Service did not meet its 2018–19 targets (see Table 1). According to the DESSFB (2019c), factors that influenced performance included the time needed to process provider staff through security clearance and inductions; differing approaches between states and territories and from prison to prison to identify eligible prisoners, promote the service and provide access and resources; the voluntary nature of the service; eligible participants having limited time and other programs to choose from; and the fact that the service had only recently commenced in some of the larger facilities.

Table 1 Time to Work Employment Service 2018–19 outcomes

Indicator	Target	Result
Proportion of eligible prisoners that participate in the service	50%	33%
Proportion of participants that complete a facilitated transfer from their in-prison service provider to their post-release employment service provider	60%	55%

Source: DESSFB, 2019c

Yarrabah Employment Services Pilot

Program

In response to consistent feedback from Indigenous organisations that services need to be designed and delivered by the community for the betterment of the community, the Australian Government invested \$5 million over four years to develop an employment

service that is more closely aligned with the community's social and economic priorities (DJSB, 2018g). The eventuating community co-designed employment service, known as Wugu Nyambil Limited, was first implemented on 2 July 2018 in Yarrabah in Far North Queensland.

According to the DESSFB (2019c), the tailored service engages with local stakeholders and uses a flexible approach to build people's capacity, skill and confidence. In the 2018–19 financial year, the employment service supported 912 Indigenous jobseekers and achieved 105 job placements.

Launch into Work

Program

In the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2016–17, the Australian Government announced the allocation of \$10 million over four years (2016 to 2020) to establish the Launch into Work pilot program. This consists of varied pre-employment projects with the shared aim to 'support jobseekers to increase their skills, experience and confidence to secure sustainable employment' (DESSFB, 2019g). To support Australia's G20 goal to reduce the gender gap in women's workforce participation by 25 per cent by 2025, the program primarily targets women (Commonwealth of Australia, n.d.-b).

The Launch into Work program was built on a previous 2016 partnership between the Department of Employment, UnitingCare Australia and the Office for Women (DESSFB, 2019g). The original partnership program involved three programs delivered in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland, each with a 100 per cent completion rate.

The current Launch into Work projects vary in design and costs depending on the employing organisation and the skills required for the intended role (Commonwealth of Australia, n.d.-b). In general, projects run between four and 12 weeks (DESSFB, 2019g). Where possible, the programs leverage from existing state subsidised training programs and the Australian Government wage subsidies program. It is expected that each project has 10 jobs available, with the number of project participants not exceeding the number of job opportunities (DESSFB, 2019g).

The various programs must all include the following components:

- accredited and non-accredited training, tailored to the positions and/or sector that the project relates to
- work experience
- participant mentoring
- employment for suitable jobseekers who successfully complete a pre-employment project.

(Commonwealth of Australia, n.d.-b)

The voluntary program is open to jobseekers of any age on from the jobactive, ParentsNext and Transition to Work caseload and is an approved activity for those with mutual obligation requirements (DESSFB, 2019g). Referrals are made by jobactive providers who identify the jobseeker as having values and attributes consistent with the organisation and role (DESSFB, 2019g). The employers—from not-for-profit, for-profit or government organisations—have the final say on which jobseekers take part in their project (DESSFB, 2019g).

Active labour market approach

The objectives and approach of the Launch to Work program are very much in line with Carter and Whitworth's (2017) description of 'human capital development' active labour market approach. The program aims to 'pull' jobseekers into employment through the focus on upskilling and in-work progression, rather than 'push' them into employment irrespective of suitability or quality.

In terms of Strathdee's (2013) policy typology, the Launch into Work program reflects both 'motivational' and 'bridging' approaches. Similar to the job specific work experience and training opportunities provided by the various Launch into Work projects, Strathdee (2013) describes 'motivational' strategies as interventions that build the jobseeker's human capital in ways that meet the needs of the labour market. Acknowledging jobseekers' intrinsic values and work ethic, it frames their unemployment as a result of lacking technical and practical skills that are demanded by employers.

With the guarantee of employment (contingent on successful project completion), the Launch into Work is an example of Strathdee's (2013) 'bridging' policy approach. Strathdee (2013) describes the 'bridging' strategies as efforts to repair deficits in an individual's social capital through the government acting as a conduit between employers and jobseekers. This strategy acknowledges that despite work experience or practical skillsets the jobseeker may hold, social networks are also vital for the facilitation of employment relationships in the open labour market (Strathdee, 2013).

Evaluation

In the 2018-19 financial year, 22 Launch into Work projects were completed, resulting in employment outcomes for 186 jobseekers, of whom 167 were women (DESSFB, 2019c).

7 Australian Government ‘human capabilities’ approaches

Transition to Work Community of Practice

Program

Alongside the mainstream Transition to Work (TtW) program, the Australian Government has also funded the Transition to Work Community of Practice model (TtW CoP). The TtW CoP was championed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, premised on the recognition that local agencies know their communities best and effort across multiple sectors is critical to enable service users to thrive (Brown, James et al., 2017; Brown and Mallett, 2017). The TtW CoP model aims to demonstrate an alternative approach to addressing youth unemployment which is built on the foundation of collaboration and multisector effort (Brown, James et al., 2017).

The TtW CoP consists of eleven TtW services providers in 13 regions around the country (Brown, James et al., 2017). The Brotherhood of St Laurence acts as the convener within the Community of Practice, with the objective to ‘enable’ member organisations to contribute and develop their complementary expertise (Brown, James et al., 2017). The convener role provides service development, practice and evaluation experience, and to ensure that learnings inform ongoing adaption and improvement (Brown, James et al., 2017). The formation and pre-commission of the TtW CoP began in 2015, with service operation beginning in 2016 (Brown, James et al., 2017). Service operation is currently funded until 2022.

In addition to its distinctive approach of organisational collaboration rather than competition, the TtW CoP service delivery thinking also differs from other mainstream Australian Government funded employment services. Unlike other programs, which predominantly depict the individual through a deficit lens, the TtW CoP adopts an Advantaged Thinking approach (Brown, James et al., 2017). This approach recognises that all young people have a vital contribution to make to the social and economic life of society and that investment should be made in building their abilities. Rather than focusing on the young person’s ‘problems’, the approach focuses on developing their assets and creating job, education, and social and community networking opportunities which will facilitate social and economic participation and enable the young person to achieve independent adulthood (Brown, James et al., 2017).

A critical aspect of the Advantaged Thinking approach is the joint focus on individual supports and structural approaches to change. The Advantaged Thinking approach understands that the way providers view and value young people influences the way they work with them, and in turn affects their ability to access opportunities and resources (Brown, James et al., 2017). Consequently, a primary objective of the Advantaged Thinking approach is to shift both the way government and community

sectors invest in young people and how employers and the community see young people and their capacity to contribute (Brown, James et al., 2017)

The TtW CoP program model consists of Four Service Offers to equip young people with the skills, experiences, networks and support necessary for sustainable employment. These Offers are established through the leveraging of local community contributions and resources (Brown, James et al., 2017). They are delivered throughout all phases of a young person's participation, from the initial guidance and exploration of strengths and opportunities, to post-placement support (Brown, James et al., 2017). The Offers are Vocational Guidance, Co-designed Planning, Real World Opportunities, and Skills and Capabilities Building (Brown, James et al., 2017).

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

- TtW CoP participants receive vocational guidance from skilled practitioners and other sources, such as employers, volunteers, mentors, and other community members and guest speakers. Guidance includes support navigating employment and education systems, as well as experiential learning opportunities to explore a range of workplaces and meet employers and industry experts. Vocational guidance is ongoing and focuses on the young person's immediate needs, as well as their long-term career goals.

CO-DESIGNED PLANNING

- Co-designed planning involves supporting the young person to identify both their career goals and the concrete actions and responsibilities they must take to achieve these goals. In collaboration with TtW staff, the young person identifies their talents and skills, their informal prior learning and areas that need further development.

SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES

- Through this Offer, participants develop non-technical employability skills that are relevant to all types of jobs. These include foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and communication technology. This Offer also develops job seeking and career management skills.

REAL WORLD OPPORTUNITIES

- This Offer provides opportunities to increase the young person's exposure to the world of work and gain experience in real workplaces. It allows the participant to broaden their knowledge of activities and expectations in a wide range of industries and to build their social capital through employer and community networking.

The staffing of the TtW CoP model comprises diverse roles with distinct responsibilities. The suggested model is the inclusion of a TtW Manager or Coordinator, Youth Development Coaches, Employer Engagement Officers and volunteers and mentors (Brown, James et al., 2017)

Active labour market approach

The problem formation and solution adopted by the TtW COP program design reflects what Brown, James et al. (2017) describe as the ‘human capabilities’ approach. Thus, the TtW COP views an unemployed young person as what they could be with supportive conditions. With this problem formation of youth unemployment, the program and its Advantaged Thinking approach provides opportunities and resources that will allow a young person to build and consolidate their capabilities for social and economic participation (Brown, James et al., 2017)

By providing supportive conditions and networking opportunities, the TtW program design further represents the ‘bridging’ approach of Strathdee’s (2013) youth engagement policy typology. ‘TtW CoP acts as a conduit between social networks, employers and young jobseekers, and attempts to repair social infrastructure deficits that act as a barrier between young people and employment (Strathdee, 2013).

Core to the ‘human capabilities’ approach is the provision of opportunities and efforts across multiple sectors (Brown, James et al., 2017). This approach is also demonstrated by the program’s Community of Practice and its aim to harness community efforts and assets. Through this collaboration, the social issue and solution is owned by the local community, rather than solely the responsibility of the individual young person or the contracted service provider.

Evaluation

In 2017, a review (van Kooy, Brown, Bowman & Mallett) provided an assessment of early outcomes achieved during the first year of implementation. As with the mainstream TtW program, the TtW CoP model’s outcomes are defined as 12 weeks of consecutive participation in employment, education or a hybrid of both, and sustained 26-week outcomes. The review found that most TtW CoP service providers were reaching 12-week outcomes in a similar time (including preparatory activities) to the national average. Some TtW CoP providers were achieving outcomes with specific cohorts, such as culturally and linguistically diverse young people, at higher percentage rates than the national average. This finding indicates that there is opportunity to learn from the specific expertise and experience of other providers. A final evaluation of the program’s outcomes and learnings is underway.

Youth Transitions Support

Program

In the 2015–16 Budget, the Australian Government allocated funds to intensive support for key groups of ‘vulnerable’ jobseekers, including young migrants. The eventual key program developed was the \$22.1 million Youth Transitions Support (YTS) pilot program, funded over four years under the DSS Settlement Grants Program (DSS, 2017c).

The initial funding allocation supported an 18-month (1 January 2016 to 30 July 2017) pilot program, which was delivered by six providers in 19 local government areas across

Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland (Synergistiq, 2018). The areas were selected for their high numbers of humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants (DSS, 2019d). In 2017, the Australian Government announced additional funding to extend the delivery of the existing program until 30 June 2018, bringing the total funds allocated to the YTS program to \$42.8 million over four years (DSS, 2017c; DSS, 2019d). The program has since secured government funding until 2020 (Community Migrant Resource Centre, 2018).

The aim of the YTS program was to support young humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants aged 15 to 25 to participate in education and work (Synergistiq, 2018). The six contracted service providers were expected to partner or develop linkages with local services and organisations to facilitate referrals, or build on existing initiatives across four thematic 'pillars' of program delivery. To support these dynamic program pillars, a third party was contracted to provide national advice and guidance to YTS service providers, as well as create a platform for collaboration (Synergistiq, 2018). The four pillars are Partnerships for employment, Strong connections to education, Increased vocational opportunities and Sports engagement for youth (Synergistiq, 2018).

PARTNERSHIPS FOR EMPLOYMENT

- The Partnerships for employment pillar is intended to increase the young participants' work experience and job opportunities, work readiness, motivation, confidence and knowledge about employment pathways, as well increase the skills and knowledge about the participant group among community service providers. This service type was designed to be delivered in partnerships/consortia with employers, jobactive service providers and other related supports.

STRONG CONNECTIONS TO EDUCATION

- The Strong connections to education pillar supports the participants to stay engaged with education and training. This component helps eligible participants through projects that support them to complete their studies, build their knowledge and increase self-confidence and peer connections.

INCREASED VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- The Increased vocational opportunities pillar provides pathways to training and work experience that will help eligible participants achieve sustainable employment outcomes. It also aims to increase engagement of employers with the participant group. It is designed to be achieved through partnerships including with TAFEs, registered training organisations and engaged employers.

SPORTS ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUTH

- The Sports engagement for youth pillar is designed to help the young participants participate in sporting activities to build social connections, demonstrate leadership, overcome isolation and increase interactions with other young Australians beyond their own communities. This program component is further intended to change

community views of refugees and vulnerable migrants within sporting clubs. It also includes broader types of leadership and cultural activities other than sport.

In acknowledging the existing resources and knowledge of the contracted YTS services providers, the design of the YTS program is flexible rather than prescriptive. As a result, the six service providers delivered distinct programs established on the four thematic pillars. This flexibility in the overarching YTS program design is intended to stimulate place-based programs that respond to the context and needs of young people in their respective communities.

Active labour market approach

In line with the 'human capabilities' approach described by Brown, James et al. (2017), the YTS program understands disengagement of young humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants in education and employment as a complex problem that requires a multifaceted solution. Rather than targeting the young person's 'deficits' or lack of 'employability', the program provides diverse opportunities and resources that allow the young person to build or consolidate their capabilities. The problem is recognised as the responsibility of the wider community, rather than simply that of the individual young jobseeker.

Brown, James et al. (2017) further described the importance of place in 'human capabilities' policy strategies addressing unemployment. This view is also evident in the dynamic problem solutions implemented by the service providers across the three states. For example, when the Brotherhood of St Laurence, one of the YTS providers in Victoria, were designing their model, they considered that their local region was well served by community and settlement services (Synergistiq, 2018). Rather than duplicate existing programs, the Brotherhood of St Laurence actively partnered with other organisations to share and leverage their diverse resources and knowledge. This place-based, partnership approach not only allowed the YTS program to expand the opportunities available for participants, but also actively promoted a shift in the way the community viewed working with newly arrived young people and refugees (Synergistiq, 2018).

Evaluation

In 2018, an evaluation (Synergistiq) of the YTS pilot period was published. Between January 2016 and June 2017, 5,492 young people received services from the six pilot providers. The evaluation reviewed the effectiveness and efficiency of the pilot program, including whether it delivered on its intended outcomes. It drew on qualitative and quantitative information from DSS data, surveys, focus groups and semi-structured interviews with stakeholder groups from all six sites.

Due to its limited timeframe, the evaluation focused on the short-term participant outcomes (within 12 months of program participation). The 14 participant-orientated, short-term outcomes generally relate to factors across the four pillars that lead to employment or education attainment and were objectively measured by a purpose-

constructed YTS Reporting Framework. For example, an intended short-term outcome under the Employment pillar is ‘increased work readiness’: the YTS Reporting Framework measures whether a young person has participated in a ‘one-off and/or ongoing group work readiness and/or work-related skill building sessions’ or ‘one-off and/or ongoing non-accredited training’.

The evaluation determined that the program was meeting its short-term objectives across the four thematic pillars. In total, 21,302 outcomes were recorded—an average of four outcomes per participant. The majority of outcomes were achieved under the Employment (36.2 per cent of all outcomes) and Sport (33.5 per cent) pillars. The pillar with the lowest share of reported outcomes was Education (13 per cent of outcomes). Attendance at work readiness courses or programs (14.2 per cent) and engagement in sports tasters, local competitions and events (12.3 per cent) were the two most reported outcomes. The average amount spent for an individual to achieve a positive outcome was \$3,357.

As the evaluation only focused on the first 18 months of program implementation, it was too early to ascertain whether the design led to medium-term outcomes (between 12 months and five years of program participation). These medium outcomes, considered more substantial, include increased employability, increased completions in vocational training and improved education. Although they were the categories where the lowest number of outcomes were recorded, two of the types of outcomes achieved by participants reflected small progress to medium-term goals: 2.4 per cent ‘obtained some form of paid employment’ and 1.9 per cent ‘completed accredited vocational training’.

A full evaluation of the YTS program is forthcoming.

8 Complementary Australian Government employment programs

The Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program

Program

In the 2013–14 Budget, the Australian Government allocated \$16.6 million for the five-year implementation and management of the Relocation Assistance to Take Up a Job program (RATTUAJ) (Vogt et al., 2018). Begun on 1 July 2014, the RATTUAJ program financially assists jobseekers to take up employment and apprenticeship opportunities in areas with lower unemployment rates than where they currently reside (Vogt et al., 2018). Though the financial assistance is typically regarded as a reimbursement of the costs incurred by the jobseeker, in some cases the payment can also be used for preparing to move, moving and settling in the new location (Vogt et al., 2018).

To be eligible for assistance, the jobseeker must be participating in jobactive or Disability Employment Services, receiving income support for 12 months or more, have mutual obligation requirements and live at least 90 minutes away from the new location (Vogt et al., 2018). Jobseekers can be reimbursed up to \$3000 if moving to a capital city or up to \$6000 if moving to a regional area. Jobseekers relocating with dependants are eligible for a larger payment (Vogt et al., 2018). Generally, the new job must be for more than 30 hours a week and ongoing for more than six months (DJSB, 2018h).

Active labour market approach

In the RATTUAJ program, the problem formation of why an individual is experiencing unemployment is vastly different from approaches taken in other Australian programs. Rather than perceiving the individual as unmotivated, as in the jobactive program, or as lacking employability skills, such as in Transition to Work, the RATTUAJ simply acknowledges that some jobseekers are unemployed due to the underlying structural cause of local job unavailability.

Evaluation

In 2018, an evaluation (Vogt et al.) examining the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of RATTUAJ was released. The evaluation covered the first 18 months of implementation and drew on administrative data, surveys and qualitative interviews with jobseekers and service providers. From 450,000 jobseekers, during the 18-month period, the evaluation determined 620 individuals had an approved Relocation Agreement and successfully relocated for a job placement.

Though the uptake of the program was marginal in the context of the eligible caseload, the evaluation found that of those who did relocate for a job, 91 per cent were either off income support or reporting earnings by the second month after the start of their agreement. This figure had fallen to 71 per cent by the twelfth month, with the

remaining 28 per cent of relocated participants on income support with no earnings. The evaluation concluded that the RATTUJ program was an effective strategy for long-term unemployed people *who were motivated* to take employment in another location and that the financial support was crucial in enabling participants to find employment elsewhere.

The evaluation identified individual and program design factors that aided program uptake and success. Those who were more likely to successfully relocate and take up a job had social networks in the new location, were seeking a fresh start and had fewer connections or family responsibilities in their previous location, could find suitable accommodation and were well supported by a service provider. Key barriers were the reluctance of providers to suggest that jobseekers consider relocating, providers' incomplete knowledge and understanding of the program, the administrative burden, and the financial mechanisms and reimbursement model of the program.

In the 2018–19 financial year, 450 individuals and families received financial assistance to relocate for ongoing, full-time employment (DESSFB, 2019c).

Wage subsidies

Program

In addition to the interventions targeting individual jobseekers, the Australian Government provides wage subsidies for businesses that employ eligible jobseekers. Though the financial assistance is not tied to any particular cost, it is intended to offset the costs that are incurred with hiring and training new staff (DJSB, 2018i). Payments are made to employers who offer ongoing positions 20 hours or more per week over a six-month wage subsidy agreement. Jobs can be full-time, part-time or casual (DJSB, 2018j). The employment offered can include apprenticeships and traineeships (DJSB, 2018j).

The wage subsidy program funds the hiring of participants engaged in jobactive, Transition to Work and the ParentsNext Intensive Stream (DJSB, 2018j). Wage subsidies are also available to Disability Employment Services and Community Development participants through the Restart wage subsidy program (DJSB, 2018j). The financial assistance targets specific cohorts of jobseekers, with the subsidy varying across the groups (DJSB, 2018j) (see Table 2).

Table 2 Government wage subsidy programs

Wage subsidy	Eligible age range	Amount employers can receive
Restart	50 years +	Up to \$10,000
Youth Bonus	15 to 24 years	Up to \$10,000 or \$6,500
Indigenous Australians	Any age	Up to \$10,000
Youth	25 to 29 years	Up to \$6,500
Parents	Any age	Up to \$6,500
Long-term unemployed (12 months or more)	Any age	Up to \$6,500

Note: Indigenous Australians may get immediate access to wage subsidies of up to \$10,000 if all eligibility requirements are met

Source: DJSB, 2018j

Active labour market approach

The wage subsidies target the structural issues of unemployment. The problem formation of unemployment in wage subsidies program goes beyond the pathology or skillsets of the individual jobseeker and instead acknowledges the lack of suitable employment opportunities as a key factor of unemployment.

Evaluation

In 2016, the Australian Government commissioned a review (DJSB, 2018i) of the barriers to uptake of wage subsidies by employers. The review also ran a trial of new approaches with the aim to increase the uptake. The review was supported by DSS data and stakeholder workshops, group interviews and surveys from different locations around Australia between October 2015 and January 2016. The trial of the new approaches took place between 25 July 2016 and 1 November 2016, analysing a sample of 1,436 employers.

The most common barriers identified by the review could be summarised in three categories: administrative complexities, financial disincentives and social disincentives. Administrative complexities include the short-time frame to sign the subsidy agreement, employers not being aware of the program or properly understanding the agreement and employers not having the systems to manage the agreement. Financial complexities included disagreement about the subsidy amount and larger businesses being less likely

to be interested. Lastly, social perceptions and beliefs that impacted program implementation included preconceptions of the program and target cohorts, the reluctance of jobseekers to be associated with the program due to its stigma or their pride and employers questioning why some jobseekers need a wage subsidy compared to others who do not.

In response, small program design changes were trialled to increase uptake of wage subsidy agreements. These included increased promotion of the program to employers, user-friendly and easier to understand wage subsidy agreements and a changed structure of subsidy payments. The review found that the changes to the program increased the number of agreements signed and reduced the time taken to finalise them. From the trial findings, some changes to the wage subsidies programs were announced in the 2016 Budget and implemented nationally from 1 January 2017.

9 State and territory employment programs

Summary of state and territory findings

The approaches to address unemployment by state and territory governments share some commonalities. All state and territory employment programs are voluntary and generally align with Carter and Whitworth's (2017) 'human capital development' categorisation of active labour market strategies, in which those who are 'harder to help' are targeted through initiatives that upskill the jobseeker and provide higher quality job opportunities. All states and territories also incorporate some form of government-hosted internship, work experience and/or graduate positions, as well as vocational education and training as key policies for pathways to workforce participation.

In contrast, there is considerable variance in program inputs, design and delivery. For example, there is no unified approach to funding mechanisms across the states and territories. Some programs are designed and delivered by the respective governments, whereas others are government designed, but tendered out to private, community and not-for-profit organisations. Another approach is to have a flexible funding system for various place-based or innovative programs.

The problem solutions to youth unemployment and unemployment also vary. While there is a general trend of training and employability skills as a problem solution, some projects also involve businesses and wider community networks. Several states and territories also acknowledge the demand-side as a factor in unemployment and offer employer incentives to hire jobseekers from target groups.

Most states targeting specific regions for their higher rates of unemployment. Very few projects have universal coverage across their state or territory. One explanation is that several governments describe their programs as complementary to or distinct from the Australian Government's mainstream programs, targeting cohorts with increased non-vocational barriers to employment. Many state and territory projects also limit participation in their programs to those ineligible for Australian Government employment programs.

While most states and territories acknowledge young people as a disadvantaged group in their policies, only three states (Queensland, Victorian and New South Wales) have comprehensive, multisite employment programs specifically targeting young people.

Government internships, work experience and graduate positions

All states and territories host employment programs within government entities and departments. These programs may be delivered in the form of cadetships, work experience, targeted employment, graduate positions, traineeships and/or internships.

They vary in whether they are paid or not and whether they lead to ongoing employment. Many target jobseekers from specific communities. The groups of young people targeted by the state and territory programs are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Employment programs hosted by government entities

	Young people	Young people with increased barriers to employment	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and/or young people	Young people and/or people with disability	People undertaking or having recently completed tertiary study or training
Australian Capital Territory			✓	✓	✓
New South Wales			✓		✓
Northern Territory			✓	✓	✓
Queensland			✓		✓
South Australia			✓	✓	✓
Tasmania					✓
Victoria		✓	✓		✓
Western Australia	✓		✓	✓	✓

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Government has a strong focus on training and apprenticeships as pathways to employment. In partnership with the Australian Government and the Skilling Australians Fund, the ACT Government administers the Future Skills for Future Jobs Grants program. This program aims to increase commencements across pre-apprenticeships, pre-traineeships, Australian Apprenticeships, and higher apprenticeships. It funds projects which include one or more priorities, including in occupations in demand, in regional areas, and/or targeting cohorts, such as women in trades or young people at risk, who are generally underrepresented (Skills Canberra, 2019a).

The vocational education, training and employment outcomes sought by the Skilling Australians Fund also underpinned the recent reform of the ACT Adult Community Education Grants program.

ACT Adult Community Education grants program

ACT Adult Community Education (ACT ACE) grants program has been operating since 1998. It

funds not-for-profit organisations to deliver programs that support individuals experiencing barriers to learning, training and work. It is expected that funded ACT ACE programs produce increased participation in work-related foundation skills training and transitions to further training, employment or volunteering (Skills Canberra, 2019b).

The most recent ACT ACE grant application round sought projects which are outcome-focused and would assist adults aged 17 years and older to develop employability skills, supportive pathways into training and work, tailoring training to the needs of target cohorts and local market needs (Skills Canberra, 2019b). Funded programs are also required to engage individuals who have low educational attainment and/or who experience barriers to training and employment. These groups include the unemployed, underemployed or people not in the labour force, young people 'at risk' (aged 17 to 24 years), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people living with disability and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Skills Canberra, 2019b).

The ACT Government has allocated \$500,000 to the 2019 ACT ACE Grants program. At November 2019, 10 programs had each been awarded around \$50,000 for two years of service delivery (Skills Canberra, 2019c). The successful projects vary in their approaches, target cohorts and program components. Only one, the Youth Employment Pathways Hub, specifically targets young people (Skills Canberra, 2019c).

Work Experience and Support Program

The Work Experience and Support Program is a voluntary 12-week employment program targeting working age people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It comprises four weeks of formal training in office skills and eight weeks of work placement in an ACT Government agency (Community Services Directorate, n.d.).

Through completion of the program, participants will receive a nationally recognised Certificate II in Business and have opportunity to:

- improve their IT, writing, office administration and communication skills
- gain practical job seeking skills
- prepare for entry into the workforce
- gain practical experience in an Australian workplace
- establish a personal network of contacts for future work and training options.

(Community Services Directorate, n.d.)

To be eligible, participants must be migrants with Australian citizenship or permanent residency, or be asylum seekers on temporary protection visas or Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (Community Services Directorate, n.d.). Priority is given to applicants who are on a refugee protection or humanitarian visa, are unemployed or not in meaningful employment and are confident to communicate proficiently in spoken and written English (Community Services Directorate, n.d.).

New South Wales

Smart, Skilled and Hired: Youth Employment Program

Introduced in 2017, the Smart, Skilled and Hired: Youth Employment Program (YEP) is New South Wales' core youth employment program. YEP is a component of the state's overarching Smart, Skilled and Hired program, a targeted youth employment initiative that aims to create new work pathways, including traineeships and apprenticeships (NSW Treasury, 2016). YEP is complemented by the Infrastructure Skills Legacy program and the Smart and Skilled program, two government programs which aim respectively to increase employment opportunities in the construction industry and improve access to certified training (Department of Industry, 2017; NSW Government, 2017a).

YEP is a \$65 million investment over three years (2017–18 to 2019–20) to assist young people overcome barriers to employment and gain skills and experience that will improve their long-term job and socioeconomic prospects (Department of Industry, 2018a). It targets four regions within New South Wales that have high rates of youth unemployment: Western Sydney, Hunter/Central Coast, New England/North West and North Coast (Department of Industry, 2018a).

To be eligible for YEP, participants must be aged 15 to 24 years, unemployed or underemployed, have finished year 10 (or have turned 17) and not registered with an Australian Government employment program, such as Youth Jobs PaTH or Transition to Work (Department of Industry, 2018a). Young participants can access the service by directly approaching program providers or be referred by external services (Department of Industry, 2018a).

YEP adopts a flexible approach, with staff providing supports specific to the needs of the individual participant. The tailored support plans can address skills training, accommodation, transport, and health and wellbeing. It engages with local employers to understand existing employment opportunities and skills gaps (NSW Government, n.d.).

Smart, Skilled and Hired: Youth Employment Innovation Challenge

The Smart, Skilled and Hired: Youth Employment Innovation Challenge (YEIC) was a \$10 million grant program funding innovative solutions and ideas that support young people with multiple and complex barriers to employment in regions with high rates of youth

unemployment. YEIC programs were seeking solutions for a range of target groups, including young people who were 'at risk'; early school leavers and young people disengaged from school; young people not in education, employment or training; and young people not registered with Australian Government employment programs or in receipt of income support (Department of Industry, n.d.-a).

Projects were selected on their ability to demonstrate employment outcomes for young people, a good understanding of youth unemployment and approaches, an innovative approach to service delivery and program design, commercial sustainability, engagement with young people in the process of designing the solution and strong team or partnership knowledge. Projects were also chosen on their capacity to evolve into new ideas and can be scaled and replicated in other regions (Department of Industry, n.d.-b).

Applications for YEIC funding closed in mid-2018 with 12 projects funded. These vary in their design, target cohort and delivery region. At November 2019, many of YEIC funded projects are currently being implemented.

Sticking Together Project Social Impact Bond

Originally piloted in Victoria, South Australia and Queensland, the NSW Sticking Together Project is an innovative approach to youth unemployment in Shoalhaven, Illawarra and Sydney Inner South regions, areas not currently serviced by NSW's Smart, Skilled & Hired Youth Employment Program (see p. 58) (Office of Social Impact Investment, n.d.). The project is funded by the NSW Government through a social impact bond contract, investing \$5 million over four years. It commenced in April 2019 and is expected to support some 870 young people aged 18–24 years with high barriers to employment, such as disability or mental health challenges, a criminal conviction or a lack of stable housing (Office of Social Impact Investment, n.d.).

The Sticking Together Project model involves 60 weeks of one-to-one coaching for each young participant, focusing on employment engagement, individual skills building and personal development (SYC, 2019). Delivery costs over the 18-month period range from \$7,000 to \$12,000 per participant (SYC, 2019).

The Refugee Employment Support Program

Funded by the NSW Department of Industry and philanthropic funds, the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP) is a four-year \$22 million initiative aimed to address the challenges that are experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in finding long-term skilled jobs (NSW Government, 2017b). The program commenced in late 2017 and targets Western Sydney and Illawarra, two areas where a large proportion of refugees and asylum seekers settle in NSW. It aims to support up to 6,000 refugees and 1,000 asylum seekers to find sustainable employment (NSW Government, 2017b).

To be eligible, participants must be aged 18 to 55 years, have arrived in Australia after 1 December 2011, and be a refugee or an asylum seeker (in Western Sydney region only) (NSW Government, 2017b).

RESP offers a range of supports. These include: assistance attaining suitable employment that uses their skills, English language skill training, education and training opportunities (including higher education through the Smart and Skilled program), mentorship, assistance to gain recognition of overseas qualifications and skills, employability training, business skills development for those wanting to start their own business, work experience opportunities and support overcoming transport barriers (NSW Government, 2018).

The New Careers for Aboriginal People program

In partnership with the Australian Government and the other states and territories, the NSW Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal people to 'actively influence and fully participate in social, economic and cultural life' (NSW Government, 2017c, p. 4). The New Careers for Aboriginal People (NCAP) program helps support this strategic direction by assisting Aboriginal people to access training pathways and employment (NSW Government, 2017c).

The NCAP is a state-wide NSW Department of Industry program which broadly aims to assist Aboriginal people address their individual needs and enhance their prospects of permanent employment (NSW Government, 2017c). In practice, the objective is to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the labour market by identifying and providing sustainable education, training and employment opportunities at a local level. Participation is voluntary and open to working-age Aboriginal jobseekers who wish to find work or improve their current job situation (NSW Government, 2017c).

The program provides jobseekers one-on-one tailored support with an Aboriginal Employment Advisor who offers a range of supports, including an individualised Career Path Plan, job search, résumé preparation and interview guidance, assistance with employment and training in line with the jobseeker's desired outcomes, and referrals to other agencies if required (NSW Government, 2017c). The Aboriginal Employment Advisors monitor local labour market trends and actively network with external agencies, community organisations, Aboriginal Business Advisors, Aboriginal communities and employers to create meaningful opportunities for NCAP participants (NSW Government, 2017c).

In the 2017–18 financial year, the NSW Government spent \$636,027 on the NCAP program, funding eight organisations to employ Aboriginal Employment Advisors (Department of Industry, 2018b). In the same period the NCAP program assisted 735 Aboriginal people into employment and 845 people into training.

Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory there is a strong focus on vocational education and training as a pathway into employment. As described by the Northern Territory Government (2018, p. 9) in their most recent Investment Plan, investment in skills is ‘an important pillar to achieve a strong and productive workforce’. The large investment in skills and vocational education and training aims to support priority outcomes identified by the Territory’s Strategic Directions 2017–2021, including the production of more jobs, a more skilled workforce, increased regional workforce participation and more Aboriginal Territorians in jobs and running businesses (Northern Territory Government, 2018).

The Territory’s investment is supported by financial contributions from the Australian Government through the Skilling Australians Fund (Council of Federal Financial Relations, 2018b). One initiative that was co-funded through the partnership agreement is the Territory Workforce Program. This program is one of the Northern Territory’s core skills and training initiatives, with the purpose to ‘assist organisations to develop industry-driven workforce initiatives to maximise job opportunities for Territorians and build a skilled workforce for business and industry, now and into the future’ (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2018a, p. 4).

As part of the commitment to producing a skilled workforce, the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation (2019a) has recently announced Territory Workforce 4.0, to address the potential impact of industry change, such as automation or mass production, on the Northern Territory economy. The initiative encompasses three components: to provide infrastructure support that facilitates future-focused training delivery and enhances innovation, to provide individual Territorians with access to approved future skills training, and to support individuals to capitalise on opportunities that arise from significant projects or future economic opportunities specific to a region (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019a). The department has budgeted \$4.2 million over two years for the program. At November 2019, the program is yet to be implemented.

In addition to accredited training and apprenticeship uptake and future skills, the Northern Territory Government has also invested in programs that aim to provide skills and support that will enable targeted disadvantaged groups to participate in employment or training.

Pre-employment Training Program

The Pre-employment Training Program is a grant scheme that funds eligible training providers, industry associations or community groups to deliver training programs that provide jobseekers (of all ages) with practical skills to help them get a job, apprenticeship or traineeship (Northern Territory Government, 2019a). Priority is given to projects which lead to employment where there are skill shortages or difficult-to-fill occupations (Northern Territory Government, 2019a). Funding is provided for projects that target unemployed people and lead to participants continuing vocational education

or training, or act as an entry into a particular workforce or occupation (Northern Territory Government, 2019a).

In the 2018–19 investment plan \$250,000 was budgeted for the Pre-employment Training Program, with applications open to organisations year-round (Northern Territory Government, 2018). In the 2018–19 financial year, five organisations were allocated a total of \$219,020 (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019b).

Equity Training Program

The Equity Training Program is another grant scheme. It funds incorporated organisations, registered training organisations and schools to run programs and activities designed to improve training and employment outcomes for working age people facing disadvantage. The proposed program must respond to community needs and include accredited training with nationally recognised qualifications or units of competency outcomes (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2017). Funded programs vary in design, but commonly include employability skills training, work experience, pre and post-placement support for employees and employers, and practical assistance to overcome barriers (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2017).

In terms of ‘disadvantaged’ jobseekers, the Equity Training Program seeks applications for projects which improve employment outcomes for:

- people with a disability
- parents returning to the workforce after an absence of five years or more
- long-term unemployed migrants
- refugees
- the mature-aged
- very long-term (more than two years) unemployed people or those at risk of becoming very long-term unemployed.

(Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2017)

In the 2018–19 investment plan \$300,000 was budgeted for the Equity Training Program, with applications open year-round (Northern Territory Government, 2018). In the 2018–19 financial year, three organisations were allocated a total of \$160,930 (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019b).

Aboriginal Employment Program

The Aboriginal Employment Program seeks to increase economic and employment outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians. It offers support to employers to provide Aboriginal jobseekers with employment and training opportunities (Department of

Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019c). It is open to Northern Territory enterprises, including Aboriginal corporations, private businesses, not-for-profit organisations, industry bodies and other incorporated organisations (Northern Territory Government, 2019c). Funds are allocated to employers through two grant schemes: Aboriginal Workforce Grants and Aboriginal Responsive Skills Grants.

In addition to the grant programs, the Aboriginal Employment Program funds dedicated workforce coordinators in each region of the Northern Territory. Their role is to connect organisations and industry with services, including other regional initiatives and government programs (Northern Territory Government, 2019d).

In the 2018–19 financial year, the Aboriginal Employment Program supported 102 businesses and organisations and 1,915 Aboriginal people into jobs (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019b).

Aboriginal Workforce Grants

Aboriginal Workforce Grants fund one-off initiatives that will help increase the number of working age Aboriginal people who obtain and sustain employment. To be eligible, projects must include structured mentoring, workforce development, and/or support services (Northern Territory Government, 2019c). Support services can include language, numeracy and literacy support, on-site mentoring and structured support, or transport or accommodation where there is no alternative (Northern Territory Government, 2019c).

In 2019, 13 organisations were allocated a total of \$758,615 in grants (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019b).

Aboriginal Responsive Skilling Grants

The Aboriginal Responsive Skilling Grants provides funding for accredited and non-accredited training which meets the needs of Aboriginal people 17 years or older living in urban, regional and remote communities and leads to employment opportunities (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019c). The program only funds training opportunities that are not funded through any other sources (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019c).

In the 2018-19 financial year, 62 businesses across Katherine, Alice Springs, Barkley, Darwin, East Arnhem and West Arnhem were awarded Aboriginal Responsive Skilling Grants to the value of \$1,923,100 (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019b). During this period, 1,613 people participated in 165 accredited and non-accredited training programs across 57 communities (Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, 2019b).

Queensland

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

The Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) initiative comprises a mix of targeted programs that assist people facing barriers to participation in training and the labour market. After the initial SQW program was discontinued by the Liberal state government in 2012, the new Palaszczuk Labor government reintroduced the initiative with a budget of \$240 million over four years (Queensland Government, 2015). In 2017, the government committed an additional \$180 million over three years (Queensland Labor, 2017), totalling a \$420 million state investment over six years (2015–16 to 2020–21) to support up to 54,000 jobseekers into work. By 30 June 2019, 24,493 Queenslanders had gained employment as a direct result of participating in SQW programs (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019a).

The SQW initiative is intended to increase workforce participation, drive job growth and strengthen the performance of the Queensland economy by improving work opportunities (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019b). The SQW programs each have clearly defined target groups, individual pathways, an integrated mix of assistance, strong support for participants, and voluntary participation (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019b). At November 2019, the vast majority of sites where the SQW funded programs are located in regional and urban areas near the east coast of Queensland.

Of the seven SQW programs, three programs (Ready for Work, see p. 64; Get Set for Work, see p. 65; and Work Start, see p. 65) focus on young people's employment. SQW also includes Youth Skills (see p. 66), a traineeship program targeting young people who are engaged with the justice system.

In addition to the youth-focused programs, SQW also includes three programs targeting disadvantaged jobseekers of all ages. The Community Work Skills (\$16.8 million 2019–20 investment) aims to deliver tailored support gain nationally recognised skills and qualifications (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019b). The Work Skills Traineeship program funds paid work placements on community, public work and environmental projects for up to six months (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019b). Lastly, the First Start program provides wage subsidies to local councils and community-based organisations to employ additional trainees (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019b).

Ready for Work

Ready for Work is a short program (up to six to eight weeks) targeting young jobseekers (15 to 24 years) who 'lack the skills and/or knowledge to find employment' (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019c, p. 2). The program targets young Queenslanders who are ineligible for Australian Government employment services or assistance, or have accessed Australian Government services for more than six months

and remain unemployed and/or require complementary services because they remain unemployed (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019c). Priority will be given to young people who have already left school, though school students may also be eligible in extenuating circumstances (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019c).

In 2019–20, \$1.5 million of funding is available to organisations to assist up to 2,000 young jobseekers. The Queensland Government allocates funding to community and not-for-profit organisations on a maximum 12-month term (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019c). It is expected of the funded organisations to both provide participants with skills and knowledge that will enable them to gain jobs and work with local business and employers to develop employment and upskilling opportunities for participants.

The job search assistance and training includes résumé preparation and writing, job interview skills, job search advice, employability skills and networking opportunities (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019c).

Get Set for Work

The Get Set for Work program aims to provide young Queenslanders aged 15–19 years with nationally recognised training and integrated learning support that will allow them to successfully transition to employment and/or further education (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019d). Like the Ready for Work program, the Get Set for Work program primarily targets young people who are ineligible for Australian Government employment services or assistance or who have accessed Australian Government services for more than six months and remain unemployed and/or require complementary services because they remain unemployed (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019d). Priority is given to young people who are no longer enrolled and have already left school.

In 2019–20, \$8.75 million is available to organisations to assist up to 2,500 young jobseekers. The Queensland Government allocates maximum 12-month term funding to community-based, not-for-profit organisations to deliver the integrated learner support component and to registered training organisations to provide the recognised training component. The program participant is provided opportunities to gain a qualification up to certificate III level, career advice, job preparation skills and case management (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019d).

Work Start incentives (Youth Boost)

The Work Start program is a private sector employer incentive program to hire a trainee or apprentice who has participated in a SQW program (youth focused or general). An initial \$10,000 is paid to the employer once the jobseeker (of any age) has completed three months of employment (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019e). A second \$10,000 Youth Boost payment is paid to the employers of jobseekers

aged 15–24 once they complete 12 months of employment (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019e).

This program is open to private sector employers who are ineligible for the Back to Work incentive program (see p. 66). In 2019–20, up to \$4 million will be available under the Work Start incentive program (both general and Youth Boost payments) (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019e).

Youth Skills

The Youth Skills program is a training program for young people (15–24 years) who are engaged with Youth Justice Services or Queensland Corrective Services. It targets young people who are ineligible for Australian Government employment services or assistance or who have accessed Australian Government services for more than six months and remain unemployed, require complementary services because they remain unemployed, and/or have completed the Transition 2 Success program (see p. 67) (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019f). In 2019–20, \$1 million is available to assist up to 250 people gain nationally accredited training.

Back to Work (Youth Boost)

The Back to Work (Youth Boost) is a program designed to incentivise employers to hire unemployed young people in areas experiencing labour market challenges. It operates in two areas: Regional Queensland and South-East Queensland. Most recently, the Queensland Government committed \$155 million to Back to Work Regional and \$20.5 million to Back to Work South East Queensland to be implemented for an additional two years (2018 to 2020) (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2018). This funding allocation includes the Youth Boost Program, as well as employer incentives for other cohorts, such as mature aged jobseekers.

To be eligible for Back to Work (Youth Boost) payments, employers are required to hire a young person aged 15–24 years who has been unemployed for four weeks or more. Three payments are paid periodically to employers when the young person achieves continuous employment milestones. The incentive payments cap at \$20,000 once the young person has worked with the same employer for 52 consecutive weeks. Only employers in selected Regional and South-East Queensland local government areas are eligible to participate.

During the 2017–18 financial year, 9,340 young people were employed through the Back to Work (Youth Boost) incentive scheme (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2018). In the 2018–19 financial year, \$79.3 million was spent through the broader Back to Work scheme to support 5,311 Queenslanders gain employment (Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2019a). It is unclear what proportion of this group were young people.

Transition 2 Success

The Transition 2 Success (T2S) program is a state-funded initiative which aims to lower offending rates of young people by engaging them with education, training and employment. The program is voluntary and open to young people over 15 years of age who are in the justice system or considered at risk of entering it (Queensland Government, 2019). Within this eligible cohort, the program targets young people who face barriers to mainstream education, training and employment, such as those with past or current trauma, abuse or neglect, lack of stable education, ongoing complex family situations and/or mental ill health (Queensland Government, 2019).

In acknowledging that the participants' barriers to education, training and employment are complex, the T2S program's objectives are multifaceted. The program aims to:

- enhance young people's acquisition of practical skills which will allow them to access employment, education and training opportunities
- develop young people's social skills, behaviour and emotional regulation to increase their readiness to access and sustain employment, education and training
- improve community perceptions of young people and their ability to overcome personal challenges to engage in prosocial activities
- build community capacity to invest in services and support young people.

(Deloitte Access Economics, 2018, p. 12)

At November 2019, the T2S program is delivered in 11 remote, regional and metropolitan areas across Queensland. As part of the state's recently introduced Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023, the government allocated an additional \$28.69 million over four years to expand the program delivery to 20 sites (Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, 2019). In each location, the T2S programs leverage from diverse resources and community partnerships that are relevant to the local young participants' needs (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018).

The direct service delivery of the T2S consists of three main components: job-related training, social skills training and behaviour management training (Queensland Government, 2019). Job-related training includes careers counselling, job training (including Nationally Accredited Training), and work experience placements Social skill training refers to setting behaviour goals, learning how to interact with others and teaching the young person to manage their emotions when they feel vulnerable or challenged. Lastly, the behaviour management training helps guide young people's behaviour, challenges them to personally improve and encourages participants to hold each other to account.

In 2018, Deloitte Access Economics undertook an outcome evaluation of the T2S program to broadly assess its effectiveness, appropriateness and sustainability. The

evaluation (Deloitte Access Economics, 2018) adopted a mixed methods approach and included findings from October 2017 to August 2018. It determined that the T2S program had successfully facilitated the engagement of participants with education, employment and training, with 95 per cent of them transitioning into one of these pathways or another T2S course. T2S participants who had successfully completed their course had lower levels of reoffending than a comparison cohort.

The evaluation identified several barriers to T2S success: lack of motivation and readiness among some participants, external influences such as family difficulties and mental health challenges, participants being out of education for a prolonged period, variable skills and abilities of the young people, lack of culturally appropriate activities and the short length of delivery.

The evaluation also included a cost-benefit analysis of the program's sustainability and efficiency. Factoring in the financial benefits that are driven by the reduction in offending, such as the avoided costs of custody and crime, the evaluation determined that the program has a net benefit value of \$15.6 million and a benefit cost ratio of 2.57. Thus, every dollar spent on the program results in \$2.57 of benefits.

South Australia

Skilling South Australia

In 2018, South Australia's new Liberal Government launched the Skilling South Australia program, a state-wide initiative with the prime objective to drive apprenticeship growth. This is the state's largest (and virtually sole) pre-employment and employment program, established on the logic that apprenticeships and training will provide quality employment opportunities for jobseekers, as well as skilled workers for industries where they are needed most (Government of South Australia, 2018).

Skilling South Australia was the result of a pre-election commitment to support traineeships and apprenticeship for occupations in demand, sectors of future growth, industries struggling with current skills shortages, and rural and regional areas (Liberal South Australia, 2018). The \$202.8 million initiative is funded through a matched funding agreement between the Australian Government and the Government of South Australia (Council of Federal Financial Relations, 2018a). Over four years (1 July 2018 and 30 June 2022) it is expected to create 20,800 apprenticeship and traineeships (Government of South Australia, 2018b).

The initiative comprises distinct contracted projects, delivered through businesses in need of apprentices or trainees, industry associations, group training organisations, training providers, regional bodies and local government (Department of Innovation and Skills, 2019). Though the broader initiative does not target any group, the competitive funding guidelines 'welcome' project proposals that target specific cohorts, such as people aged between 21 and 24 years, young people in casual employment, Aboriginal

apprentices and people with no post-school qualifications, or under-representation in an industry which may relate to gender, culture, background or experience (Government of South Australia, 2018a; Department for Innovation and Skills, 2019).

In response to employer and industry feedback, Skilling South Australia has four focused measures in driving apprenticeship and traineeships: industry and employer support, student support, training support and system development.

- Industry and employer support includes industry plans, a new advisory service for employers and students, additional support for first-time employers, targeted incentives for employers and industries, and additional funding for group training organisations.
- Student supports include improved career advice, learner support services and additional financial support for accommodation, travel and equipment.
- Training support refers to more subsidised courses, greater access for non-Government training providers, and tailored project funding.
- System development includes a marketing campaign, reducing regulatory burden on employers, signature projects, Industry Skills Councils, and strengthening policy to support companies employing apprentices and trainees.

(Council of Federal Financial Relations, 2018a)

In the 2018–19 financial year, Skilling South Australia was expected to support the commencement of 13,745 traineeships and apprenticeships, 3,500 more than the pre-program baseline (Government of South Australia, 2019). It achieved 12,941 commencements, 96 per cent of its target (Government of South Australia, 2019).

Building Family Opportunities

The Building Family Opportunities (BFO) program was an initiative of the South Australian Department of Premier and Cabinet, administered by the SA Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (Brown, Osborne et al., 2017). The pilot program was delivered by non-government organisations in three disadvantaged local areas (Playford, Port Augusta and Port Adelaide/Enfield) between 2010 and 2013 (Brown, Osborne et al., 2017). The BFO continues to be delivered by non-government organisations in disadvantaged areas; however it is now administered by the state's Department for Innovation and Skills.

The BFO program supports long-term unemployed families who are experiencing complex and interrelated personal, family and vocational barriers (Walter et al., 2016). Its primary aims are to:

- increase the social and economic participation of the families
- secure sustainable employment for at least one of the family members

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- increase the participation and engagement of child and dependants into education and work
 - improve the responsiveness of systems and services to meet the needs of the families (Isherwood, Moskos, King, Walker & Brown, 2017).

To be eligible, families must have a dependant aged 24 years or less, a parent on income support and no reported earnings from employment in the previous 12 months (Isherwood, Moskos, King, Walker & Brown, 2017). Families with dependent children that are facing or experiencing retrenchment may also be eligible for BFO assistance (Department for Innovation and Skills, n.d.).

BFO takes a 'life-first' approach, offering 18-months of intensive, strengths-based case management to support families in addressing and overcoming the complex barriers that are preventing them from gaining and sustaining employment. The case management support includes mentoring, and linking families with local community organisations, training and employers to assist them getting a job (Department for Innovation and Skills, n.d.). The program further supports young people in the family to complete secondary education and/or participate in prevocational, learning and skills development programs which support employment opportunities (Department for Innovation and Skills, n.d.).

After the pilot (June 2010 to December 2013), a series of evaluations of BFO were commissioned by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Three of these evaluations (Walter et al., 2016; Brown, Osborne et al, 2017b; Isherwood, Moskos, King, Walker & Brown, 2017) are publicly accessible. This paper considers two of these evaluations, each focusing on the pilot period, which had a throughput of 393 participants aged 15 years or older.

Walter et al. (2016) undertook a qualitative evaluation that drew on the first-hand accounts of 31 BFO program participants. The aim was to understand how the BFO program addresses a client's personal barriers to employment, as well as the aspects they felt enabled 'successful outcomes' for them individually and for their wider family. The authors concluded that to provide the best chance of gaining and sustaining employment, employment programs should address personal and vocational barriers in tandem.

In addition to vocational education and employment support, such as brokering funded training and assisting the jobseeker to find a job, the evaluation identified the psychosocial support and the practical assistance provided to program participants as integral to achieving employment. With most participants having histories of mental ill health, all participants articulated their appreciation for the one-on-one emotional and social support of case managers. For many, it was the first time in their lives they had had a person who provided them with a sense of emotional stability and support. Participants also discussed how practical support laid the groundwork for progressing in

education, training, and/or employment. This practical assistance included help in gaining a driver's licence, finding stable housing, becoming more financially literate and accessing the health system.

A second evaluation (Isherwood, Moskos, King, Walker & Brown, 2017) explored the association between the level of disadvantage, service delivery and outcomes in education and employment for BFO program participants. In determining the level of disadvantage, the evaluation drew on a wide range of measures, including three or more years of joblessness; no current enrolment in education; a disability, impairment or long-term health condition; homelessness; and no recent participation in community activities, groups or voluntary work.

The evaluation found that during the pilot 27.5 per cent of all BFO jobseekers found work and 43.5 per cent entered education and/or training. The employment outcome results were comparable to that of a similar clientele of the (then) Jobs Services Australia mainstream employment service. In contrast, education participation was much higher for those in the BFO program, with the comparison Jobs Services Australia group only achieving between 15 and 20 per cent of education and training outcomes.

The evaluation identified a correlation between levels of disadvantage and participant education, training and/or employment outcomes, with those experiencing the greatest disadvantage less likely to achieve outcomes. It further identified systemic issues beyond the remit of the BFO program, such as labour market conditions, financial disadvantage, housing and access to certain services, as impacting upon clients' progress.

SAYES (SA Young Entrepreneurs Scheme)

SAYES is designed to assist young (aged 18 to 35 years) South Australian entrepreneurs to develop and create a sustainable business. The program duration is 12 months, with participants attending a 2.5-hour training session and 1-hour individual mentoring session each month (Chamber of Commerce and Industry South Australia, n.d.). The training sessions cover topics including legal, finances and digital strategy (Chamber of Commerce and Industry South Australia, n.d.). By completion of the program it is expected that the young participant will have a comprehensive, fully-formed business plan, ready to launch or establish their business (Chamber of Commerce and Industry South Australia, n.d.).

Aspiring SAYES participants are required to complete an online application and attend an interview. The scheme also requires the young person to pay a \$1,500 fee to participate.

LaunchME

Launched as a pilot program in 2017, the LaunchMe program continues to operate in South Australia supported by state government funds. Designed in direct consultation with its target cohort, LaunchME is a free initiative that gives low income earners of any

age the opportunity to develop, finance and launch their own microenterprise. The program is tailored to fit the needs of each participant and provides personalised coaching, mentoring, business planning, building skills and networks to support their business. It also provides microenterprise loans of up to \$5,000 (Good Shepherd Microfinance, n.d.).

To be eligible, participants must earn less than \$45,000 a year (after tax), hold a Healthcare or Pension Card and reside in South Australia (Good Shepherd Microfinance, n.d.). Between May 2017 and June 2018, the South Australian LaunchMe program directly supported 47 clients to develop their microenterprise (Good Shepherd Microfinance, 2018).

Tasmania

Tasmania's current workforce and employment policy efforts have a strong focus on creating and supporting job opportunities through cadetships, traineeships and apprenticeships in priority industries. For example, its Industry and Regionally-Led Solutions Program aims to increase the number of apprenticeships and trainees by 40 per cent by 2025 (Department of State Growth, 2019). This grant program, which is in its early stages, funds projects which must resolve or significantly address a barrier or issue preventing employment of apprentices or trainees in specific industries or regions (Department of State Growth, 2019). This could include wrap-around services that address employment barriers, such as transport, literacy and numeracy skills, or language (Department of State Growth, 2019).

Except for selected programs within the Training and Work Pathways Program (see next section), Tasmania lacks initiatives that strictly focus on direct employment outcomes. However, in the 2017–18 Budget the Tasmanian Government committed \$4.1 million over four years to the Employment Partnership: Jobs Action Package (Package). This is a collaborative initiative between the Tasmanian Government, the Tasmanian Council of Social Services and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with the aim of joining local businesses with workers, particularly in regional communities. It intends to broker solutions between local employers' needs and Tasmanians who are unemployed, underemployed, in precarious employment or not participating in the labour market (Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2017).

In the same Budget the Tasmanian Government also allocated \$600,000 over three years to the Whitelion Work Ready Program, to provide support to 'high-risk' young people aged 16 to 24 years experiencing vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment (Tasmanian Government, 2017b). However, according to Whitelion's (n.d.) website, the four Whitelion offices in Tasmania closed on 1 October 2019.

Training and Work Pathways Program

The Training and Work Pathways Program (Pathways Program) is Tasmania's key program targeting Tasmanians facing disadvantage and experiencing barriers to education, training and employment. A grant program, it funds innovative, targeted projects that provide support, pathways and opportunities to employment and/or further training (Department of State Growth, 2018). Projects funded through the Pathways Program are diverse, though each must clearly identify the barriers to training and employment they seek to address and the support services they will utilise to assist access and successful participation (Department of State Growth, 2018).

The 2019 Pathways Program funding round had a budget of \$1,950,000 and sought projects which would meet the following objectives:

- Increase participation by Tasmanians facing disadvantage in education-related activities that will help them into employment
- Support collaborative relationships between Tasmanians facing disadvantage, community organisations, industry, employers and training organisations to improve life chances in relation to education, training and employment
- Identify existing barriers and propose targeted solutions to enhance the employment potential and opportunities for disadvantaged Tasmanians to engage productively in education and employment
- Expand and sustain learning opportunities by supporting innovative community-based learning that leads to increasing participation in education and employment
- Improve the quality of learning experiences and outcomes by promoting learning opportunities in new and flexible ways, especially with regard to location and delivery arrangements
- Provide supported pathways for Tasmanians facing disadvantage to better access effective transitions into apprenticeships and traineeships; and/or undertake activities that assist employers and industry to address barriers and blockages to recruiting Tasmanians facing barriers to commencing and successfully completing apprenticeships/traineeships.

(Department of State Growth, 2018, p. 2)

In terms of addressing disadvantage and barriers to participation, the successful projects can elect to target a range of factors: age (especially being perceived as 'too young' or 'too old'), low levels of education and skills development, low numeracy and literacy skills, low-income and poverty, disability, mental ill health, lack of English fluency and minority culture background, isolation due to rural or remote location with inadequate transport and services, a history of offending and imprisonment, and a history of family violence.

In the 2019 funding round 18 projects were successful. The funds allocated to the projects ranged from \$23,574 to \$220,631, with 24 months the longest term (Skills Tasmania, n.d.). Nine of these projects specifically list young people aged 15 to 24 years as a target cohort (Skills Tasmania, n.d.).

Victoria

In the 2016–17 state Budget Victoria’s Labor government announced the \$53 million Jobs Victoria Initiative (Department of Treasury and Finance, 2016). Jobs Victoria includes a suite of programs which collectively aim to ‘help people find employment more quickly and ensure disadvantaged Victorians remain engaged in the labour market’ (Department of Treasury and Finance, 2016, p. 4). Jobs Victoria is designed to complement Australian Government programs in supporting disadvantaged jobseekers, particularly in disadvantaged and rural areas (Department of Treasury and Finance, 2016).

Jobs Victoria oversees all of Victoria’s employment programs and services, including: Jobs Victoria Employment Network, Work and Learning Centres, Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund, LaunchMe, community co-designed projects, and the expansion of market opportunities through policies targeting local business and employees (Jobs Victoria, 2019). The initiative also includes the Victoria Social Enterprise Strategy, a framework to drive employment participation and inclusive economies growth (Jobs Victoria, 2018a).

Under Jobs Victoria, the Victorian Government also hosts paid youth traineeships and cadetships across various government departments and entities. This program is open to young people aged 15 to 24 years from groups such as long-term unemployed or having a disability or mental illness. In 2018–19, 298 traineeships were commenced (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, 2019).

In 2018–19, around 4,000 jobseekers were supported into employment; and 2,159 long-term achieved a 26-week milestone (Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, 2019).

Jobs Victoria Employment Network

A core component of the Jobs Victoria initiative is the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN). The JVEN was established in response to the University of Melbourne’s review of Victoria’s employment programs, which found that the existing system lacked scale, coverage and coordination (Jobs Victoria, n.d.). The review further identified that Australian Government employment services were not effective for some jobseekers who have complex vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment (Jobs Victoria, n.d.). The Government of Victoria launched the JVEN in October 2016, with the objective to assist Victorian jobseekers who experience disadvantage in the labour market to gain and retain employment (Jobs Victoria, 2017). The program further aims to assist Victorian businesses to meet their skills and labour needs, and contribute to a more

streamlined, coordinated suite of employment programs for Victoria jobseekers (Jobs Victoria, 2017).

The JVEN provides funding to various organisations that have produced a sound program design to provide tailored assistance to jobseekers and meet labour market needs (Jobs Victoria, 2016). JVEN projects should provide jobseekers with job search support, work preparation (including job-specific skills training), job matching and placement into employment, personal non-vocational support (in collaboration with other community organisations) and referral to external programs, such as vocational training and literacy numeracy support, if required (Jobs Victoria, 2016). The funded programs should also complement existing Australian Government employment services and leverage existing state schemes and training programs (Jobs Victoria, 2016).

To be eligible for a JVEN program, jobseekers are required to be long-term unemployed (six months or longer) and either ineligible for full Australian Government employment services or identified as having increased or complex barriers to employment (Jobs Victoria, 2017). These groups include Aboriginal jobseekers, youth justice clients, long-term unemployed people from culturally diverse communities, young people in out-of-home care and young people not engaged in education, training or employment (Jobs Victoria, 2017).

A core feature of the JVEN is the focus on specific areas and cohorts (see Table 4).). The subsequently funded programs are diverse in location, target group and approach.

Table 4 Jobs Victoria Employment Network priority areas and cohorts

Priority location	Targeted jobseekers
Melbourne – Eastern (especially Burwood, Box Hill, Ringwood, Boronia and Bayswater)	Broad range of disadvantaged jobseekers, including young people, mature age, and multicultural jobseekers
Melbourne – Inner South	Broad range of disadvantaged jobseekers, including young people and mature age
Melbourne – South-East (focusing on Frankston and Mornington Peninsula)	Broad range of disadvantaged jobseekers, including young people, mature age and ex-offenders
Melbourne – South-East (focusing on Dandenong)	Workers retrenched from automotive supply chain businesses (with barriers to re-employment)
Melbourne – Western (focusing on Flemington area)	Unemployed and disengaged jobseekers from refugee and other migrant communities
Central Highlands region	Broad range of disadvantaged jobseekers, including young people, mature age and multicultural jobseekers, ex-offenders
Great South Coast region	Broad range of disadvantaged jobseekers
Ovens-Murray region	Broad range of disadvantaged jobseekers, including young people, mature age, multicultural jobseekers, ex-offenders
Multilocation	Youth justice clients, with a focus on ‘first-time’ offenders

Source: Jobs Victoria, 2017, p. 5

Through the JVEN and its programs 3,048 unemployed Victorians were supported into a job in the 2017–18 financial year and 1,527 individuals reached the six-month employment milestone (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, 2018).

Work and Learning Centres

Based on the success of the Brotherhood of St Laurence’s existing Centre for Work and Learning program model, in 2011 the Victorian Coalition government committed to fund Work and Learning Centres (WLCs) across Victoria in areas with high concentrations of public housing (Bodsworth, 2014). Today, five government funded WLCs continue to operate across the state: one in inner Melbourne and four in various regional cities (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2019b). The core aim of WLCs is to provide pathways to learning and work (Bodsworth, 2014).

Recognising that public housing residents and those living in disadvantaged communities face significant personal and structural barriers to accessing employment and training, the WLC seeks to provide personalised support and link to employers (Bodsworth, 2014). The key elements of the WLC model are:

- place-based approach
- a core model, with flexibility
- voluntary engagement
- building human capital
- leveraging organisational social capital
- building individual social capital
- prime provider approach. (Bodsworth, 2014, p. 4).

In practice, working age jobseekers receive skills assessment sessions, training, computer classes, guidance on résumé preparation, interview techniques, and guidance on Australian workplace culture and the needs of local employers (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2019b). The WLC staff further advocate on jobseekers' behalf, connect them to local employers and training and apprenticeship opportunities, refer them to relevant local services and continue to support them once they have commenced employment or training.

In 2014, the Brotherhood of St Laurence published a progress report of the five government-funded sites (Carlton, Moe, Shepparton, Geelong and Ballarat). The report (Bodsworth, 2014) used program data, client surveys, a client focus group and a stakeholder interview to examine the impact of WLCs on client outcomes during early program implementation (January 2012 to January 2014).

During this period, nearly half (44 per cent) of the client caseload were aged 25 years or less and more than one-third (36.9 per cent) were born overseas. Some 86 per cent of clients had engaged with non-vocational training and support and 44 per cent with accredited training. The report further identified that 49 per cent of WLC clients had secured employment, with more than half (54 per cent) of this group still employed 16 weeks later. The type of employment (full-time, apprenticeship, casual, etc.) varied.

The progress report also determined that compared with participants entering WLCs, those exiting them have lower reliance on income support, higher incomes, increased confidence and increased life satisfaction.

Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund

Another element of Jobs Victoria is the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund (JVIF), a small grant (from \$50,000 to \$250,000) scheme that supports new approaches to employment support and employment systems (Jobs Victoria, 2018b). Funded projects can take the form of an innovative pilot employment service or model, or a research-based project

that analyses such a service or model (Jobs Victoria, 2018b). A portion of funds within the JVIF have been allocated for innovative approaches to employment support and employment services for people with disability (Jobs Victoria, 2018b).

Thirteen programs were funded over two rounds, with funding varying between projects. Successful projects vary in their approaches, target cohort and locations delivered. An example is the Ticket to Work – After School Jobs pilot for students with a disability.

Ticket to Work – After School Jobs

The Ticket to Work – After School Jobs is a pilot program funded through the JVIF and philanthropic funds until 2020. It aims to support high school students with disability to prepare for, gain and sustain after-school-hours employment (Jobs Victoria, 2018b). In line with the goals of JVIF, the Ticket to Work – After School Jobs program has clearly defined objectives that have the potential to both produce a new employment support model and contribute to sector development.

The program objectives are:

- young people with significant disability will have the opportunity to experience work while at school
- explore, demonstrate and document a model of after-school work experience that supports both young people with disability and employers of student labour
- explore the benefits to students with disability in participation in after-school work
- explore the long-term effect of participating in after-school work for students with disability
- identify good practice through models of after-school work and develop tools to support others to implement (scalability/ transferability)
- advocate and influence: change the policy and practice landscape so young people with disability have the opportunity to participate in after-school work.

(Ticket to Work, n.d.-a)

The support provided for the young student and employer depends on their respective needs, though it can include employability skills for students, on-the-job support, disability confidence training for employer/staff, financial incentives for the employer, work-related modification and services to support the after-school job and career plans for students post school. Up to \$9,000 per participant can be used to support the needs of the young person and the employer, with program funding available for 40 participants (Ticket to Work, n.d.-b).

To be eligible, the young participant must be attending a school in Victoria, have a significant disability which limits their functional capacity relating to mobility,

communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance and work skills, and be funded under the Program for Students with Disabilities in Victoria or attend a Victorian specialist school (Ticket to Work, n.d.-b).

LaunchMe

Funded as another part of Jobs Victoria, LaunchME is a free initiative that gives working age individuals the opportunity to develop, finance and launch their own microenterprise. It adopts a tailored approach to the needs of each participant and provides personalised coaching, mentoring, business planning, building skills and networks to support their business. It also provides microenterprise loans of up to \$5,000 (Good Shepherd Microfinance, n.d.).

To be eligible for the LaunchMe program, participants must earn less than \$45,000 a year (after tax) and hold a Healthcare or Pension Card (Good Shepherd Microfinance, n.d.). There are two distinct LaunchMe programs: one open to residents of Doveton and Dandenong and the other open to those living in the Latrobe Valley (Good Shepherd Microfinance, n.d.).

In Victoria there is also a LaunchMe program targeting young carers funded through the Australian Government Department of Social Services' Try, Test and Learn Fund (see p. 39) (DSS, 2018c).

Skills and Jobs Centres

In addition to the programs implemented under the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions' Jobs Victoria initiative, the Department of Education and Training also oversees the Skills and Jobs Centres in TAFEs around Victoria. Like Western Australia's Jobs and Skills Centres (see p. 80), Victoria's Skills and Jobs Centres act as a one-stop-shop for students and jobseekers (of all ages) to get expert advice on careers and training. This assistance includes career and training plans, job searching, résumé preparation, employment trends, referral to welfare support and financial advice. The centres engage with a broad range of local employers to ensure the services are meeting the needs of their local communities and industries (Department of Education and Training, 2019).

The Skills and Jobs Centres target a range of cohorts, including prospective and current students, apprentices and trainees, unemployed or retrenched workers, women returning to work and recently arrived immigrants and refugees (Department of Education and Training, 2019).

Western Australia

In Western Australia there is a strong focus on education and training information and career guidance. Services include Jobs and Skills Centres and specialist career centres.

In addition to their physical career and workforce development services, the Government of Western Australia has also invested in online services that link

individuals to employment, apprenticeships, training information and opportunities, as well as allowing employers to post jobs free of charge (Department of Training and Workforce, 2018). In the 2018–19 financial year, the Jobs and Skills WA website had been viewed 218,725 times (Department of Training and Workforce, 2019a).

More recently the Government of Western Australia also introduced the Jobs and Skills WA Employer Incentive, a joint investment from the state and the Australian Government to grow apprenticeships and new entrant traineeships by financially assisting employers (Department of Training and Workforce, 2019a). From 1 July 2019, eligible employers can receive payment of up to \$8,500 dependent on the length of the apprenticeship or traineeship and the milestones achieved by the employee.

Jobs and Skills Centres

Once elected in 2017, the McGowan Labor government acted on their -election commitment to transform Western Australia’s TAFE colleges into skill centres that will act as one-stop shops where new skills can be developed, existing skills tested and prospective employees can find direct links into work (WA Labor, n.d.). The centres, now known as Jobs and Skills Centres, were also designed as single points of contact for industry, business and jobseekers (Government of Western Australia, 2017).

Since April 2018, the WA Government has progressively rolled out 13 Skills and Job Centres on TAFE campuses—six in metropolitan areas and seven in regional towns (Government of Western Australia, 2019). Fourteen satellite and 39 outreach centres have also been established (Department of Training and Workforce, 2019a).

The centres offer jobseekers (of all ages) services, support, information and assistance, including:

- information and guidance on career choices
- information about training and courses
- help to choose the right training course or qualification to suit personal, work or career goals
- information about different industry areas and occupations
- help with job searching and job matching
- information about recognition of skills and qualifications
- apprenticeship and traineeship assistance
- culturally sensitive employment and career services for Aboriginal people.

(Government of Western Australia, 2019)

The Department of Training and Workforce (2019a) reported the total cost of Jobs and Skills Centres services in 2018–19 was \$13,532,395. During this period there were 32,291 individual and business client contacts. Each client contact cost on average \$432.

A survey was sent out to a group of Jobs and Skills Centres' clients to determine the extent to which the service was producing individual and business outcomes in careers, employment and training. Of the 2,456 survey responses received, 63.7 per cent of clients had entered employment, education or training, changed employment or made a career decision, choice or plan after receiving direct assistance through the service (Department of Training and Workforce, 2019a).

Contracted specialist career centres (people from CALD background)

The contracted specialist centres serve working age people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) to overcome barriers to employment, education and training. Their services include developing personalised career plans, advice about the current and future labour markets, information and referrals to relevant education and training, job search and interview guidance, and career and training workshops (Mercy Care, n.d.).

The specialist CALD careers service operates in two Perth suburbs (Cannington and Mirrabooka). Appointments via phone or Skype can be arranged for eligible clients across Western Australia. Between July 2017 and June 2018, there were 1,047 recorded client contacts (Department of Training and Workforce, 2018). The number of 2018-19 client contacts is unclear.

Contracted specialist career centre (Aboriginal ex-offenders)

The specialist career centre is designed to support individuals' transition from prison into employment or training. The centre also aims to support Aboriginal ex-offenders to effectively transition from prison and to reconnect with community and culture. The services and programs at the centre include information on training or education options, advice on choosing a career path, assistance with résumé writing, job applications and preparing for job interviews, and access to computers and the internet (Department of Training and Workforce, 2019b). The service provides support in prison, during their release and after release.

The centre is operated by a not-for-profit organisation in East Perth. Between July 2017 and June 2018 there were 1,111 recorded client contacts (Department of Training and Workforce, 2018). The number of 2018-19 client contacts is unclear.

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