

Transition to Work National Community of Practice

Youth Transitions to Work: A promising response to youth unemployment

*The Federal Transition to Work (TtW) service, announced by the Government in 2015–6 Federal Budget, provides a distinct, youth focused employment service which provides specialised, longer term support for 15–24 year olds at risk of long-term unemployment, including ‘intensive, pre-employment support to improve the work-readiness of young people and help them into work and/or education’.*¹

A Youth Specific Employment Service

The introduction of TtW signalled a recognition of the specific needs of young people entering the workforce and the failure of mainstream employment services to adequately support them into work. The current mainstream employment service, Jobactive, (previously Job Services Australia), works with unemployed people of all ages and focuses on trying to quickly engage or re-engage job seekers with the labour market, by mandating activities and imposing penalties for non-compliance. Evidence suggests that this type of service is inappropriate and ineffective for young people who often have limited workplace experience and need support to become work ready.

A youth specific employment service ensures that providers can focus exclusively on what works in achieving sustainable outcomes for young people, recognising the specific set of challenges that young people face in their transition from school to work.

What works to achieve sustainable outcomes for young people?

Young people experiencing unemployment require access to quality training and education, real work experience opportunities, and specialised support and skills development. They also need positive relationships with those they are working with that engender trust, motivation and self-efficacy.

More than ever, in the context of COVID-19, it is imperative that employment services are enabled to provide demand and supply side solutions that can set young people up with the required capabilities and opportunities for medium and long-term economic security.² Young people need access to entry level jobs and employers willing to invest in and train them as well as skills development and experience. Employment services therefore need to create structural solutions to employment that are attuned to regional labour markets and local infrastructure, conditions and populations – as well as focusing on preparing the work readiness of individuals. This requires a collaborative effort across sectors; local, community embedded providers and a model and approach that is focused on motivating and enabling young people.

In contrast to the current (and previous) iterations of mainstream employment services, TtW was commissioned as a ‘collaboration focused market’ with only one provider being allocated across each of the 51 employment regions across Australia. To be successful, providers were required to be already embedded within their local communities and to have experience working with young people. This approach has greatly supported the capacity of providers to engage effectively with other support services, local council, education providers and employers to provide opportunities and support to participants. By removing the imperative to compete with each other, TtW providers have been able to devote time and resources to engaging with the community transparently and productively.

The TtW model encourages knowledge of local labor markets as well as deep, collaborative networks in a community – this is essential for the delivery of evidence informed employment services that are attuned to, and can adapt to, local conditions.

¹ Department of Employment, *Transition to Work Evaluation Strategy*, May 2017

² OECD 2014, *OECD Reviews on Local Job Creation: Employment and Skills Strategies in Australia*, OECD Publishing, Paris.



Transition to Work Community of Practice

The **TtW Community of Practice** has built on this collaborative approach by bringing together 11 TtW providers and their partners across 13 employment regions in every state and territory with the shared aim of developing and documenting an effective response to addressing youth unemployment, one that is underpinned by collaborative, multi-sectoral effort. Through delivery of a structured model and practice approach and shared resources, TtW CoP providers have, over the past three years, been able to exchange service based expertise and situated knowledge across the country, and as a result have been able to develop new skills, improve practice and collectively solve problems and generate new and innovative ideas and solutions. They have also been able to develop productive relationships within their local community.

A Youth Focused Model and Approach

Broadly speaking, the TtW CoP Model consists of:

- 1 An innovative **practice approach called Advantaged Thinking**, which builds motivation and agency by:
 - a working with young people according to their talents and aspirations; and
 - b being intentional in how we invest in providing or sourcing opportunities, resources and networks to build their capabilities.

2 **Evidence informed Service Offers**³ which incorporate Vocational Guidance, Co-designed Planning, Skills and Capabilities Building and Real-World Opportunities.

3 **A structured approach to service delivery through Four Phases**, which focuses on exploration and inspiration to build motivation, and provides young people with a blue print for their journey to work.

The delivery of this service model is also supported by the establishment of **Community Investment Committees** – an employer-led mechanism for harnessing community effort to maximise local economic development for young job seekers⁴.

Collectively the TtW CoP represents almost one quarter of all TtW providers, who deliver TtW to approximately 3,000 young people per year across the country. To date, the TtW CoP has achieved over 6,500 employment and education outcomes for young people, with nearly half of those young people still employed six months later.

Evidence to date suggests that it is the combination of the model and the practice approach that is key to motivating (activating) and inspiring (incentivising) young job seekers to engage in education, training and work.



3 Evidence outlined in TtW CoP Practice Guide

4 See Community Investment Committee Fact Sheet for further information