

## YOUTH JOBS: Clarion call for the nation

The distress of young people who can't find work is sounding a clarion call across Australian society. And it's not just welfare groups or parents who are wearing furrowed brows. Business leaders are also voicing strong concerns.

The new **Business Council of Australia** president Catherine Livingstone has declared that youth unemployment is "one of the greatest national priorities for government and business to tackle". The BCA president added: "Our CEOs are deeply concerned about youth unemployment, but even more so because many young people applying for jobs, or who are new to the workforce, don't appear to have the right skills or capacity".

Meanwhile, some of Australia's largest private sector employers, including Woolworths, News Corp Australia, Leighton Holdings and Telstra, have pledged to help tackle the nation's youth joblessness under the badge '**Generation Success**'.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott was recently chief guest at a breakfast and roundtable meeting with youth that was convened by the business bosses. Young people at the Sydney event were quick to nominate work experience as a key pathway to securing that elusive first job.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence believes Australia urgently needs a new approach to assist unemployed youth to build their qualifications, skills and experience to obtain a job in the modern economy.

Brotherhood executive director Tony Nicholson says the Federal Government should move towards establishing a specialist, targeted youth transitions service to help young people secure first jobs.

Under the Brotherhood's proposal, jobless youth aged 17 to 24 would be rapidly referred to a National Youth Transitions Service so that they are actively engaged in an employment preparation and placement program.

The service would include intensive coaching, mentoring and real-life work experience and, importantly, direct contact with local employers.

"Governments can provide leadership and resources but that's not enough. This really needs to be an all-of-community effort. The service we propose for unemployed youth would be built on tapping into local networks – from employers to service clubs to the school principals", Tony Nicholson said.