

**'SWIMMING UPSTREAM':
YOUNG PEOPLE
AND SERVICE PROVISION
UNDER JOB SERVICES AUSTRALIA**

A RESEARCH REPORT

Jen Rose, Lisa Morstyn and Alice Tudehope

August 2011

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'SWIMMING UPSTREAM': YOUNG PEOPLE AND SERVICE PROVISION UNDER JOB SERVICES AUSTRALIA

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- Melbourne Citymission
- Mission Australia
- The Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Hanover Welfare Services; and
- Jobs Australia

YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) is the peak body representing the youth sector in Victoria. YACVic provides a means through which the youth sector and young people can voice their opinions and concerns in regards to policy issues affecting them. YACVic works with and makes representations to government and serves as an advocate for the interests of young people, workers with young people, and organisations that provide direct services to young people. YACVic also promotes and supports the participation of young people in debate and policy development areas that most affect them. YACVic's resources are primarily directed towards policy analysis and development, research and consultation, and to meeting the information, networking, education and training needs of our constituency. YACVic is funded by the Office for Youth, Department of Human Services.

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INTRODUCTION

Currently Australians are enjoying a low unemployment rate of less than 5% – that is if you are not a young person. The unemployment rate of young people aged between 15 and 24 years is 11.0%¹ - almost triple that of the broader Australian community. Unemployment figures indicate that due to the recent economic downturn, in combination with other barriers to employment, young people have experienced and continue to experience disproportionate difficulty in finding and maintaining employment throughout Australia².

The Federal Government has a strong commitment to getting more Australians off benefits and into the workforce. In May 2011, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) emphasised that the Government's new Workforce Participation package was a 'primary focus for the 2011-12 budget; with job seekers receiving assistance to develop work skills and build their individual capacity to engage and participate in the workforce and contribute to Australia's continued economic growth...'³.

In the 2011–12 Federal Budget there is an allocation equivalent to an extra \$500 per young person who has left school early, provided to the Employment Pathway Fund (EPF), to enable Job Services Australia (JSA) providers to deliver a new initiative Early School Leavers Transition Support (ETS)⁴.

However, there is a growing body of research expressing concern about the capacity of the Job Services Australia (JSA) model to meet the needs of highly disadvantaged job seekers, including young people requiring additional support. Melbourne Citymission, a large Melbourne-based charity that is a specialist youth Job Services Australia provider, has undertaken some research in this area. In a recent report, Melbourne Citymission found 'that the needs of this most vulnerable group are not being sufficiently met under JSA to enable young people to achieve a lasting connection to employment, education and training.'⁵

This report explores some of the issues around the adequacy of the JSA model in delivering sustainable, meaningful employment outcomes to young people, particularly young people experiencing disadvantage.

¹Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force*, Australia, June 2011, released on 7 July 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Jun%202011?OpenDocument>, accessed on 7 July 2011.

²Alison Anlezark, *Young People in an economic downturn*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, Briefing Paper 23, 1-20, 1.

³Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 'Section 1: Agency overview and resources', *DEEWR Budget Statements – Overview and resources*, 15-38, 17.

⁴Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Building Australia's Future Workforce – transitional activities for early school leavers*, Budget 2011-12 – Budget Paper 2, Part 2: Expense Measures.

⁵Emma Cull, *Skilling All Victorians? A response to the reform of Victoria's Vocational Education and Training Sector: Securing Jobs for Your Future: Skills for Victoria*, Melbourne Citymission Discussion Paper: June 2009, 1-37, 1.

This report specifically seeks to understand:

- How effective is the current JSA model for young people?
- Is the current JSA model adequately ensuring that young people are not missing out on intensive, specialist employment support when needed?
- What could be done better?

For the purpose of this report the focus is on young people aged 15 to 25 years, who are experiencing difficulty securing employment. This report primarily explores the specific needs of young people who are experiencing high degrees of vulnerability and disadvantage in relation to JSA services. It is clear that many young people searching for employment experience at least a degree of vulnerability, as is evident by the 11.0% unemployment rate of Australian 15 to 25 year olds in June 2011.⁶ Due to factors such as lack of work experience, less defined pathways from high school or higher education to employment, the recent Global Financial Crisis, as well as personal barriers such as the high rate of mental health issues, there is a large proportion of young people seeking employment who require a different level of support and assistance in order to obtain and maintain work.

This report identifies three key issues:

- Concern that the JSA model may not be sufficiently youth-centred⁷
- Concern that young people experiencing significant or sustained disadvantage require more intensive and holistic case management and support⁸
- The critical importance of youth specialist providers, even though there are obvious challenges in delivering these services⁹

Finally, this report confirms the importance of all generalist and specialised youth JSA service providers adopting best practices in working with young people seeking employment. In addition, for the most highly vulnerable and disadvantaged young people, it is imperative that JSA employment services are able to better provide intensive, holistic, and highly individualised assistance.

⁶Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force*, Australia, April 2011, released on 12 May 2011, viewed on 8 June 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0>.

⁷Mission Australia, (2010). *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*. March, 2010.

⁸Cull, E. *Finding the Rights track: A snapshot Study of young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*. Mission Australia, Jan 2011.p.10.

⁹Flentje, E., Cull, E. and Giuliani, G. *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers; challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia Contract*. Dec, 2010.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

METHODOLOGY

In the development of this report, Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) has sought to:

- Consolidate and summarise findings of previously published research relating to the provision of JSA services to young people.
- Draw findings from a literature review of research relating to the essential role of 'youth specific' service provision in achieving positive and sustainable outcomes for young people, particularly those experiencing vulnerability.
- Draw on broader research to explore the evidence relating to the provision of effective service responses to young people, particularly vulnerable young people, and highlight the relevance of this evidence to the provision of employment services to young people.
- With input from JSA providers, other youth service providers and young people themselves, explore in more detail some of the issues already identified in previous research.

Anecdotal evidence (which is referred to in quotes that appear throughout this report) was collected through interviews conducted by YACVic staff with:

- Case managers working for Job Services Australia providers (two case managers – one from a specialist youth specific service provider and one from a generalist provider)
- Young people with experiences of accessing the Job Services Australia Program; and
- Youth workers working with young people with experience of accessing the Job Services Australia Program (including one working for a Youth Connections provider and one working for a specialist youth service).

These interviews were conducted during April and May 2011, with agreement that quotes would appear in the report anonymously.

DEFINITIONS

Young people: This report focuses on young people aged 15 to 25 years.

Vulnerable young people: Young people who are experiencing a range of personal as well as structural and/or systemic barriers to participation in employment¹⁰.

Youth services: Services that 'support...the personal and social development of young people and their social inclusion'¹¹.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT

This report has not drawn from a broad survey sample of young people or service providers in the collection of anecdotal evidence. Instead, targeted, in depth interviews have been sought to provide an articulation from young people and service providers of the issues previously revealed by existing research examining the effectiveness of the JSA program. This anecdotal evidence seeks to further illustrate those issues and as such it appears in relevant sections throughout the report.

There has not been scope in this report to consider the new Disability Employment Services¹² available to assist young people with disabilities, but a number of barriers to employment, which young people with disabilities may experience, have been considered.

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¹⁰Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Valuing all young people*, Submission to the Victorian Government on the Vulnerable Youth Framework discussion paper, September 2008, i-14, 4.

¹¹Jen Rose and Carolyn Atkins, *Who's Carrying the Can? A report into youth service gaps in Victoria*, Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and YACVic, 2006, 1-39, 5.

¹²Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Disability Employment Services*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/Programs/DES/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed on 30 June 2011.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN AUSTRALIA

Young people (aged between 12 and 25 years) in Australia are not a homogenous group – they are highly diverse in their experiences, capacities, ethnicities, where they live, what they hope to achieve, and what their needs are¹³. However, in spite of this diversity, young people do experience general disadvantage as a population group when it comes to employment¹⁴. The June 2011 *Labour Force Survey* revealed that the unemployment rate of young people aged 15 to 24 years in June 2011 was 11.0% compared to an unemployment rate of 5.0% of persons aged 15 to 64¹⁵.

This section will explore the current unemployment trends for young people in Australia and their relation to global figures, will outline the case for a targeted approach to employment support for young people, and will look in detail at the specific barriers to employment for young people.

Australia's figures are in line with global youth unemployment figures. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the rate of unemployed young people aged 15 to 24 who were neither engaged in work, training or education was approximately 12.5% in the middle

of 2010, compared with 10.8% in 2008¹⁶. Projecting that unemployment rates of young people are likely to reach 17% in 2012, the OECD noted that 'young people are much more vulnerable to unemployment than adult and older workers', and emphasised that long periods of youth unemployment may have an ongoing negative effect on young people's careers and futures.¹⁷ In addition, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has characterised the high rates of youth unemployment as potentially creating a 'lost generation' of young people¹⁸, due to the negative consequences that may result from youth unemployment.

Young people are generally at a disadvantage when it comes to employment at both a national and global level. As John Greenwood of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation asserts, 'young people entering the labour market have always been at a relative disadvantage,' given that they frequently have less accumulated work experience, which makes them 'relatively less attractive to employers'¹⁹. In addition, Greenwood notes that periods of economic downturn have a significant effect on young people, as 'youth employment (and unemployment) is more cyclically sensitive than for older workers'²⁰. In addition, young people who are seeking to enter the labour market for the first time are most likely to be the 'first to be affected by any slowdown in hiring, and young inexperienced workers are more likely to be affected by layoffs that are governed by job security...'²¹

¹³ John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 99; see also KPMG, *Youth Services Mapping Project: Final Report*, Department of Planning and Community Development, November 2007, 1-80, 9.

¹⁴ John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 98.

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force*, Australia, June 2011, released on 7 July 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Jun%202011?OpenDocument>, accessed on 7 July 2011.

¹⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Multilingual Summaries: Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth*, Summary in English, 2010, 1-5, 2.

¹⁷ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Multilingual Summaries: Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth*, Summary in English, 2010, 1-5, 2.

¹⁸ International Labour Office, 'The world economic crisis and the record increase in youth unemployment', ILO Global Job Crisis Observatory, 17 August 2010, 1-5.

¹⁹ John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 98.

²⁰ John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 98.

²¹ John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 98.

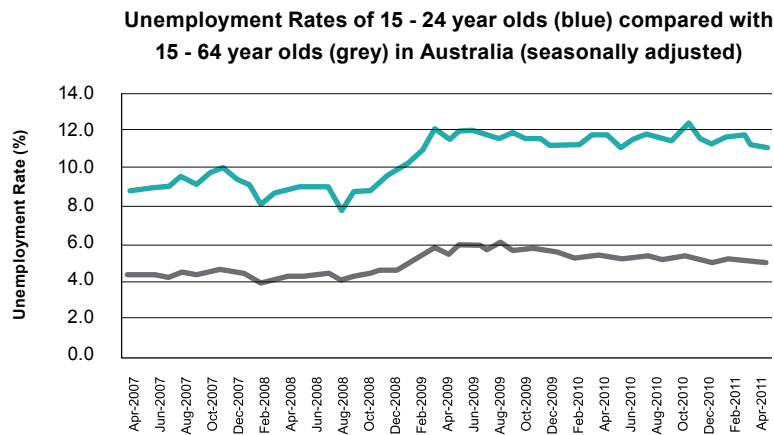
During the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), unemployment levels rose significantly for young people, both in Australia and globally:

'Similar to women, youth are often in a disadvantaged position in labour markets. Preceding the economic crisis, youth were on average already 2.8 times more likely to be unemployed than adults at the global level, and this ratio showed little change in 2009. On current estimates, the global youth unemployment rate rose by 1.3% points from 12.1% in 2008 to 13.4% in 2009....compared to an increase by 0.7 percentage points for adult workers....The number of unemployed youth increased by 8.5 million between 2008 and 2009, the largest year-on-year increase in at least ten years, and by more than 10 million since 2007.'²²

It is apparent that levels of unemployment of young people have been significantly affected by the recent 'economic downturn'.²³ In the report *Times are still tough for young unemployed people*, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) refers to May 2009 data which revealed that '36% of the 2008 cohort of

school leavers failed to transition to either fulltime employment or further study, compared with 27% the year before'.²⁴ In addition, 'number[s] of unemployed people on Youth Allowance for more than 12 months increased by almost 50% from 32,000 in May 2008 to 47,000 in May 2010, while the number of young adults on Newstart Allowance for over 12 months rose by more than 80%, from 26,000 to 47,000 recipients'.²⁵ ACOSS has emphasised that recent economic conditions have meant that 'employers put new hires on hold, waiting for the economy to improve'.²⁶ In addition, 'many young people lost their casual jobs', and a significant proportion of young people who were unable to obtain employment due to the difficult economic climate 'are still out of work', as 'employers are reluctant to hire people who lack recent work experience'.²⁷

Whereas the unemployment rate in Australia for those aged 25 to 64 years has steadily decreased since September 2009, returning close to where it was preceding the GFC, this employment recovery has not been experienced by young people.



* Graph created from data from the June 2011 ABS Labour Force, Australia Survey²⁸

This graph illustrates the way in which young people were already experiencing employment disadvantage preceding the GFC, experienced a rise in unemployment as a result of the GFC, and have not benefited from Australia's economic recovery (reflected in falling unemployment figures for the broader community). Measures to ensure a drop in unemployment figures in Australia have not meant strengthened employment participation by young people in any relative measure.

²²International Labour Office, *Global Employment Trends*, January 2010, 1-82,16.

²³ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 7.

²⁴ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 7.

²⁵ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 7.

²⁶ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 1.

²⁷ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 1.

²⁸Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Labour Force, Australia*, June 2011, released on 7 July 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Jun%202011?OpenDocument>, accessed on 7 July 2011.

A CLEAR CASE FOR A TARGETED APPROACH TO EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Improving the participation of young people in the employment market is a clear priority of the Australian Government, and was articulated in the National Strategy for Young Australians:

'Young people are an important part of Australia's working age population...Young people's participation in the workforce will become increasingly important to the economy as the population ages. This generation of young people face some additional challenges in employment... Young people (15 to 24 year olds), who have grown up during a period of prosperity, are now feeling the effects of the global economic recession – the youth unemployment rate rose to 11.8% in March 2010 from 8.7% in September 2008 at the onset of the global financial crisis. It is worth noting, however that the youth unemployment rate has declined from its peak of 12.2% in June 2009... We'll continue to work with young people, other governments, local employers, community organisations, unions, Job Service Australia providers and training providers to...provide early intervention and extra support for those young people who need the most help at key intervention points...create more work experience, training and employment opportunities for young people by working with business...expand youth mentoring opportunities, including peer-to-peer mentoring, to support young people to make the transition to work...reform the apprenticeship system to make it more attractive to young people and provide easier access and more support'.²⁹

However, further program reform is needed to ensure that the Australian Government is able to achieve the outcomes it hopes to in supporting young people to find employment. Unemployment figures show that young people continue to experience significant disadvantage in the Australian employment market. Current efforts to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged in terms of employment are not alleviating youth

unemployment figures. Targeted, additional support and an expanded youth-specific approach to the provision of employment support are clearly needed to improve employment outcomes for young people.

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Vulnerable or disadvantaged young people seeking employment may experience a number of systemic, structural, as well as personal barriers which impede their ability to secure and maintain employment. Employment service providers will often have to assist these young people to overcome a number of these barriers in order to help them in securing and maintaining work.

In the report *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, Mission Australia identified a number of key barriers which vulnerable or 'at risk' young people may be experiencing. Barriers included: a 'breakdown of social networks including, but not limited to, family, substance misuse, mental health issues, many of which are often undiagnosed, lack of even the most basic school qualifications, low levels of literacy, including an inability to tell the time, homelessness, risk of homelessness or lack of stable housing, risk of self harm or a history of attempted suicide, a history of reported sexual or physical abuse, a lack of daily living skills, [and an] inability to access effective case management support due to unsustainable caseloads of community workers and other professionals'.³⁰ Of further concern is that vulnerable young people may be reluctant to access services due to having previously '[struck] a "wrong door"' or having experienced difficulty 'navigate[ing] the complex and fragmented system of service delivery'.³¹

Research conducted by Melbourne Citymission has also identified a range of barriers which vulnerable young people accessing JSA services may be experiencing. Among the twenty-five young people who participated in Melbourne Citymission's report

²⁹The Australian Government, *National Strategy for Young Australians*, April 2010, 1-38, 22-23.

³⁰Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 3.

³¹Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 3.

investigating the effectiveness of the provision of job services under JSA, barriers to employment included: 'lack of experience and/or skills', 'lack of labour market opportunities', 'poverty/lack of resources/poor infrastructure', 'personal motivation', 'poor physical or mental health', 'cultural issues/racism', and legal issues'. In addition, many of the young people had experienced 'homelessness and insecure housing and [a] lack of family support'.³²

The following discussion of a number of these key systemic and personal barriers has been informed by existing research as well as the interviews conducted by YACVic with young people, JSA Providers and youth service providers.

1. LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A lack of employment opportunities available for young people acts as a substantial barrier for vulnerable young people seeking employment. As researcher John Greenwood notes, 'supply-side measures cannot, on their own, solve youth labour market problems'.³³ It is critically important that there is an 'availability of...employment opportunities' and that 'parallel strategies on the demand-side' to increase the range of opportunities available for young people be adopted in addition to 'better preparation' of young people 'for the labour market'.³⁴ In addition, Greenwood emphasises the need for the 'government...to engage the private sector in the provision of job opportunities for youths'.³⁵

Similarly, research by Melbourne Citymission notes that even the job seekers 'who had some previous experience...were finding it increasingly difficult to find work in the current climate' and that 'fewer opportunities' exist today for young people to obtain work.³⁶ Many of the young people consulted with 'expressed difficulty even getting a [job] interview', and young people also emphasised that 'apprenticeships and even pre-apprenticeship courses were widely considered to be near impossible to secure due to 'companies...only taking the best and brightest applicants...'.³⁷ Furthermore, in a discussion of university graduates, researchers Lisa Perrone and Margaret Vickers based at the School of Management, College of Law and Business at the University of Western Sydney, discuss the 'highly competitive...graduate labour market' and the 'enormously high expectations that recruiters have for applicants to entry-level positions'.³⁸ It is therefore apparent that a lack of job opportunities and high levels of competition for jobs can act as significant barriers for young people attempting to secure employment.

³²Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 7-8.

³³John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 100.

³⁴John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 100.

³⁵John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 100.

³⁶Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 12.

³⁷Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 12.

³⁸Lisa Perrone and Margaret H. Vickers, 'Life after graduation as a 'very uncomfortable world': an Australian case study', *Education + Training*, 45(2), 2003, 69-78, 76.

2. LACK OF WORK EXPERIENCE

In the Melbourne Citymission report *Finding the right track: A Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, 'nearly half of the participants identified lack of work experience as a significant barrier to getting a job, predominately due to employers' reluctance to 'give them a go'.³⁹ In the study, one of the participants noted, 'Everyone wants people with experience but no one's willing to give people experience. I've been looking at doing an RSA (Responsible Service of Alcohol certificate), just because there's always people looking for bar people, but even then they don't want to hire people without experience' (Michelle, 24 year old female).⁴⁰

As discussed above, young people who are new to the labour market 'have always been at a relative disadvantage' as they have often not 'acquired much work experience' and are therefore 'relatively less attractive to employers'.⁴¹ Likewise, in a February 2011 article in *The Age*, Professor Mark Wooden of the Melbourne Institute noted that 'many of the...jobs on offer require skills', which places young people at a disadvantage as they 'don't come with skills, they have to acquire them'.⁴² Similarly, in their submission to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Reference Committee, DEEWR noted that 'people who are most vulnerable to job loss and unemployment are those with the lowest skill and job experience levels'. Emphasising that 'this is exacerbated in periods of economic downturn', DEEWR identified 'younger and mature people, second income earners, those with low qualifications, Indigenous Australians, recent migrants and those in casual employment' as those who are likely to be the 'most disadvantaged'.⁴³

ACOSS has also highlighted the worrying likelihood that the vulnerability of young people may increase as young people who may possess limited qualifications and work experience 'become stuck in unemployment'.⁴⁴ Indeed, research by Melbourne Citymission noted that '...many participants felt trapped in a cycle of needing experience but not being given any opportunities to gain experience'.⁴⁵

Though university graduates have the advantage of a tertiary qualification, which greatly increases their employment prospects, scholars Lisa Perrone and Margaret Vickers note that even for recent university graduates, 'graduates need to get a job to gain the required experience, while employers continually assert the need for significant work experience in addition to their degree to secure an entry-level graduate position'.⁴⁶ Ultimately, a lack of recent work experience is a significant barrier which many young people in Australia face in securing employment.

'...it is very, very hard, especially when your early school leavers say, 'I just want to work.' JSA case manager, on finding employers willing to give young people with limited work experience a job.

³⁹Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 11.

⁴⁰Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 11.

⁴¹John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', chapter 6 in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, a Research Report to Human Resources Development Canada, November 1996, 98-111, 98.

⁴²Peter Martin, 'Jobs growth strong but not for the young', *The Age*, News, February 11, 2011, 9; see also Lisa Perrone and Margaret H. Vickers, 'Life after graduation as a 'very uncomfortable world': an Australian case study', *Education + Training*, 45(2), 2003, 69-78, 74.

⁴³DEEWR, 'Inquiry into the DEEWR Tender Process to Award Employment Services Contracts', Submission to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Reference Committee, 1-36, 12.

⁴⁴ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 1.

⁴⁵Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 11.

⁴⁶Lisa Perrone and Margaret H. Vickers, 'Life after graduation as a 'very uncomfortable world': an Australian case study', *Education + Training*, 45(2), 2003, 69-78, 74.

3. EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Early school leaving is another key barrier which may affect young people in their search for employment. The Brotherhood of St Laurence notes that 'young school leavers seeking paid work face more struggle, especially in economic downturns, as we have seen over the past 18 months'.⁴⁷ According to ACOSS, in 2009 young people who left school prior to year 12 were 'over twice as likely to be unemployed as those who completed year 12 (19% and 8% respectively)'.⁴⁸

Lower levels of 'educational attainment' were also identified in the 2007 Dusseldorp Skills Forum Report *It's Crunch Time: Raising Youth Engagement and Attainment* as being a barrier to young people obtaining employment. The report notes that young people who have left school early are less likely to be in full-time work or education.⁴⁹ Furthermore, there are '...powerful disparities related to skills attainment' in Australia and 'a significant number of young people not adequately engaged or prepared for the future'.⁵⁰ The report refers to data from May 2007 which reveals that 306,000 of the '526,000 young Australians aged 15 to 24 years [who] were neither in full-time work nor full-time study...were unemployed, working part-time but wanting more hours or were not in the labour force but wanting to work'.⁵¹ Ultimately, it is this group of 'disenfranchised young people'⁵² who likely require additional supports and assistance in completing further training, obtaining work experience and skill development,⁵³ and securing jobs in areas of interest to them.

In the research conducted by Melbourne Citymission, many of those who had left school early had begun, but not completed several qualifications, indicating again the 'need for more intensive support'⁵⁴ to complete additional training or to secure employment opportunities.

'There's a lot of disconnection with schools, which is probably one of the biggest issues we face - young people's ability to cope with the school system. I'm seeing lots of young people, even in the older age groups, experiencing bullying at school. Bullying is becoming a major issue. And trying to get young people back to school...' JSA case manager.

⁴⁷Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 9-10.

⁴⁸ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 2.

⁴⁹Australian Industry Group and Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'It's Crunch Time: Raising Youth Engagement and Attainment – a Discussion Paper, August 2007, 1-44, 12.

⁵⁰Australian Industry Group and Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'It's Crunch Time: Raising Youth Engagement and Attainment – a Discussion Paper, August 2007, 1-44, 10.

⁵¹Australian Industry Group and Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'It's Crunch Time: Raising Youth Engagement and Attainment – a Discussion Paper, August 2007, 1-44, 11 and 15.

⁵²Australian Industry Group and Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'It's Crunch Time: Raising Youth Engagement and Attainment – a Discussion Paper, August 2007, 1-44, 11.

⁵³Australian Industry Group and Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'It's Crunch Time: Raising Youth Engagement and Attainment – a Discussion Paper, August 2007, 1-44, 11.

⁵⁴Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 25.

4. GEOGRAPHIC DISADVANTAGE

Living in urban fringe or rural/regional areas can act as another significant barrier to employment for young people in Australia.

Research into the experiences of young people in urban fringe areas as well as rural and regional areas in Victoria indicates that young people in such areas achieve, on average, lower levels of education, and may also experience significant difficulty finding sustainable, full-time employment in their area of interest. For example, YACVic's report *Snapshots from the edge – young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne* notes that varying rates of youth unemployment in urban fringe areas meant that a number of 'Interface municipalities' are having to 'deal with both the immediate and longer-term consequences of youth unemployment, particularly where unemployment is combined with poor school completion rates and consequently lower educational opportunities'.⁵⁵ In addition, the report notes that barriers to young people obtaining employment in a number of urban fringe areas include: 'limited employment opportunities within their local community', high travel costs required to 'access work', and limitations regarding the nature of the work available.⁵⁶

Research also reveals that 'young people in the capital cities are more likely to be working or learning full-time'.⁵⁷ *Snapshots from the edge* found that 'there [are] marked difference[s] between the engagement in both the attainment of year 12 and tertiary qualifications between the inner suburban regions of Melbourne and the outer regions'.⁵⁸ In addition, those in 'country regions...had the lowest rates of tertiary transition, due to both low university transfer and low middle-level transfer'.⁵⁹

Snapshots from the edge also found that many young people felt constrained by the type and nature of the jobs available in their local communities, even though they may have been able to find work.⁶⁰ For instance, a number of young people who took part in a youth forum in Cardinia stated that they felt 'pretty hopeful of getting a job in their local areas after they leave school 'but not a good job''.⁶¹

Young people also expressed their belief that they would have to 'travel closer to the city...to get a 'real job' in the field they were interested in...'⁶²

A lack of public transport options is another barrier for rural and regional young people seeking employment or educational opportunities, as it may restrict their ability to travel to and from their place of work or educational institution.⁶³

The Victorian drought has also had a substantial impact on rural and regional young people's abilities to obtain higher education and secure work. For instance, the joint report between the North Central Local Learning and Employment Network (North Central LLEN) and YACVic, '*Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*', highlights the significant impact that the Victorian drought has had on the education attainment rates⁶⁴ and employment opportunities of young people in regional and rural communities.⁶⁵ The report indicates that many families experience difficulty with the costs involved in assisting their child to attend tertiary education⁶⁶ and that the levels of young people in rural and regional areas who defer their university place are high.⁶⁷ Research also indicates that many of the young people who defer higher education or choose to enter the workforce immediately after school do so in order to save to pay for their university education, assist their family financially, and 'support themselves independently'.⁶⁸ However, '*Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*' also emphasises the significant impact of the drought 'on local economies', and notes that 'in many cases... drought...[has made] finding reliable employment more difficult' for young people.⁶⁹ In 2006, the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into Retaining Young People in Rural Towns and Communities found that, while unemployment rates of young Victorians are 'variable', 'those under the age of 25 are subject to significantly higher rates of unemployment than people aged 25 years and above'.⁷⁰ It appears that young people living in rural, regional and some urban fringe areas may experience significant disadvantage in obtaining higher education and in securing employment due to their geographic location.

5. LACK OF RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A lack of resources, such as 'not having a license', 'limited finances', and 'restricted access to computers and the internet', has been identified as another barrier to young people finding employment.⁷¹ In addition, young people have raised the issue of the 'cost of participation'⁷² of training and education programs as being either prohibitive or a significant hurdle to undertaking the education and training courses that are encouraged by JSA providers as a way of increasing young people's employment skills and experience. Infrastructure, such as inadequate public transport,⁷³ has also been raised by young people as a barrier to securing and maintaining employment, as many young people rely on public transport to get to and from job interviews and jobs.

'The reason why people can't get jobs – people don't have licenses, no transport, all that kind of stuff.. if you go to (JSA provider) people expect you to have a license...they ask you do you have a license...I can't even afford to get a license.'

Young male job seeker.

⁵⁵Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Snapshots from the edge – Young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne*, 2005, 1- 57, 55.

⁵⁶Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Snapshots from the edge – Young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne*, 2005, 1- 57, 54- 55.

⁵⁷Australian Industry Group and Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 'It's Crunch Time: Raising Youth Engagement and Attainment – a Discussion Paper, August 2007, 1-44, 12.

⁵⁸Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Snapshots from the edge – Young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne*, 2005, 1- 57, 53; see also Victorian Rural Youth Services and YACVic, *A Response to the Rural and Regional Committee Inquiry into the Extent and Nature of Disadvantage and Inequity in Rural and Regional Victoria*, March 2010, 1-36, 7.

⁵⁹Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Snapshots from the edge – Young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne*, 2005, 1- 57, 53.

⁶⁰Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Snapshots from the edge – Young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne*, 2005, 1- 57, 55.

⁶¹Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Snapshots from the edge – Young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne*, 2005, 1- 57, 55.

⁶²Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, *Snapshots from the edge – Young people and service providers on the urban fringe of Melbourne*, 2005, 1- 57, 55.

⁶³Department of Education and Early Childhood Development & Department of Planning and Community Development, *The State of Victoria's Young People*, 2008, 173-174 in the joint report by Victorian Rural Youth Services and YACVic, *A Response to the Rural and Regional Committee Inquiry into the Extent and Nature of Disadvantage and Inequity in Rural and Regional Victoria*, March 2010, 1-36, 11-12.

⁶⁴North Central Local Learning and Employment Network and YACVic, *Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*, June 2008, 1-33, 8.

⁶⁵North Central Local Learning and Employment Network and YACVic, *Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*, June 2008, 1-33, 12-13.

⁶⁶North Central Local Learning and Employment Network and YACVic, *Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*, June 2008, 1-33, 11.

⁶⁷North Central Local Learning and Employment Network and YACVic, *Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*, June 2008, 1-33, 8. See also Polesel, J., *Deferring a University Offer in Regional Victoria*. Centre for Post-Compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Melbourne, Local Learning and Employment Network and Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, 2009, 4.

⁶⁸North Central Local Learning and Employment Network and YACVic, *Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*, June 2008, 1-33, 14.

⁶⁹North Central Local Learning and Employment Network and YACVic, *Talking about the big dry: young people and the impact of drought. Forum report*, June 2008, 1-33, 14.

⁷⁰Parliament of Victoria, Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee, *Inquiry into Retaining Young People in Rural Towns and Communities*, September 2006, 1-325, 243

⁷¹Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 14.

⁷²ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 13.

⁷³Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 14.

6. PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

According to the 2003 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 9.0% of young people aged 15 to 24 years had a reported disability, defined as 'any limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities'.⁷⁴

The employment rate of individuals with a disability has been found to be less than that of individuals not experiencing a disability. In 2009, the workforce participation rate of individuals experiencing a disability was 54%, while the workforce participation rate of people with no disability was 83% in Australia.⁷⁵ Though this data is not specific to young people with a disability, it is likely that young people with disabilities also experience difficulty securing work in Australia.

Young people with disabilities may experience a range of barriers to employment. These barriers include discriminatory attitudes of employers, inaccessible workplaces, rigid and inflexible employment policies and practices, 'costs...and perceived costs to employers', a lack of understanding about the benefits and valuable contribution young people with disabilities may bring to a workplace, and a 'lack of proactive marketing and recruitment strategies'.⁷⁶ The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has also noted a range of employment barriers for people with disabilities, such as 'incorrect assumptions about the needs of, and risks associated with, hiring people with disabilities', costs to people with disabilities when engaging in work, such as the finances required for transportation to get to and

from work and aids or carers, and limited educational opportunities and work experience of young people with disabilities.⁷⁷

In research conducted by Melbourne Citymission, 'mental and physical health issues were identified by a number of participants as a significant barrier to young people getting a job'.⁷⁸ Mental health difficulties may include 'anxiety and depression' and substance abuse issues.⁷⁹ The mental health of young people in Australia has been raised as an issue of significant concern in the *Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019*. The strategy refers to statistics regarding the significant proportion of Australian young people who experience mental health difficulties. For instance, 'one in seven children and young people aged between four and 17' are estimated to have experienced 'some form of mental health problem before they reach early adulthood'.⁸⁰ These estimates increase to 'one in four...18-24 year olds'.⁸¹ In addition, approximately 20% of the deaths of young people aged 15 to 24 years are a result of suicide.⁸² These statistics indicate that many vulnerable young people seeking employment are likely to be experiencing mental health difficulties which are likely to affect many aspects of their lives, including their ability to secure and maintain employment.

In addition, a number of young people who participated in Melbourne Citymission 'indirectly alluded to issues of depression...as a consequence of not being able to get a job' as well as a barrier affecting their ability to secure employment,⁸³ indicating that an inability to secure employment may have a negative effect on young people's mental health in Australia.

⁷⁴Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings*, Australia, 2003, released September 2004, 1-80, 16.

⁷⁵Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, *Building Australia's Future Workforce – Supporting Australians with disability into work*, http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publications/articles/corp/BudgetPAES/budget11_12/Documents/FaHCSIA_DSP_web.htm, accessed on 7 July 2011.

⁷⁶Australians for Disability and Diversity Employment (ADDE), *Leading from the front? Research on Disability Employment in the Victorian Disability Sector*, April 2008, 1-34, 2 and 9-11.

⁷⁷Australian Human Rights Commission, *National Inquiry on employment and disability: Summary of Roundtable Meetings*, Sydney- 31 March 2005 and Melbourne- 7 April 2005, http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/employment_inquiry/forums/forums.htm#barriers, accessed on 1 July 2011.

⁷⁸Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 16.

⁷⁹Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 16.

⁸⁰Department of Human Services, *Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019*, February 2009, 1-168, 48.

⁸¹Department of Human Services, *Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019*, February 2009, 1-168, 48.

⁸²Department of Human Services, *Because Mental Health Matters: Victorian Mental Health Reform Strategy 2009-2019*, February 2009, 1-168, 48.

⁸³Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 16.

7. CULTURAL ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

One of the barriers faced by Indigenous young people in securing employment appears to be discrimination, both when searching for a job and once they have obtained a job. The 2009 *State of Victoria's Children: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria* revealed that approximately 21.6% of Indigenous young people in Victoria indicated that they had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months.⁸⁴ In addition, of the Indigenous young people in Victoria who had experienced discrimination, 18.4% had felt discriminated against when 'applying for work or when at work'.⁸⁵ The rate is higher in Australia overall. 28.9% of the Indigenous young people in Australia who had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months indicated that they had felt discriminated against when 'applying for work or when at work'.⁸⁶

It is of great concern that Indigenous young people have higher rates of early school leaving than non-Indigenous young people and lower overall levels of employment.⁸⁷ In August 2006, 31.6% of Indigenous young people aged 18 to 24 years in Victoria were neither engaged in education nor employment.⁸⁸ Of those aged 15 to 24 years, 24.6% were not in either employment or education as of August 2006.⁸⁹ In their August 2010 report *Times are still tough for young unemployed people*, ACOSS noted that 'Indigenous people are more than twice as likely as other young people to be out of work and neither studying or training', and approximately 16% of young people who were unemployed and obtaining Youth Allowance were Indigenous young people'.⁹⁰ While these rates of school disengagement and unemployment are likely to be due to a range of factors, discrimination appears to be one of the barriers to workforce participation faced by Indigenous young people.

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people have also 'identified cultural and racial factors...[including] both direct discrimination or racism on the part of employers as well as more indirect cultural barriers' as factors which have impeded their ability to find work⁹¹ in Australia. In a 2011 submission, the Settlement Council of Australia also identified employment barriers experienced by CALD young people as including 'limited (or even no) schooling, poor English competency, [in addition to] few if any qualifications, vocational skills or work experience in Australia'.⁹²

VicHealth has noted that there is an 'established link' between experiences of discrimination and 'psychological distress, stress, [and] anxiety'.⁹³ Ultimately, experiences of discrimination may negatively impact the health and wellbeing of Indigenous and CALD young people and cause further difficulties for these young people as they attempt to secure work.

African young male job seeker:
'I actually thought my worker
was a racist.'

Interviewer: 'Why was that?'

African young male job seeker:
'I don't know I just thought the
relationship - she was just
angry - cause I'd just turn up
and do the same thing, but it
was like she didn't like me or
something.'

⁸⁴Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *The State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria*, i-312, 67.

⁸⁵Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *The State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria*, i-312, 69.

⁸⁶Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *The State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria*, i-312, 69.

⁸⁷Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *The State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria*, i-312, 244-247.

⁸⁸Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *The State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria*, i-312, 245-246.

⁸⁹Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *The State of Victoria's Children 2009: Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria*, i-312, 245-246.

⁹⁰ACOSS, 'Times are still tough for young unemployed people', August 2010, 1-20, 8.

⁹¹Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 13.

⁹²Settlement Council of Australia, submission regarding recommendations on employment service improvements within Job Services Australia (JSA) and the Disability Employment Service (DES) for recent humanitarian entrant arrivals to Australia, 28 Jan 2011, 1-10, 2-3

⁹³Vic Health, *Ethnic and race-based discrimination as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing*, Research Summary 3, 1-8, 3.

8. EMPLOYER ATTITUDES

Employer attitudes towards hiring vulnerable young people have also been identified as a potential barrier to employment. A December 2009 survey of 193 employers conducted by the Brotherhood of St Laurence and VECCI analysed a range of Victorian employers' attitudes toward employing 'disadvantaged or vulnerable entry-level job seekers'.⁹⁴ The research found that 52% of surveyed employers attributed 'lack of relevant experience', 46% selected 'poor attitude', 34% selected 'poor motivation', and 29% selected 'poor personal presentation' as their 'main reasons for not hiring entry level employees'.⁹⁵ The fact that the second and third highest reason for not hiring an entry level job seeker were related to negative attitudes toward entry level employees (i.e. 'poor attitude' and 'poor motivation') indicates that a proportion of employers hold negative attitudes toward entry-level jobseekers.

This research has relevance to young people, as a significant proportion of job seekers being considered for entry level positions will likely be young people. In addition, comments submitted by a number of employers 'particularly targeted... Generation Y', leading the researchers to conclude that today's young people 'appear...to have an image/marketability issue'. Examples of such comments were: '*Generation Y. Very self absorbed*', and '*we employ younger staff, they tend to be on the look out for more attractive wages etc and leave quickly if they find it*'.⁹⁶ Former Chief Executive of Job Futures and current member of the ACOSS Board of Governors Lisa Fowkes has also noted that 'even where they are not overtly biased, employers are often nervous about employing...young people...'.⁹⁷

Interestingly, however, the Brotherhood of St Laurence/VECCI research also found that 38% of employers noted experiencing 'occasional...difficulty filling entry level positions' and 22% experienced 'frequent difficulty...'. In addition, 90% of employers surveyed expressed 'strong interest...in employing people from disadvantaged groups provided assistance was available', such as '...targeted pre-employment training and government subsidised training for low skilled employees'.⁹⁸

The research ultimately concludes that 'businesses are prepared to take a proactive role' in assisting disadvantaged job seekers, 'provided that the right kind and level of support is available' to them.⁹⁹ Whilst this is encouraging in terms of the potential for disadvantaged or vulnerable young people to secure more entry level positions, it appears that attitudes held by various Victorian employers to some degree act as a barrier against vulnerable young people securing employment. Indeed, even the perception that extra supports are required before an employer would hire a young person is an attitude that may prevent the employment of young people.

⁹⁴Brotherhood of St Laurence and Vecci, 'Barriers to hiring disadvantaged or vulnerable entry-level job seekers: Victorian employers' attitude survey, December 2009, 1-29, 3.

⁹⁵Brotherhood of St Laurence and Vecci, 'Barriers to hiring disadvantaged or vulnerable entry-level job seekers: Victorian employers' attitude survey, December 2009, 1-29, 14.

⁹⁶Brotherhood of St Laurence and Vecci, 'Barriers to hiring disadvantaged or vulnerable entry-level job seekers: Victorian employers' attitude survey, December 2009, 1-29, 23-24.

⁹⁷Lisa Fowkes, 'Rethinking Australia's Employment Services', *Perspectives*, 6, The Whitlam Institute, 1-23, 20.

⁹⁸Brotherhood of St Laurence and Vecci, 'Barriers to hiring disadvantaged or vulnerable entry-level job seekers: Victorian employers' attitude survey, December 2009, 1-29, 3.

⁹⁹Brotherhood of St Laurence and Vecci, 'Barriers to hiring disadvantaged or vulnerable entry-level job seekers: Victorian employers' attitude survey, December 2009, 1-29, 4.

9. CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED AT A TIME OF TRANSITION: FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD AND INTO THE WORKPLACE

Scholars often emphasise the new challenges faced by today's young adults (18 to 25 years)¹⁰⁰ in navigating the 'transition to adulthood', particularly those experienced by 'vulnerable youth in transition'.¹⁰¹ While thirty years ago young people generally had 'a small [and] easily understood set of options following high school,' these 'well defined pathways from adolescence into adulthood' are largely unavailable for today's young people.¹⁰² Older adolescents and young adults now face new challenges¹⁰³ in navigating these years, which was first characterised by scholar Jeffrey Arnett as 'emerging adulthood'.¹⁰⁴ In emerging adulthood, young people 'are increasingly independent, and manage greater responsibility and...take on more demanding roles'.¹⁰⁵ Challenges faced by many emerging adults include 'the management of [their] demanding roles, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses...finding meaning and purpose in the roles acquired, and assessing and making necessary life changes and coping with these changes'.¹⁰⁶ Though all young people must navigate such challenges, 'vulnerable youth populations' face additional 'specific challenges...over and above those faced by young people generally' and typically have 'fewer resources and skills'.¹⁰⁷

DEEWR's December 2010 *Labour Market Assistance Outcomes* report shows that positive outcomes, 'achieved when three months after participation in employment assistance, [a] job seeker is working or studying'¹⁰⁸ were achieved by only 35.9% of 21 to 24 year olds in stream 4.¹⁰⁹ This is compared to achievement rates of 51.2% of 15 to 20 year olds in stream 4 and 42.1% of 25 to 34 year olds in stream 4.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, specific supports need to be in place to assist disadvantaged emerging adults to make successful transitions into training and employment.

¹⁰⁰Nicole Zarrett and Jacquelynn Eccles, 'The passage to adulthood: Challenges of late adolescence', *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 111, Fall 2006, 13-28, 14.

¹⁰¹D Wayne Osgood, E. Michael Foster, and Mark E. Courtney, 'Vulnerable Populations and the Transition to Adulthood', *Future Child*, 20(1), Spring 2010, 209-229, 209-215.

¹⁰²Nicole Zarrett and Jacquelynn Eccles, 'The passage to adulthood: Challenges of late adolescence', *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 111, Fall 2006, 13-28, 14.

¹⁰³Nicole Zarrett and Jacquelynn Eccles, 'The passage to adulthood: Challenges of late adolescence', *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 111, Fall 2006, 13-28, 14.

¹⁰⁴Jennifer Tanner and Jeffrey Arnett, 'The emergence of 'emerging adulthood: the new life stage between adolescence and young adulthood', pp. 39-45, in *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood: New Perspectives and agendas*, Andy Furlong (ed.), Routledge, London: 2009.

¹⁰⁵Nicole Zarrett and Jacquelynn Eccles, 'The passage to adulthood: Challenges of late adolescence', *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 111, Fall 2006, 13-28, 15.

¹⁰⁶Nicole Zarrett and Jacquelynn Eccles, 'The passage to adulthood: Challenges of late adolescence', *New Directions for Youth Development*, No. 111, Fall 2006, 13-28, 15.

¹⁰⁷D Wayne Osgood, E. Michael Foster, and Mark E. Courtney, 'Vulnerable Populations and the Transition to Adulthood', *Future Child*, 20(1), Spring 2010, 209-229, 210 and 220.

¹⁰⁸Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Labour Market Assistance Outcomes*, December 2010, 1-25, 1.

¹⁰⁹Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Labour Market Assistance Outcomes*, December 2010, 1-25, 11.

¹¹⁰Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Labour Market Assistance Outcomes*, December 2010, 1-25, 11.

POLICY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS RELATING TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMPLOYMENT

This section outlines the recent Australian policy context and federal and state programs relevant to young people, especially those seeking employment.

During the May 2011-12 budget the Federal Treasurer announced that “We believe in extending the benefits of work to every capable Australian — single parents and jobless families, young Australians, the very long-term unemployed, the disabled, and older workers whose experience we need and value”¹¹¹ There were a number of initiatives that YACVic believe would benefit young people. Some of these are outlined below in the *DEEWR Budget Statement – Outcomes and Performance*.¹¹²

- additional funding to assist Job Services Australia providers to address the foundational skill deficits and employment barriers that young unemployed people without Year 12 or equivalent attainment face;
- transition support for early school leavers (aged 15-21 years) which will fund Job Services Australia providers to deliver targeted assistance in the form of a structured activity of up to 25 hours per week to build life, study and employment skills; and
- taking measurements of the proportion of young people, amongst other critical groups, in full-time unemployment after three months following participation in employment services for each of the following.

COMPACT WITH YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

Another important initiative is the Australian Government’s Compact with Young Australians (the Compact), which was agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 30 April 2009.¹¹³

The Compact includes:

- a participation requirement that ‘all young people...participate in schooling (or an approved equivalent) to Year 10 and then participate full-time (at least 25 hours per week) in education, training or employment, or a combination...until age 17’.¹¹⁴
- ‘an entitlement to an education or training place for 15 to 25 year olds which focuses on attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualifications’.¹¹⁵
- For 20 to 24 year olds who have received a ‘Year 12 or equivalent qualification [an] entitlement... to a place that would result in them attaining a higher qualification than they currently hold’.¹¹⁶
- Additionally, there are ‘strengthened participation requirements for some types of income support’.¹¹⁷

For instance, young people ‘under the age of 21 who seek income support through Youth Allowance (Other) or the Family Tax Benefit (Part A)...’ and who have not obtained a Year 12 or other qualification, ‘...need to participate in education and training full-time, or participate in part-time study or training in combination with other approved activities, usually for at least 25 hours per week, until they attain Year 12 or an equivalent Certificate Level II qualification’.¹¹⁸

The States and Territories in Australia are responsible for implementing the education and training entitlement aspects of the Compact.¹¹⁹ The Victorian Training Guarantee provides government subsidised places to young Victorian people who have left school early or who wish to obtain a higher level qualification than they currently have. To be eligible for a government subsidised place, a young person must either be ‘under 20 years’ old, ‘an applicant seeking a Foundation skills course’, a young person undertaking an apprenticeship, or a young person who wishes to obtain a qualification which is higher than the ‘highest qualification already held’.¹²⁰

In addition, in the 2011-12 Budget, the Victorian Government provided \$103 million for concession fee places for young people aged 15 to 25 years who are undertaking a diploma or advanced diploma course, in order to increase the educational opportunities available for Victorian young people.¹²¹

AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICESHIPS ACCESS PROGRAM

The Australian Apprenticeships Access Program (Access) endeavours to provide support to disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals seeking employment through the provision of 'training...by registered training organisations'.¹²² This training 'is accredited, linked to an Australian Apprenticeship pathway, and [is] recognised by employers nationally', and provides individuals with a range of employment skills.¹²³ There are eligibility requirements, which young people must satisfy before they are able to participate in the program.¹²⁴ For example, '...the option of participating in the Access Program must not be a factor in their decision to leave school' for an early school leaver if they are to participate in Access.¹²⁵

YOUTH CONNECTIONS

Youth Connections is a federal initiative which seeks to assist highly vulnerable young people who are 'at risk of disengaging, already disengaged from education, and/or family and the community'.¹²⁶ Youth Connections providers assist young people to 'develop personal skills' such as 'resilience and self-efficacy', as well as assist young people to re-connect to or remain engaged with education.¹²⁷ Youth Connection services are focused on disengaged young people aged 13 to 19 years.¹²⁸ With regards to JSA, the Youth Connections Program Guidelines specifically state that 'Youth Connections Providers must build and maintain effective relationships with Job Services Australia providers in the Service Region...to ensure that services delivered to young people are complementary, rather than duplicated' and that the process by which Youth Connections providers will 'engage and work with' JSA employment service providers 'should be outlined in the Youth Connections Provider's Service Plan'.¹²⁹ The extent to which JSA providers and Youth Connections Providers are collaborating in assisting vulnerable, disengaged young people will be discussed in greater detail later in this report.

¹²¹Brisbane Times' Treasurer Wayne Swan's budget speech' <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/business/federal-budget/treasurer-wayne-swans-budget-speech-20110510-1eh8z.html#ixzz1PrjKmQ6D>

¹²²Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Budget Statement outcomes and performance – outcome 4*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations,

¹²³Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions: Compact with Young Australians*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/compact.aspx>, accessed on 16 May 2011.

¹²⁴Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions: Compact with Young Australians*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/compact.aspx>, accessed on 16 May 2011.

¹²⁵Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions: Compact with Young Australians*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/compact.aspx>, accessed on 16 May 2011.

¹²⁶Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions: Compact with Young Australians*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/compact.aspx>, accessed on 16 May 2011.

¹²⁷Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions: Compact with Young Australians*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/compact.aspx>, accessed on 16 May 2011.

¹²⁸Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions: Compact with Young Australians*, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/compact.aspx>, accessed on 16 May 2011.

¹²⁹Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Attainment and Transitions: Compact with Young Australians*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Youth/YouthAttainmentandTransitions/Pages/compact.aspx>, accessed on 19 May 2011.

¹²⁰Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Skills Victoria, 'Get Funding', <http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/get-training/get-funding>, accessed on 26 May 2011.

¹²¹The Hon Ted Baillieu MLA, *2011-12 Budget Estimates Hearing: Public Accounts and Estimates Committee*, 13 May 2011, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, 1-18, 15.

¹²²Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Australian Apprenticeships Access Program: Overview*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/PreVoc/AAAP/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed on 19 May 2011.

¹²³Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Australian Apprenticeships Access Program: Overview*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/PreVoc/AAAP/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed on 19 May 2011.

¹²⁴Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Australian Apprenticeships Access Program: Overview*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/PreVoc/AAAP/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed on 19 May 2011.

¹²⁵Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Australian Apprenticeships Access Program: Overview*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/PreVoc/AAAP/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed on 19 May 2011.

¹²⁶Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Connections: Program Guidelines*, January 2010, 1-89, 11.

¹²⁷Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Connections: Program Guidelines*, January 2010, 1-89, 9-10.

¹²⁸Brotherhood of St Laurence, Submission to Review of Funding for Schooling, March 2011, 1-35, 30

¹²⁹Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Youth Connections: Program Guidelines*, January 2010, 1-89, 24.

PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN VICTORIA – ‘VICTORIAWORKS’

‘Victoriaworks’, for jobseekers with employment challenges, aims to meet the labour and skill needs of Victorian industry, as well as increase economic and social inclusion by increasing the sustainable employment of people who may need additional assistance to find employment. It is an example of a locally based support that has been developed with all of the best practice elements of youth service provision that are outlined on pages 50 and 51.

These features of the program are:

- Industry focus and engagement: A strong focus on industry skills and labour needs and direct engagement of employers
- Flexibility: The program provides flexibility in the type of assistance that is provided to eligible jobseekers and employers as part of an effective approach to skills and labour needs
- Locally responsive: The development of partnerships between key players that are responsive to local and regional needs and conditions
- Linked to Victorian Government investment in community support services: The focus on eligible jobseekers who are also receiving community support services links Government investment with better holistic outcomes

An essential element of the program is the partnership that Victoriaworks for jobseekers with employment challenges creates, bringing together:

- employers with specific skills and labour needs
- employment support services to jobseekers with employment challenges
- State community support services that are seeking to address the employment needs of their clients (for example, corrections services, migrant/refugee settlement services, public housing services)
- Funding for partnerships will vary according to size, duration and scope. It will be linked to the employment outcomes achieved.

At the time of writing this report, this program is due to finish at the end of June 2011. However, discussions are underway with the State Government to see if funding of this program could continue.

THE JOB SERVICES AUSTRALIA PROGRAM

ABOUT JSA

Job Services Australia is a federal policy initiative which is highly relevant to young people seeking employment in Australia. Following a comprehensive review of employment services in Australia, the Australian Government introduced JSA on 1 July 2009.¹³⁰ Both for-profit and not-for-profit service providers were able to tender to become JSA employment service providers.¹³¹ In addition to generalist employment service providers, there are several categories of specialist employment service providers who deliver services for specific groups of individuals who may be experiencing greater vulnerability in securing employment. Such groups include ‘Homeless or at risk of Homelessness’, ‘Culturally-Linguistically Diverse Migrant Refugees’, ‘Indigenous Australians’, and ‘Youth at Risk’.¹³²

Under JSA, job seekers are allocated to one of four streams depending on their level of disadvantage and the various barriers to employment they are experiencing.¹³³ The provision of support increases according to which stream a job seeker is allocated to.¹³⁴ This program involves referrals of young people seeking employment by Centrelink to a JSA provider, following Centrelink’s use of the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) to classify each job seeker into one of the streams.¹³⁵ When Centrelink identifies that an individual may be experiencing disadvantage or barriers to finding employment, Centrelink may also make a Job Capacity Assessment to determine which stream will provide the most appropriate level of support for the individual.¹³⁶ In each stream, those seeking employment will be assisted to create an Employment

Pathway Plan (EPP) 'that is tailored to [an individual's] need[s]'¹³⁷ and individuals may undertake a number of work experience activities as well as participate in additional education and training options.¹³⁸ JSA employment providers receive fees 'at different stages of their work with a particular job seeker'.¹³⁹ Fees include 'service fees [which are] paid quarterly for each job seeker who is required to engage with them', 'placement fees...paid when a job seeker completes a specified number of hours in a job arranged by the provider', and 'outcome fees [which are] paid when a job seeker successfully completes 13 weeks (a 'pathway outcome') and 26 weeks (a 'full outcome') in an employment or education placement'.¹⁴⁰ In addition, providers are to 'draw on payments credited by DEEWR to an Employment Pathway Fund (EPF) account which it holds on their behalf'.¹⁴¹ Employment providers can use money from their EPF account to 'fund assistance for job seekers such as counselling, training, equipment, work experience and wage subsidies'.¹⁴²

In their *Evaluation Strategy for Job Services Australia: 2009 to 2012*, DEEWR noted that JSA 'seeks to improve the links between labour market assistance and apprenticeships, vocational education and training and state and territory government employment and training programs', as well as 'place a greater emphasis on addressing skill shortages,

social inclusion and targeting more disadvantaged job seekers'.¹⁴³ In addition, DEEWR has noted that Job Services Australia seeks to 'offer individually tailored and comprehensive services to assist disadvantaged job seekers with particular needs or barriers to employment to achieve sustainable employment outcomes'.¹⁴⁴

The recent Australian Government's 2011-12 Budget 'invest[s] more than \$5.5 billion over the next four years in Job Services Australia'. In the Budget Statement, the DEEWR specifies that a key objective of JSA is that 'employment service providers help all eligible job seekers build linkages with employers, connect job seekers to appropriate training and skills development opportunities and build linkages with other key stakeholders'.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁰Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Job Services Australia: Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/Pages/faq.aspx#01>, viewed on 9 June 2011.

¹³¹The Nous Group, *Jobs Australia: Evolution of the Jobs Services Australia system*, 1-30, 4.

¹³²Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Specialist Services*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/EmploymentServices/Pages/streamServices.aspx>, viewed on 9 June 2011.

¹³³Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Stream Services*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/EmploymentServices/Pages/streamServices.aspx>, accessed on 11 May 2011.

¹³⁴DEEWR, *Evaluation Strategy for Job Services Australia 2009 to 2012*, Evaluation and Program Performance Branch, Research, Analysis and Evaluation Group, August 2009.

¹³⁵Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Stream Services*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/EmploymentServices/Pages/streamServices.aspx>, accessed on 11 May 2011.

¹³⁶DEEWR, *Job Services Australia, 'Frequently Asked Questions'*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/Pages/faq.aspx>, accessed 11 May 2011.

¹³⁷DEEWR, *Job Services Australia, 'Stream Services'*, <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Employment/JSA/EmploymentServices/Pages/streamServices.aspx>, accessed on 11 May 2011.

¹³⁸Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Labour Market Assistance Outcomes*, December 2010, 1-25, 20.

¹³⁹Julian Disney, Anna Buduls and Peter Grant, 'Chapter 4: Participation Reports', *Independent Review of the Job Seeker Compliance Framework: A Report to the Parliament of Australia*, September 2010, at [23] and [24].

¹⁴⁰Julian Disney, Anna Buduls and Peter Grant, 'Chapter 4: Participation Reports', *Independent Review of the Job Seeker Compliance Framework: A Report to the Parliament of Australia*, September 2010, at [23] and [24].

¹⁴¹Julian Disney, Anna Buduls and Peter Grant, 'Chapter 4: Participation Reports', *Independent Review of the Job Seeker Compliance Framework: A Report to the Parliament of Australia*, September 2010, at [23] and [24].

¹⁴²Julian Disney, Anna Buduls and Peter Grant, 'Chapter 4: Participation Reports', *Independent Review of the Job Seeker Compliance Framework: A Report to the Parliament of Australia*, September 2010, at [23] and [24].

¹⁴³DEEWR, *Evaluation Strategy for Job Services Australia 2009 to 2012*, Evaluation and Program Performance Branch, Research, Analysis and Evaluation Group, August 2009.

¹⁴⁴Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 'Outcome 4', *DEEWR Budget Statements – Outcomes and performance*, 110-128, 111.

¹⁴⁵Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 'Outcome 4', *DEEWR Budget Statements – Outcomes and performance*, 110-128, 117.

STRENGTHS OF THE JSA MODEL IN PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

A number of positive aspects of the Job Services Australia program have been identified by various community organisations, JSA providers, and researchers.

In their *Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012*, the Brotherhood of St Laurence noted that the reforms to the employment service system in Australia brought about by JSA 'have gone some way in addressing the weaknesses of the previous programs' and that 'early available evidence' indicates that the reforms brought in by JSA 'have been in the right direction'.¹⁴⁶ The Brotherhood of St Laurence identified a number of positive characteristics of JSA including: that the new employment services system has brought about 'a stronger focus on disadvantaged job seekers in JSA, albeit within constrained budget', that there is 'increased capacity to deliver accredited training', 'a stronger focus on individualised pathway planning, and a more effective compliance system focused on re-engagement', and there is 'greater flexibility in brokerage dollars through the Employment Pathway fund (EPF)'.¹⁴⁷ Ultimately, the Brotherhood of St Laurence asserted that 'the current JSA model is working reasonably well for the majority of unemployed people', particularly those who have the 'work experience, skills and capacities to take up work...'.¹⁴⁸

'We do have a lot of brokerage, which I find is really good. So, if a client is ready and wanting to do training it's no problem...and there's a lot more flexibility with those in stream 4. You can pay for other things aside from just training and so we've got the capacity to pay for medications, counselling, bond...' JSA case manager.

Similarly, Mission Australia noted that the new JSA model 'is a significant improvement in many respects on the former employment service models', as it has 'reduced complexity for job seekers and providers and is aiming to minimise the risk that those who are unemployed are referred from provider to provider without receiving any real service'.¹⁴⁹

The allocation of job seekers into one of four streams depending on their level of need and the barriers they may be experiencing in obtaining employment has also been characterised as being a positive aspect of the JSA system. For instance, in research conducted by Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, which examined the experiences of JSA specialist providers, it was noted that JSA's 'streamed approach provides recognition that job seekers experiencing disadvantage require additional services, support, time and flexibility in order to find and maintain employment'.¹⁵⁰

'...from an employment perspective it's all in one place, rather than getting a person to be job ready and then handing them to someone, and we do have the streamed services, which enables us to work longer term with job seekers. For example, stream 4 job seekers have a capacity to do a whole lot of things like training, even getting accommodation for a young person who may be homeless...' JSA case manager.

Jobs Australia has also noted that many of its members feel they have 'greater flexibility...when working with Streams 3 and 4 job seekers...'.¹⁵¹ Melbourne Citymission research has commended the 'considerable flexibility' provided by 'the JSA model' in allowing for more 'individualised responses to some of the barriers' experienced by vulnerable young people.¹⁵² The research has also noted that 'work experience programs...[provide] some young people with positive personal development opportunities', though cautions that such programs 'were less successful in providing links to employment'.¹⁵³

In addition, the JSA model 'includes specialist providers intended to provide a more integrated response to particular groups of job seekers who will benefit from the knowledge, expertise and networks of these providers'.¹⁵⁴ These specialist providers have an ability to 'bring a specific understanding of the barriers faced by particular population groups and the different ways in which these can impact on people's capacity to engage with the labour market'.¹⁵⁵ Jobs Australia also commends the ability of specialist providers to 'bring to the table networking relationships that allow access to other specialised services that are crucial in providing support to vulnerable job seekers'.¹⁵⁶ Ultimately, the existence of specialist providers who are uniquely equipped to work with specific groups of vulnerable individuals, such as 'youth at risk', and who have broader relationships with other services in the various sectors in which they operate, is a positive aspect of the JSA model.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE JSA MODEL

As has been discussed, vulnerable or disadvantaged young people may experience a range of structural and personal barriers which can significantly hinder their ability to obtain and maintain employment. The provision of employment services which provide young people with effective support is of critical importance. A number of researchers, community organisations, and JSA providers have expressed concerns about the JSA model in its ability to assist highly vulnerable or disadvantaged young people to secure and maintain employment. A range of these concerns will be discussed in the next few pages.

¹⁴⁶Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', *Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012*, January 2011, 1-34, 3.

¹⁴⁷Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', *Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012*, January 2011, 1-34, 3.

¹⁴⁸Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', *Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012*, January 2011, 1-34, 3.

¹⁴⁹Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-19, 5.

¹⁵⁰Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 8.

¹⁵¹Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 2.

¹⁵²Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 9-10.

¹⁵³Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 9-10.

¹⁵⁴Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 28.

¹⁵⁵Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 9.

¹⁵⁶Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 7.

1. THE PROGRAM IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY 'YOUTH CENTRED'

Mission Australia's report *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a Lost Generation* questions whether the JSA model 'is sufficiently youth-centred' and whether at-risk young people are being adequately assisted by JSA services.¹⁵⁷ CEO of Mission Australia Toby Hall refers to the 'competitive purchasing model' in which 'youth specialist contracts were awarded', as well as the 'competitive nature of the star ratings system' as problematic, likely 'run[ning] counter to notions of collaboration between providers'.¹⁵⁸ Former Chief Executive of Job Futures and current member of the Board of Governance of ACOSS, Lisa Fowkes, also notes similar concerns, stating that under the JSA system, 'providers are pitted against one another in a contest to achieve quantifiable outcomes'¹⁵⁹, thereby hindering a sense of collaboration between providers. The competitive nature of the tendering process and the star ratings system appear to place significant pressures on specialist and generalist JSA providers assisting highly disadvantaged young people, as providing meaningful assistance can take time and require significant flexibility of approach.

'They need age specific agencies, you know like youth service providers. There are some where anyone can go. So if they had a place where like they worked more with youth maybe they'd understand.'

Young male job seeker.

Another concern is that only '35 youth specialist contracts were awarded...across 28 employment services areas'.¹⁶⁰ In addition, 'a significant number of youth focused and specialist organisations were dropped out of the provider base as a result of the changed program structure' brought about by JSA.¹⁶¹ This has given rise to a situation in Australia in which youth specialist providers are not available to young people in a number of areas across the country. In Victoria, there appears to be a lack of youth specialist providers in the State's west. While generalist

providers and other non-youth specific specialist providers may be available in these areas, it is of great concern that youth specialist providers are not available for all young people in Australia. As Mission Australia notes, the lack of youth specialist providers in all areas across Australia means that there is no 'guarantee' of 'a common delivery platform for all young people'.¹⁶²

'Workers need more training and an understanding of the people that they're working with, and where they might be coming from.'

JSA case manager.

In the joint research undertaken by Hanover, Melbourne Citymission and Jobs Australia into the 'challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract,' specialist providers noted that 'specialist case workers, counsellors and psychologists, as well as reverse marketers and trainers... are able to cater for the variety of barriers their job seekers may experience in getting into employment'. In addition, caseworkers employed by specialist providers have detailed knowledge and 'experience' in 'working with particular population groups'.¹⁶³ Such expertise is of critical importance to young people who may be experiencing a number of barriers impeding their ability to secure employment. Specialist providers possess a 'wider understanding of the service system and of the needs of specialist groups of job seekers', allowing them to provide more 'integrated service response[s] through providers... leveraging funding from various program areas to get the best outcomes' and 'implement[ing] coordinated responses'.¹⁶⁴ It is of great concern that there are not greater numbers of youth specialist providers available across Australia given the high levels of unemployment for this age cohort.

2. INADEQUATE CAPACITY FOR INTENSIVE AND HOLISTIC SUPPORT

One aspect of the JSA model which has been identified as a concern is whether the JSA model is able to, in practice, provide for 'adequate levels of intensive and holistic case management and support'

to vulnerable young people.¹⁶⁵ The research conducted by Melbourne Citymission reveals that highly vulnerable young people would be best supported and most likely to achieve sustainable employment outcomes through the provision of a strong 'one to one relationship' with a 'case worker... rather than just consultant...', in addition to extensive 'time and support to motivate and orient young people, develop social and personal skills and connections, as well as vocational skills and experience...'¹⁶⁶

'We just can't work holistically with the clients, not the way we want to.' JSA case manager.

In the article *Rethinking Australia's Employment Services*, Lisa Fowkes asserts that 'despite claims that services within JSA...are individually tailored, the high volume, low margin nature of this work means that they are highly homogenous' and 'providers rely heavily on standardisation approaches' such as 'enrolment in a work preparation course'.¹⁶⁷ In this article, Fowkes refers to high caseloads of '100 or more clients', which, by necessity, require a 'rationing [of] one's effort...'.¹⁶⁸ She argues that, though the JSA systems are 'designed to ensure more focus on longer term unemployed job seekers in higher streams', 'more motivated and compliant job seekers will be selected above the others' when providers have to make difficult decisions about who to direct their attention to,¹⁶⁹ raising questions about the capacity of JSA providers to provide the intensive and holistic supports needed by vulnerable young people.

Young male job seeker 1:

'I don't think they actually sit down properly and actually talk to you - what you want to do and, you know what I mean, where you want to go from here. They don't do that, they just...'

Young male job seeker 2:

'for me I feel like, for them it's just routine'.

Young male job seeker 1:

'Every week I have to go in there, but when I go there really they don't really do nothing. It's just 'ok, you came', 'what are you doing?' check what I'm doing, not much guidelines you know, to help me get a job. Which becomes annoying because me and her, we started having arguments cause I just go there and she just wants to tick me off the thing and that's it, 'say (name) came' and that's it.'

¹⁵⁷Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 5.

¹⁵⁸Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 5-6.

¹⁵⁹Lisa Fowkes, 'Rethinking Australia's Employment Services', *Perspectives*, 6, The Whitlam Institute, 1-23, 7.

¹⁶⁰Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 6.

¹⁶¹Lisa Fowkes, 'Rethinking Australia's Employment Services', *Perspectives*, 6, The Whitlam Institute, 1-23, 7.

¹⁶²Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 6.

¹⁶³Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 6.

¹⁶⁴Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 10.

¹⁶⁵Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract* Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 10.

¹⁶⁶Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 10.

¹⁶⁷Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 10.

¹⁶⁸Lisa Fowkes, 'Rethinking Australia's Employment Services', *Perspectives*, 6, The Whitlam Institute, 1-23.

¹⁶⁹Lisa Fowkes, 'Rethinking Australia's Employment Services', *Perspectives*, 6, The Whitlam Institute, 1-23.

In addition, the 2010 report *Evolution of the JSA System*, the Nous Group found that 'employment consultants...spend 50% of their time with any one job seeker...on administrating and complying with over 3,000 pages of JSA requirements'.¹⁷⁰ In addition, employment service providers 'spend close to 15% of their overall process time on unnecessary administration and duplicated effort with Centrelink'.¹⁷¹ In light of such administrative pressures, it appears impossible for employment service providers to be able to have the amount of time required to provide the intensive and holistic supports required by disengaged, highly vulnerable young people.

Those who attended the Refugee Council of Australia's December 2009 national community consultations also raised concerns regarding resourcing and the ability of employment service providers to provide intensive, integrated and individualised supports. Issues raised included that 'JSA providers are not resourced to provide the kind of targeted individual and community support that would equip newly-arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants with the necessary job seeking skills and understanding of the Australian workplace culture'.¹⁷² Though these concerns were raised in the context of the provision of JSA supports to newly-arrived refugees and individuals entering Australia on humanitarian grounds (a group of individuals experiencing significant vulnerability and disadvantage), the capacity of providers to deliver individualised and holistic supports, which are urgently required by disadvantaged individuals seeking employment, is applicable to the situation regarding highly vulnerable or disengaged young people in Australia.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence has raised similar concerns regarding the ability of the JSA model to provide the supports required by disadvantaged job seekers. Though a long-time provider of employment services, the Brotherhood of St Laurence ultimately 'decided not to tender to deliver JSA or [Disability Employment Services], but instead '[focus] on developing and proving innovative approaches aimed at highly disadvantaged groups...'¹⁷³ such as 'young adults'.¹⁷⁴

Labelling the JSA program as 'a tightly controlled contractual regime', the Brotherhood of St Laurence

argues that 'the contractual arrangements and funding structures' mean that 'many providers... are reluctant to spend [Employment Pathway Fund] monies on clients with a lower prospect of a paying outcome within the streamed assistance regime' and the JSA system 'limits the extent to which assistance can be personalised to meet the needs of individual job seekers'.¹⁷⁵ While the Brotherhood of St Laurence notes that there is currently 'inadequate program data on effectiveness and outcomes in the public arena to make a fully informed assessment of the current JSA model',¹⁷⁶ they refer to data regarding employment outcomes of Stream 4 clients (the most highly disadvantaged clients), which reveals that 'employment outcomes for JSA Stream 4 clients total 15%', and that, worryingly, '42% of Stream 4 job seekers are no longer in the labour force 3 months after employment assistance...'¹⁷⁷ With regard to reform of Australian employment services, the Brotherhood of St Laurence argues that there is a need for 'a simplified screening assessment', as well as 'shared case planning within Centrelink' and 'with [employment service providers] and facilitated hand-over to other non-vocational service providers with regular review of circumstances'.¹⁷⁸

'We will take them to Centrelink, we will take them to the doctor, to the nurse, Medicare, we will do all those things with the kids, we'll advocate with them, we'll do what needs to be done. And, I suppose, what we're hearing back from the young people is that they're just going there, sitting there, looking at jobs, [and] walking out the door – see you later. And they don't appear to develop that relationship, so therefore they're not very forthcoming with information – they don't have that connection with the worker...'

Youth Connections case worker manager on young people's experiences at JSA providers.

3. THE MODEL DOES NOT ADEQUATELY SUPPORT AN APPROACH THAT PUTS THE NEEDS OF THE YOUNG PERSON AT THE CENTRE

Anecdotal evidence collected in YACVic's interviews with a number of JSA providers and young people accessing JSA services has indicated that there is a reluctance among a number of JSA providers to work collaboratively with other JSA providers, such as specialised youth providers or youth programs such as Youth Connections, even when it has become evident that a young person's needs are not being adequately met by the JSA provider with whom they are working. Upon a JSA case worker becoming aware that their particular JSA service is not able to provide the levels of support required by a young person or does not possess the degree of expertise required, it is essential that a provider consider referring a young person to another JSA or youth service provider which may be better able to address the young person's needs or the barriers that they may be experiencing.

'During my contact with the young boys that I work with, some of them had a bad experience with the Jobs Services provider they're linked to, and I tried to link them up with a new one, encourage them to change to (youth specific service provider – name removed). [It's a] serious problem that we have now because the Job Service Provider won't let go of young people. I tried for a couple of young boys. The Jobs Service Provider was saying 'why, why do you want to go there?' 'What couldn't we do for you here?'...

Youth Worker

¹⁷⁰The Nous Group, *Jobs Australia: The evolution of the Job Services Australia system*, 2010, 1-33, 1.

¹⁷¹The Nous Group, *Jobs Australia: The evolution of the Job Services Australia system*, 2010, 1-33, 9.

¹⁷²Louise Olliff, *What works: Employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants*, Refugee Council of Australia, June 2010, 1-87, 22.

¹⁷³Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 7.

¹⁷⁴Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 7.

¹⁷⁵Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 15.

¹⁷⁶Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 12.

¹⁷⁷Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 13.

¹⁷⁸Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 30.

4. CHALLENGES IN PROVIDING ADEQUATE CASE MANAGEMENT TO ADDRESS BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT 'JOB READINESS'

Concerns have been raised about whether the current JSA system allows for adequate case management to address disadvantaged or vulnerable young people's barriers to employment. For instance, ACOSS has noted that, 'despite the improved flexibility' for JSA providers, 'the system for the most part...directs jobseekers to follow detailed rules and requirements rather than encouraging choice and initiative'.¹⁷⁹ ACOSS notes that a group of highly disadvantaged jobseekers...face multiple health and social barriers to employment' and another group is 'at risk of joining this group' as 'prolonged unemployment has well known effects on physical and mental health'.¹⁸⁰ In the *Submission to Minister for Employment Participation on the future of Job Services Australia*, ACOSS provides detailed descriptions of possible funding models which would allow JSA providers to better connect with 'training, health, housing and social support services' to ensure that the most disadvantaged or vulnerable job seekers are able to receive more comprehensive supports to address their barriers and needs.¹⁸¹

Young people who participated in the Melbourne Citymission research indicated that 'emotional and psychological assistance and support' is an important aspect in aiding them to overcome their barriers to employment.¹⁸² In addition, participants asserted that referrals to other services, 'the development of trust and understanding between caseworkers and job seekers', and the provision of 'practical assistance' are aspects of employment services that are of substantial benefit to them.¹⁸³

Ultimately, it appears that JSA, as it is currently structured, does not provide adequate casework support to provide the intensive, integrated assistance needed to address the barriers and needs of vulnerable young people. For instance, the Brotherhood of St Laurence asserts that while the 'JSA system is operating reasonably well...for the majority of 'job ready' unemployed people', 'assistance to highly disadvantaged job seekers who are not 'job ready' and face multiple barriers to open employment remains poor...'¹⁸⁴ As Mission Australia notes in their report *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost*

generation, the 'multiplicity' of structural and personal barriers commonly experienced by vulnerable and disadvantaged young people 'make[s] it extremely difficult for any single service provider to be effective in supporting a young person within the current youth service delivery'.¹⁸⁵ These young people...require 'sustained, integrated and appropriate intervention' in order to have their various needs addressed and to obtain and maintain employment.¹⁸⁶ It appears that funding constraints, administrative pressures, and the structural design of JSA limit JSA providers' ability to provide such intensive case management support to vulnerable young people.

5. INCORRECT INITIAL ASSESSMENTS AND RETENTION OF PROGRAM KNOWLEDGE BY CENTRELINK STAFF

Concerns have been raised about initial Centrelink assessments and their allocation of young people into the most appropriate stream.

'We get a kid walk through the door with multiple, multiple barriers who is already in JSA, but they are in stream one.'

Youth Connections case manager

It is the responsibility of Centrelink 'to register and...classify job seekers through the Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI)' into one of the four streams depending on their assessment of a job seeker's barriers and level of need.¹⁸⁷ This initial assessment by Centrelink may be made over the phone or in a face-to-face interview.¹⁸⁸ It is of concern to note that, while 'Centrelink's records indicate that they have 96% JSA accuracy by phone or face-to-face' in placing job seekers into the correct streams, employment service providers have indicated 'that up to 50% of Centrelink's JSCI classifications require re-classification' and said that they often 'duplicate the 10 minute JSCI classification process to verify its validity'.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, 95% of specialist providers who responded to the survey conducted by Hanover, Melbourne Citymission and Jobs Australia indicated they had 'significant or some difficulties with the way in which Centrelink assigns job seekers to streams', primarily due to the fact that 'barriers were not

'We've had so many clients – from day one – and still continue to, that haven't been assessed properly. You know they're classed as being in stream 1 or 2 and they've got drug and alcohol issues, they're homeless and they've got all these different things going on for them. You don't know how they've actually ended up in such a low stream... So the clients have to just know it themselves, without having that process explained to them...so if they've got a crisis with housing or whatever it might be, they don't attend appointments, they get penalised,' JSA case manager

'They need to give us the power to send them back for Job Capacity Assessments...I don't understand – I know they've said that there were too many incorrect referrals, but not one of mine wasn't up-streamed when I sent them off.'

JSA case manager

recognised or disclosed in Centrelink assessments'. Specialist providers emphasised the importance of a correct assessment, as a job seeker's level of support is determined on this basis.¹⁹⁰

The Nous Report also noted that approximately 15% of 'job-ready' jobseekers' end up becoming long-term unemployed', and emphasised that there is a need for a 'formal individual handover...between Centrelink and [Employment Service Providers]' as well as 'enhance[ment] [of] the existing registration and classification system to better identify the 15% of short-term job seekers that become long-term job seekers'.¹⁹¹ It is positive that DEEWR has noted in the 2011-12 DEEWR Budget Statement – Outcome 4 that 'changes' will be 'introduced from 1 July 2012 [which] will...[improve] the interaction between employment service providers and Centrelink'.¹⁹²

Anecdotal evidence collected by YACVic has also identified concerns relating to the capacity of Centrelink staff to retain up to date information about the Youth Connections program. As one Youth Connections case manager described:

'The Centrelink workers, because it's such a massive turn-over of workers, we can go in there once every six months, and we can update them, which we do, give them the information and it's great for a couple of weeks, and then it all falls down again because the staff turnover just keeps on going.'

¹⁷⁹Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), *Submission to Minister for Employment Participation on the future of Job Services Australia*, ACOSS Paper 169, January 2011, 1-27, 5.

¹⁸⁰Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), *Submission to Minister for Employment Participation on the future of Job Services Australia*, ACOSS Paper 169, January 2011, 1-27, 21.

¹⁸¹Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), *Submission to Minister for Employment Participation on the future of Job Services Australia*, ACOSS Paper 169, January 2011, 1-27, 21-22.

¹⁸²Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 27.

¹⁸³Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 27.

¹⁸⁴Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 12.

¹⁸⁵Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 3.

¹⁸⁶Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-18, 3.

¹⁸⁷The Nous Group, *Jobs Australia: The evolution of the Job Services Australia system*, 2010, 1-33, 11.

¹⁸⁸The Nous Group, *Jobs Australia: The evolution of the Job Services Australia system*, 2010, 1-33, 11.

¹⁸⁹The Nous Group, *Jobs Australia: The evolution of the Job Services Australia system*, 2010, 1-33, 11.

¹⁹⁰Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 19.

¹⁹¹The Nous Group, *Jobs Australia: The evolution of the Job Services Australia system*, 2010, 1-33, 1 and 19.

¹⁹²DEEWR, *DEEWR Budget Statements – Outcomes and performance – Outcome 4*, 2011, 110-128, 112.

6. INFORMED 'CHOICE' OF JSA PROVIDER NOT A REALITY FOR MOST YOUNG PEOPLE

In its *Submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, Jobs Australia notes that the 'understanding' of job seekers who are new to the system 'about the way the system works and the respective roles of Centrelink and employment providers is generally poor'.¹⁹³ As a result, 'the apparent choice the job seeker exercises when choosing a provider is frequently poorly informed'.¹⁹⁴

The operation of Centrelink 'on the basis of job seeker choice...does not allow them to make any kind of recommendation to job seekers as to which provider might best suit their needs'.¹⁹⁵ With regards to young people, it appears that unless they already have knowledge that a 'particular provider might be a specialist that targets their specific needs', i.e. a youth specialist provider, they will not necessarily be referred to a youth specific provider as 'Centrelink is unable to refer job seekers to specific providers, despite a specialist provider being best placed to meet specific needs'.¹⁹⁶ One consequence of this appears to be that many specialist providers are referred individuals that are not within their specialist population group,¹⁹⁷ 'leading to a waste of specialist resources'.¹⁹⁸ As Jobs Australia has noted, 'specialist providers...have staff with specific and unique skills and experience' and 'the loss of these resources to employment services, even if inadvertently...would be a great loss'.¹⁹⁹ The Brotherhood of St Laurence has also noted that 'changes to the JSA contract arrangements and processes are required to ensure that specialists are able to focus on their niche markets' in recognition of the 'principle that specific needs groups require provider staff to have specialist skills and knowledge'.²⁰⁰

It is also of concern that referrals of job seekers to JSA providers may be 'made via call centres that can be located anywhere [in] Australia', and 'Centrelink

staff often lack knowledge about local providers and are...unable to provide information about providers that most suit a job seeker's needs.²⁰¹ In the research conducted by Melbourne Citymission, 'just over half of the participants were aware that the JSA they were attending was a youth specialist service', further indicating that vulnerable young people may not be aware of the existence of specialist youth providers or that they may request referral to one of these providers. Hanover, Melbourne Citymission and Jobs Australia ultimately recommend that the 'Centrelink referral process be revised to...ensure that where job seekers are known to have particular barriers, they are informed if there is a specialist provider in their area that has a specific focus on their area of need'.²⁰²

'When I stopped studying they made an appointment for me to go to the (name removed) office, and at the (name removed) office, they had all these lists, they don't even know, they just tell you to pick, you know what I mean, this is like a lotto. You just pick a number, and so I just picked the one that was in (area removed) because most of the time I study in (area removed) so I think I'll just go there, make it easier, quicker, but I didn't know actually that was a bad place, because they didn't tell you nothing. They just said, you have to be there at this time and your seeing this person – that's it...you don't know, you're like a blind person just walking into some organisation you don't even know.' Young male job seeker

¹⁹³Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 10.

¹⁹⁴Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 10.

¹⁹⁵Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 21.

¹⁹⁶Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 21.,

7. PROGRAM DOES NOT ADEQUATELY RECOGNISE OR MEASURE NON-VOCATIONAL OUTCOMES

For vulnerable young people whose barriers may include a lack of stable accommodation, mental health issues, experiences of family violence, or language difficulties, a JSA provider will work with the young person to create an Employment Pathway Plan, which 'should identify their goals and steps towards achieving them'.²⁰³ These goals may include, 'completing language training, undertaking counselling...finding accommodation or ensuring a health condition is stabilised'.²⁰⁴ However, joint research conducted by Hanover, Melbourne Citymission and Jobs Australia notes that such a process 'takes considerable time and can involve periods of regression'.²⁰⁵ In addition, though 'social outcomes are not an end in themselves... they are a critical step in the pathway to achieving sustainable employment'.²⁰⁶ In addition, if measured appropriately, they could help promote innovative practice that addresses long term unemployment'.²⁰⁷ Specialist providers who participated in the research were 'critical of the contract's failure to recognise social outcomes in the star ratings system and to provide payments for these outcomes'.²⁰⁸

'We've got KPIs for placing someone, but there's no KPIs for social supports, actually getting someone into housing and sorting out their legal issues... So, it's like you're working so hard with the clients but on paper, it does not reflect this'. JSA case manager.

As a JSA case manager interviewed for this report described:

'In the past with, for example, the Personal Support Program you'd get an outcome for moving a person along, whereas you really don't get recognition for that it could take two years to get someone to a point where they get a sustainable outcome.'

Jobs Australia has also asserted that the 'concept of social outcomes remains fairly rudimentary within employment services' and argues that 'social outcomes should be given greater prominence as tools to improve the engagement and participation of some groups'.²⁰⁹ In addition, when a vulnerable job seeker overcomes a significant barrier, 'the achievement of these milestones by job seekers often represents considerable effort by providers', and Jobs Australia asserts that a 'specific Pathway Outcome which recognises progress in achieving a social outcome would encourage providers to put effort and resources into overcoming barriers without removing the ultimate goal of employment'.²¹⁰

In light of the often long-term nature and multiplicity of barriers which are commonly experienced by highly vulnerable job seekers, it is essential that the JSA system better recognise the importance of social or non-vocational outcomes and provide adequate funding for such outcomes. As joint research conducted by Hanover, Melbourne Citymission and Jobs Australia notes, a failure to adequately recognise and fund non-vocational outcomes may mean that a provider is unable to continue to provide high quality support to vulnerable job seekers and the provider's 'financial viability' may be 'jeopardise[d]'.²¹¹

¹⁹⁷Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 7.

¹⁹⁸Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 21.

¹⁹⁹Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 7.

²⁰⁰Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 18.

²⁰¹Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 21.

²⁰²Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 21.

^{203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208}Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 13.

²⁰⁹Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 7.

²¹⁰Jobs Australia, *Jobs Australia submission on ways to improve employment services within Job Services Australia (JSA) and Disability Employment Services (DES) from 2012*, 1-26, 8.

²¹¹Erica Flentje, Emma Cull, and George Giuliani, *Achieving sustainable outcomes for disadvantaged job seekers: challenges for specialist providers under the current Job Services Australia contract*, Hanover, Melbourne Citymission, and Jobs Australia, December 2010, 1-54, 13.

8. NOT ENOUGH ACCESSIBLE PRACTICAL SUPPORT

In the research conducted by Melbourne Citymission and in a number of interviews which YACVic conducted with young people accessing JSA services, the need for more practical support was emphasised. In an interview with the 'employment specialist' at ORYGEN, a youth mental health service, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Centre for Public Policy noted that a number of support services are offered 'for those interested in training or higher education, including sourcing funds, help with applications and forms, advocacy and negotiation of accommodation for clients, and practical help, such as with transport'.²¹² Such supports appear to be invaluable in assisting vulnerable or disadvantaged young people who may be experiencing barriers to employment.

'While some...requests may be somewhat unrealistic in terms of what JSA providers are able to deliver, the requests demonstrate the level of support that some young people need'.²¹³ It appears that many young people experiencing a range of barriers require practical supports, which may not be adequately provided for by the current JSA model.

9. INADEQUATE FOCUS ON RELEVANT AND MEANINGFUL EDUCATION AND TRAINING OPTIONS

While JSA's focus on training opportunities for job seekers is positive, concerns have been raised by young people about the 'difficult[ies] of balancing work and study aspirations and the need to earn an income and live independently versus the aspiration of pursuing further training'.²¹⁴ In addition, young people have mentioned that the cost involved in the training programs can also be a 'significant factor that could inhibit further study'.²¹⁵

It is also important that young people are assisted to find training programs that they are interested in and which they find meaningful. Anecdotal evidence collected by YACVic indicates that young people may be encouraged by JSA providers to participate in training in areas that they are not interested in or programs that they consider not to be relevant to their future employment. As one JSA case manager described:

'I think one of the biggest challenges for me is the early school leaving requirements and having to push people to do something they don't necessarily fit with, but at the same time...it's almost punitive, we say to them you have to do this or you're not going to get paid, so there can be a tendency for that relationship to be affected by that, and you really can't work around that unless Centrelink exempts a young person and they're not going to exempt everybody you send down, and that's only going to get tougher with the new budget...and a presumption that all young people fit within the same model, which they certainly don't.'

²¹²Jyden Lawlor and Daniel Perkins, 'Integrated support to overcome severe employment barriers – adapting the ISP approach', Social Policy working Paper No. 9, Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Centre for Public Policy, February 2009, 1-24, 15.

²¹³Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 32.

²¹⁴Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 23.

²¹⁵Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 23.

CASE STUDY

The following interview is with a young job seeker and highlights their experience at a Job Services Australia provider

'I'm 24. I'm a university graduate. I studied Science/ Arts. After I finished, I went travelling for a little while. I came back to try to find some work, and after a while I ended up working for (organisation's name-name removed) for a few months, that was just a contract role. Now I'm more settled, so I'm looking for work. I went to sign up for Newstart allowance at Centrelink, and that basically involved a payment every fortnight, and I had to, there were a few requirements I had to meet. I had to go to a, what was it called, a personal contact interview every month at Centrelink. That didn't involve very much and they'd just see how I was doing. It really didn't involve much at all. I just had to turn up. It was always a different person...they didn't do much at all, I'm not really sure what the point was, I guess to just make sure that we're not getting left behind or something maybe. So there was that, and then also I have to attend appointments at a Job Services provider and they basically just sent me a letter saying you have to attend this appointment, at (Service Provider- name removed).'

Interviewer: 'So they told you which one you had to go to?'

'Yep, I wasn't given any choice. And so I turned up to that appointment. They were ok. They just didn't really do anything. They were asking what kind of jobs I was looking for and they would kind of type it in to a little box, and that was about it. That was my appointment.'

Interviewer: 'How long did those appointments usually go for?'

'Hmm, 10 minutes, yeah, and recently I had a new case manager at (Service Provider – name removed) and she was, she's not very friendly at all. I've seen her twice and the first time I saw her she was ok. She just told me that I have to be more proactive about finding work.'

Interviewer: 'And how did she go about saying that – tell me about the conversation?'

'She was basically, well I don't remember the first time very well to be honest, but it was the most recent interview that I remember. It was a couple of weeks ago, and she was just, you know, I went in there and she was already upset with me, just for being there I think. She was in a bad mood, and she sort of started out with a very condescending tone. She was like, 'So what's up, what's going on?', 'What are you doing?' 'Why are you still coming to see me?' So she was very condescending and she didn't sort of try to provide any help. She was just very judgemental, and I was really uncomfortable sitting there because I didn't expect to be told off by her, I thought they were there to help me.'

So, I sort of retreated a little bit and I didn't really answer her questions and yeah, I sort of retreated and I didn't want to talk to her. And then she said, 'What's going on? You don't look very enthusiastic, you don't look very pro-active, I mean, what are you doing?'

She was making all these judgements about me and she didn't even know me. It was so strange. And she kind of asked me, what did she say? She said, 'What are the main barriers, why can't you get work?' and I said 'well, I don't know.' I said 'It might be because I did quite a general degree, so it's hard. If I try to apply for sort of unskilled jobs, they think I'm over qualified, but if I try to apply for jobs that require degrees, they think I'm underqualified so I'm in a little bit of a rut.'

And she just had no sympathy whatsoever, she was just unimpressed. And it's strange, because I looked around to other people who were talking to their case managers and their case managers were actively trying to help them get work, and mine just, she didn't seem to, yeah, she just seemed to be really enjoying her power. So it wasn't a positive experience at all, and in the end, and then she has this kind of little box on her computer that she had to fill in, she had to write a few sentences. She said, 'So what do I write here?' and I was like, I didn't know what I was supposed to say. So I just, I told her the jobs that I have been applying for and she kind of typed them in and that was that was about it. It was very strange.'

Interviewer: 'So what did you do after that? How did that leave you feeling about JSA?'

'Yeah, it was really demoralising I guess because it's already humiliating enough to have to go to a Job Service Provider and she sort of just kicked me when I was down.'

Interviewer: 'So did you think about making a complaint?'

'Yeah, I did after a while. I was like surely that's not right. They're not supposed to do that. So I actually called up (Service Provider-name removed) and I said, 'I'd like to make a complaint about the case manager I had, how would I go about doing that?' She said, 'Oh yeah, you can call like the general number for...' um, what's that department called?'

Interviewer: 'DEEWR'

'Yes, that's it and she sort of gave me a general 1800 number. So yeah, I called it and I was like on hold for a while and then I just left it for a few days. Then I called up (Service Provider-name removed) again and spoke to another receptionist, and she said that they have a form that I could fill in.'

Interviewer: 'Oh, so different information the second time around?'

'Yes, completely different, and so she said that she would email that to me, which she did. Then in the email she said that she could get her manager to contact you if you like and I said that yeah that would be good, and she's like, 'ok I've passed your request on,' but they never contacted me.'

Interviewer: 'They didn't get back in touch?'

'No, so I'll have to call them again.'

Interviewer: 'So when was that, that you were last in contact with them?'

'Probably about three weeks ago now.'

This case study raises issues regarding customer service in relation to young people and the JSA program. The young person in the case study felt upset and misunderstood due to the job service provider's lack of support and apparent failure to adopt the key elements of good practice in youth service delivery. Her experience in receiving assistance by a JSA provider was not a positive one, as is evidenced by her attempt to make a formal complaint.

This case study highlights the importance of all JSA providers adopting the elements of good practice in youth service delivery in their work with all young people (in streams 1 to 4), to ensure that all young people receive employment assistance that is useful, relevant to their area of interest, and empowering. The elements of good practice in youth service delivery will be discussed later in the report.

WHAT WORKS IN DELIVERING SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

Following is a summary of some key considerations in ensuring that a service or program is responsive to young people's needs.

YOUTH SPECIFIC SERVICE DELIVERY: KEY ELEMENTS OF GOOD PRACTICE

The International Youth Foundation describes effective programs for young people as those 'which have a 'demonstrably positive impact on the life of a young person'.²¹⁶ Though the needs of young people are many and varied, an analysis of literature regarding programs aimed at assisting young people allows a number of good practice principles to be identified, which should be adopted when working with young people.

In this report, substantial regard has been given to the practice framework set out in the 2007 KPMG report, *Improving Youth Service Responses in Victoria: Final Report (Improving Youth Service Responses in Victoria)*, which identifies key principles of effective service delivery for young people from both Australian and international research.²¹⁷ The service principles set out in the report include the following:²¹⁸

- 'Services [that] are **visible and accessible** to young people'
- 'Services [that] are **flexibly delivered** and [are] able to **assist a broad range of young people**'
- 'Services [that] are **developmentally focused**'
- 'Services [that] **develop key relationships** between staff and...young people'
- 'Services [which] **facilitate youth participation**'
- 'Services [that] are **informed by evidence** as to

what is appropriate to support the developmental needs of young people and work within a risk/protective factor framework'

- 'Services [that] are **sustainable**'; and
- 'Services [that] are supported by **partnership and collaboration approaches** to address the needs of young people...'

A number of these principles will be discussed in more detail below in relation to good practices in the provision of employment services.

The Victorian *Code of Ethical Practice – A First Step for the Victorian Youth Sector* (the *Code*) also specifies a number of 'youth work principles' as well as 'practice responsibilities' for those working with young people in Victoria.²¹⁹ The *Code* was developed by YACVic following extensive consultation with the youth sector.²²⁰ Practice responsibilities set out in the *Code* include:²²¹

- '**Duty of care**', which emphasises the 'responsibility' of those working with young people to 'make sure that the activity, referral or program is safe in general and for the particular young person...'
- '**Young people as the primary consideration**'
- '**Boundaries**', which emphasises that 'youth workers...develop trusting, healthy relationship with the young people they work with and recognise the power imbalance inherent in the professional relationship'; and
- '**Cooperation and collaboration**', which notes that 'ethical youth work practice involves a commitment to cooperative partnerships with relevant service providers and across sectors in order to collectively achieve positive outcomes for young people'

Importantly, the *Code* articulates what it means to be working ethically and effectively with young people; issues that are relevant to all specialist and generalist JSA providers assisting young people.

²¹⁶KPMG, *Improving youth service responses in Victoria: Final Report*, Department of Human Services and Department for Victorian Communities, August 2007, 1-105, 41.

²¹⁷KPMG, *Improving youth service responses in Victoria: Final Report*, Department of Human Services and Department for Victorian Communities, August 2007, 1-105, 42.

²¹⁸KPMG, *Improving youth service responses in Victoria: Final Report*, Department of Human Services and Department for Victorian Communities, August 2007, 1-105, 42-43.

²¹⁹YACVic, *Code of Ethical Practice – A First Step for the Victorian Youth Sector*, revised May 2008, 1-23, 9-18.

²²⁰YACVic, *Code of Ethical Practice – A First Step for the Victorian Youth Sector*, revised May 2008, 1-23, 2.

²²¹YACVic, *Code of Ethical Practice – A First Step for the Victorian Youth Sector*, revised May 2008, 1-23, 9-18.

HOW MIGHT THIS APPLY TO THE PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES?

For employment services to be responsive to young people's needs, they need to reflect practice elements of effective youth services provision. Key examples are outlined below.

The relationship between service provider and young person and the value of casework support

- The importance of 'sustained relationships with caring, knowledgeable adults' is vital in programs assisting young people.²²²
- Melbourne Citymission's research noted that, while 'emotional assistance and support from caseworkers' was 'one of the most helpful aspects of their current service,' a number of young people 'lamented the lack of time they had with caseworkers and the narrow scope of the help that they were able to give'.²²³ The establishment of trust between an employment service provider and a young person is an essential aspect of the relationship, both in enabling a young person to feel comfortable enough to disclose their needs and various employment barriers and in providing encouragement and support of a young person in their search for employment.

A youth friendly environment

- The benefits of young people receiving assistance in an environment which is youth friendly as well as 'visible and accessible' has been noted in literature regarding good practices of service delivery to young people.²²⁴ In their report *Barriers to Service Provision for Young People with Presenting*

Substance Misuse and Mental Health Problems, researchers Tricia Szirom, Debbie King and Kathy Desmond found that young people highlighted the importance of a 'relaxed and welcoming' environment 'where they could witness other young people in attendance and where they could access appropriate information about a range of interests that they found of interest'.²²⁵

Sustained, ongoing, and integrated support

- The importance of sustained, ongoing support for vulnerable young people, including assistance that extends beyond the achievement of successful employment outcomes, has been emphasised as a key component of the provision of employment services to vulnerable young people.²²⁶ In their *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a Lost Generation*, Mission Australia advocates for young people receiving a 'minimum of 12 months' of support upon entering the workforce to assist them with the transition to work and help to 'ensure that their employment is sustainable'. Similarly, in the report *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, researcher John Greenwood noted that 'most effective programs for young people provide sustained adult contact'.²²⁷
- In-depth assessments, along with sustained and concentrated casework, are vital to providing assistance to vulnerable young people in order to understand their particular circumstances and barriers to employment.
- In addition, integrated assistance that is 'specifically tailored to the needs' of highly vulnerable young people is essential in order to address the multiple barriers young people may be experiencing.²²⁸

²²²Jessica Collura, 'Best Practices for Youth Employment Programs: a Synthesis of Current Research', *What Works, Wisconsin – Research to Practice Series*, Issue # 9, August 2010, 1-11, 6.

²²³Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 33.

²²⁴KPMG, *Improving Youth Service Responses in Victoria Final Report*, Department of Human Services and Department for Victorian Communities, 1-105, 42-43.

²²⁵Tricia Szirom, Debbie King and Kathy Desmond, 'Barriers to Service Provision for Young People with Presenting Substance Misuse and Mental Health Problems', *SuccessWorks, a Report for National Youth Affairs Research Scheme*, October 2004, 1-78, 58

²²⁶Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-19, 11; see also Alistair Lemmon, 'The bleedin' obvious: Long-term support reconnects at risk young people', *Youth Studies Australia*, 27(1), 2008, 9-17; and John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, November 1996, Ottawa, Canada: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 98-111.

²²⁷John Greenwood, 'Lessons Learned on the Effectiveness of Programs and Services for Youth', in *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Employment-Related Programs and Services for Youth*, November 1996, Ottawa, Canada: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 98-111, 99.

²²⁸Mission Australia, *Youth Employment Strategy: Preventing a lost generation*, March 2010, 1-19, 3 and 4.

Services that are flexibly delivered and incorporate specialist knowledge in working with young people

- Flexibility of service delivery, as well as the employment of staff with specialised expertise in working with young people and knowledge of the youth sector, is of critical importance in addressing the needs of highly disadvantaged, disengaged young people.
- In their 2008 submission to the Employment Services Review, Berry Street noted that 'high-risk youth' require 'flexibility in design of engagement strategies'.²²⁹ Similarly, the Salvation Army Youth Outreach Service has noted that 'young people benefit from a range of flexible pathways into employment experience, combined with an education/training focus and long term supports'.²³⁰ They asserted that 'existing intervention models take an overly simplistic view of the tasks and timeframe required to address the barriers that prevent young people from entering and remaining in the workforce'.²³¹

Services which are strength-based and developmentally focussed

- It is important that all those working with young people adopt a strength-based approach and assist young people to feel empowered. In the *Code*, it is noted that 'youth workers will work towards enabling and ensuring...the empowerment of all young people'.²³² In addition, an employment specialist at ORYGEN noted the importance of 'general interpersonal skills, such as skills in effective engagement with clients, a positive and hopeful attitude towards client strengths, and self motivation'.²³³

- In addition, it is important that services are mindful of the developmental stages of the young people they are assisting and that services are 'designed to address [their] ages and developmental stages'.²³⁴ Services should 'assess individual needs and goals at intake and track these through authentic assessment', as well as 'sequence activities so that young people [will] experience a series of successes and increase their responsibilities'.²³⁵

Responses tailored to individual young people's needs and the offering of relevant work experience to young people

- The importance of young people having the opportunity to pursue and obtain jobs in areas of interest to them is an essential aspect of employment support. In Melbourne Citymission's report, many of the young people interviewed regarding their experiences of JSA noted the importance of receiving 'tailor[ed] assistance that was relevant to their goals or aspirations'.²³⁶ In addition, the Brotherhood of St Laurence refers to research which indicates that 'clients in...jobs matched closely to client preferences...remained in them on average almost twice as long as those in other jobs'.²³⁷

'I remember I had this lady once, she was always angry whenever I rocked up. I didn't know what to do. Whenever I said 'Hi' in like a friendly way, she just replied in an angry way and I'm like 'ok whatever', so I just sit there quiet.'

Young male job seeker.

²²⁹Berry Street, Submission to the Hon. Brendan O'Connor Minister for Employment Participation – Employment Services, February 2008, 1-5, 2

²³⁰Salvation Army youth Outreach Service, 'Response to the 'Future of Employment Services in Australia', 1-6, 3.

²³¹Salvation Army youth Outreach Service, 'Response to the 'Future of Employment Services in Australia', 1-6, 3.

²³²YACVic, *Code of Ethical Practice – A First Step for the Victorian Youth Sector*, revised May 2008, 1-23, 3.

²³³Jyden Lawlor and Daniel Perkins, 'Integrated support to overcome severe employment barriers – adapting the ISP approach', Social Policy working Paper No. 9, Brotherhood of St Laurence and The Centre for Public Policy, February 2009, 1-24, 18.

²³⁴National Youth Employment Coalition, 'Improving Youth Programming and Building Capacity in Youth Employment Programs: Lessons Learned from the Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet)', 1-7, 5.

²³⁵National Youth Employment Coalition, 'Improving Youth Programming and Building Capacity in Youth Employment Programs: Lessons Learned from the Promising and Effective Practices Network (PEPNet)', 1-7, 5.

²³⁶Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 33-34.

²³⁷Jyden Lawlor and Daniel Perkins, *Integrated support to overcome severe employment barriers: adapting the ISP approach*, Social Policy Working Paper No. 9, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Centre for Public Policy, February 2009, 1-24,14.

Services that provide links to employers and real employment opportunities

- Research indicates that it is important that employment services for young people include '[a] greater focus on pre-employment orientation, more entry level positions, [and] on job training and work experience programs that are linked to employment opportunities'.²³⁸ It is also highly desirable for 'staff members [to] have strong connections to potential employers'.²³⁹
- The Brotherhood of St Laurence has also highlighted the need for 'work experience' that '[provides] a line of sight to open employment'.²⁴⁰

Services that facilitate youth participation

- A key principle for working effectively with young people is delivering a service model that centrally facilitates young people's participation.²⁴¹ In *Improving Youth Service Responses in Victoria*, it was noted that 'youth participation in services and systems that are youth oriented is vital to ensure that...the service is youth friendly and youth focused'.²⁴²
- Importantly, youth participation involves recognition that 'young people [have] valuable and legitimate ideas to share, expertise about what works for them as young people, and the capacity to make decisions either independently or with appropriate support'.²⁴³

Well-designed 'holistic/wrap-around' pre-employment component of programs

- Comprehensive and flexible pre-employment components of employment programs help to better prepare young employment seekers for work, particularly where there is a lack of experience or work-related skills.
- In their policy paper *A bridge that leads the way to many other bridges*, Jesuit Social Services note that the 'majority of the young people [they] support are keen to work in paid employment... however, many lack basic skills and have little or no positive experience of working in a cooperative environment with adults'.²⁴⁴ They stress the importance of pre-employment training, which includes "creative, expressive programs, social enterprise activities that provide opportunities for 'hands-on, real world' paid work experience... flexible, multiple entry-points allowing young

people to exit and re-enter programs as required, inclusion of strategies to address basic literacy and numeracy difficulties, accreditation of the skills young people acquire, [and] a holistic 'wrap-around' approach that includes generalist youth work support and easy access to mental health and drug and alcohol services'.²⁴⁵

Services that are supported by partnership and collaborative approaches

- The need for collaboration and partnerships between employment services and other youth specific services or organisations that work with young people is of particular importance.
- An example of an innovative and collaborative approach to the provision of employment services is the Australian 'Local Connections to Work' programs, 'initiated by the Human Services Portfolio'.²⁴⁶ Though initially available at only four locations in Australia, the Australian Government's Budget 2011-12 has provided for \$20.2 million over four years to expand this program.²⁴⁷ Local Connections to Work is a 'wrap around service', in which a number of service providers 'co-locate in a Centrelink office on a rostered basis'.²⁴⁸ Services include 'employment, health, housing, education [and] community welfare'.²⁴⁹ Local Connections to Work was designed to assist "disadvantaged youth" as well as individuals who have experienced unemployment for five or more years, and is aimed at providing more comprehensive and holistic assistance to disadvantaged job seekers with multiple needs.²⁵⁰
- It is important that JSA providers assisting young people are supported to develop stronger partnerships and collaboration with other JSA providers as well as the broader youth sector to ensure that the needs of young people are being holistically met. For instance, Melbourne Citymission's JSA sites are 'embedded in co-located or integrated service settings, which incorporate a range of both internal and external support services including homelessness and housing support, education and training facilities, health and legal supports and enterprise and innovation opportunities'.²⁵¹

A strong focus on relevant and meaningful education and training options

- It is important that young people are assisted to find training programs that they are interested in and which they find meaningful. While JSA's focus on training opportunities for job seekers is positive, concerns have been raised by young people about the 'difficult[ies] of balancing work and study aspirations and the need to earn an income and live independently versus the aspiration of pursuing further training'.²⁵² In addition, young people have mentioned that the cost involved in the training programs can also be a 'significant factor that could inhibit further study'.²⁵³

'We've seen a lot of outcomes, particularly around self esteem, confidence and developing social networks, however at the same time when the program finishes, unless the participant is linked in with a good provider that can engage the young person quickly and get them something meaningful to continue on with...then they lose that momentum. So if there were more programs that did link in better with Job Services Australia, and also programs that are youth specific, something like National Green Jobs Corps, but were still linked in with JSA providers so that the transition between programs would be smoother and the support the young person receives would lead to more successes that would definitely help.'

Youth Employment/Training Program Manager

²³⁸Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 11.

²³⁹Jessica Collura, 'Best Practices for Youth Employment Programs: a Synthesis of Current Research', *What Works, Wisconsin – Research to Practice Series*, Issue # 9, August 2010, 1-11, 7.

²⁴⁰Brotherhood of St Laurence, 'Line of sight: better tailored services for highly disadvantaged job seekers', Submission to the Australian Government on future employment services from 2012, January 2011, 1-33, 4.

²⁴¹KPMG, *Improving Youth Service Responses in Victoria Final Report*, Department of Human Services and Department for Victorian Communities, 1-105, 50.

²⁴²KPMG, *Improving Youth Service Responses in Victoria Final Report*, Department of Human Services and Department for Victorian Communities, 1-105, 50.

²⁴³Roger Holdsworth et al, *Doing Positive Things: "You have to go out and do it", Outcomes for Participants in Youth Development Programs – a Report of a Three Year Longitudinal Study*, Australian Government, Department of Family and Community Services, June 2005, 1-124, 76.

²⁴⁴Jesuit Social Services Policy Unit, 'A bridge that leads the way to many other bridges', Jesuit Social Services submission to the Parliament of Victoria Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee 'Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending by Young People', October 2008, 1-32, 8.

²⁴⁵Jesuit Social Services Policy Unit, 'A bridge that leads the way to many other bridges', Jesuit Social Services submission to the Parliament of Victoria Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee 'Inquiry into Strategies to Prevent High Volume Offending by Young People', October 2008, 1-32, 8.

²⁴⁶Centrelink, 'Service providers unite to make job seeking easier', *The Journey*, Issue 27, Autumn 2011, 1-12, 5.

²⁴⁷Australian Government, *Budget Measures - Budget Paper No. 2 – Part 2: Expense Measures*, 10 May 2011, i-351, 247.

²⁴⁸Centrelink, 'Service providers unite to make job seeking easier', *The Journey*, Issue 27, Autumn 2011, 1-12, 5.

²⁴⁹Centrelink, 'Service providers unite to make job seeking easier', *The Journey*, Issue 27, Autumn 2011, 1-12, 5.

²⁵⁰Centrelink, 'Service providers unite to make job seeking easier', *The Journey*, Issue 27, Autumn 2011, 1-12, 5.

²⁵¹Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38.

²⁵²Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 23.

²⁵³Emma Cull, *Finding the right track: a Snapshot Study of Young People's experiences looking for work with Job Services Australia (JSA)*, Melbourne Citymission, January 2011, 1-38, 23.

Services that are culturally sensitive and appropriate

- It is of critical importance that employment services that assist young people are culturally sensitive and appropriate. Given the significant differences which exist between the education and employment attainment rates of Indigenous young people compared with those of non-Indigenous young people, it is of particular importance that all employment service providers in Australia are culturally appropriate and sensitive, in addition to recognising the particular barriers which Indigenous young people in Australia may face in obtaining employment and providing adequate supports.
- CALD young people, especially those who are newly arrived in Australia, experience a range of 'language and cultural barriers', which may influence their ability to secure employment.²⁵⁴ It is therefore of critical importance that employment services are adequately 'resourced to provide the kind of targeted individual and community support that would equip newly-arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants with the necessary job seeking skills and understanding of Australian workplace culture'.²⁵⁵

'Another thing is, they need to actually start showing people how to actually start looking for work. You don't know how to look for work in Australia here. Like in Africa you can go up to a shop and like say you're looking for work, but here, you have to have a resume, and all that. You have to be qualified, you need this, you need that,. In Africa I can do anything. I can go to any place without any complications, it's nothing, I can just ask for a job.'

Young male job seeker

²⁵⁴Melbourne Citymission and Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria Implementation Review Submission 2010*, 1-11, 5.

²⁵⁵Louise Olliff, *What works: Employment strategies for refugee and humanitarian entrants*, Refugee Council of Australia, June 2010, 1-87, 22.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO IMPROVE THE RESPONSIVENESS OF JSA TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S NEEDS?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Good practices for working with 'vulnerable' young people

1. Vulnerable young people with multiple barriers to employment in streams 3 or 4 of the JSA program should be eligible for a six month 'engagement period' before an evaluation of formal Key Performance Indicators commences. This is in recognition of the time providers will need to build rapport, gain an in-depth understanding of young peoples' aspirations and barriers and develop foundational skills.
2. That the JSA program should provide greater recognition of the social or non-vocational outcomes achieved by JSA providers for vulnerable young people.
3. That the JSA program should encourage JSA providers to adopt an integrated, flexible and highly individualised approach in their work with vulnerable or disadvantaged young people.
4. That generalist JSA providers consider employing staff who are skilled in working with young people and that the services adopt the principles of good practice identified in this report.
5. That the JSA program should provide greater opportunities for collaboration between JSA providers around meeting the needs of young people.

6. That Centrelink should inform vulnerable clients about the existence of specialist providers in their area and be able to refer vulnerable clients to specialist JSA providers.

7. That best practice programs such as Victoriaworks continue to be funded.

Data evaluation for good policy

8. That the new data to be collected around disadvantaged and vulnerable young people's outcomes in the JSA system be broken down into streams, geographic regions and be made publicly available.

Youth voice to inform program development

9. That the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations ensure young people are able to meaningfully participate in all evaluations of the JSA system and to provide ongoing feedback regarding their experiences with JSA providers.

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