



# Youth Employment

What young people said...

A report on  
ideas from  
young people  
about youth  
employment

December  
2014

## About TYF

The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) is Tasmania's peak youth consultative body. TYF is an initiative of the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), the peak organisation for the non-government youth sector in Tasmania, with funding from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, through the Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania.

## Acknowledgements

YNOT and TYF would like to thank the young people who participated in the TYF *Youth Employment* Forum and Survey. Thank you to our TYF members, volunteers and sector workers who volunteered their time in the lead up to the Forum and on the day. We would also like that acknowledge our sponsor, Communities, Sport and Recreation Tasmania (CSRT) in Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) and supporters Hobart City Council, BEACON Foundation, Colony 47, National Job Link (N JL) and Youth, Family and Community Connections (YFCC).



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## Executive Summary

This report was developed to communicate the ideas and views of young people who participated in the Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) *Youth Employment Statewide Youth Forum* and online Survey.

The Forum and Survey was run by TYF which is the peak consultative body for young people in Tasmania. TYF is an initiative of the Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), the peak organisation for the non-government youth sector in Tasmania.

Tasmania's high levels of youth unemployment are an issue which has been frequently discussed within groups of the Tasmanian community, by young people and decision makers at a local and national level. TYF conducted the Forum and Survey to provide young people with the opportunity to discuss their concerns about planning for their future, applying for jobs, and starting in their first job and what ideas they had to make the transition to the workplace as seamless as possible for young people.

The report found that young people are thinking broadly about the issues around youth employment and what can be done to help young people gain employment and stay employed.

The results and ideas from the Forum and Survey have been combined to develop key findings.

## Key Findings

*Finding 1: Young people understand that having an education and getting work experience are important for gaining employment.*

*Finding 2: Young people identified ways that individuals, government, workplaces, schools and businesses are helping young people to transition to the workforce, demonstrating that young people are aware of the bigger picture and are not just youth focused.*

*Finding 3: Young people want more opportunities to gain experience and develop their skills because they understand that this is important to help them prepare for the workplace.*

*Finding 4: Young people want to gain relevant, meaningful experience and had suggestions on how career planning and support could be improved to better meet the needs of young people.*

*Finding 5: Young people identified ways that individuals, government, workplaces, schools and businesses could improve their support for young people transitioning to the workplace, which highlights the need for a whole of community approach to youth employment.*

*Finding 6: Young people recognised that they needed more support to help them transition to the workplace, particularly one on one support.*

*Finding 7: Young people identified the need to have an online youth specific resource which is more tailored to the needs of young people by having relevant information to their circumstances and connecting them to mentors and opportunities to gain experience in their community.*

*Finding 8: Young people identified that they did not know how to go about getting experience, even though they knew it was an important part to securing employment and that they wanted to take these opportunities.*

*Finding 9: Young people need a combination of face to face and online resources which can support them to find employment.*

*Finding 10: Young people want to understand how their current learning or job relates to their future aspirations for employment.*

*Finding 11: Young people need and want to know more about the workplace environment and what is expected of them during their first work experiences.*

*Finding 12: After attending the Forum, young people were more likely to be aware of new ways to find job opportunities and different industries where opportunities could be available.*

*Finding 13: Young people are thinking about employment from a very early age and are aware of the many factors that play a role in becoming employed, such as education.*

*Finding 14: Young people who are not looking for work have personal barriers, commitments or health issues which prevent them from seeking employment.*

*Finding 15: Young people face barriers to employment which they have little control over making it difficult for them to overcome these and gain employment.*

*Finding 16: Young people need access to flexible services that accommodate their different needs but also recognise that young people have employment needs that are quite different to the general population.*

*Finding 17: Even though young people had not considered going to a job agency for assistance, they still thought some of the better ways to get help included volunteering, work experience and training.*

*Finding 18: Young people are actively trying different strategies to help them gain employment and recognise the need for support.*

*Finding 19: Young people identified the need to know their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.*

*Finding 20: Young people identified aspects of the employment process and developing work readiness skills that could be improved to better support young people to gain employment.*

## Introduction

The Tasmanian Youth Forum (TYF) developed the *Youth Employment* Statewide Forum through being informed with background research, consultation with young people and broader discussions within the community. Youth employment is something which has frequently been discussed in the media, among community groups, within Government and among young people particularly over the past year.

The TYF *Youth Employment* Forum provided young people aged 12 to 25 the opportunity to discuss the issues they face when thinking about or looking for employment and what solutions or ideas they had to make the transition into sustainable employment easier. In conjunction with the Forum, an online Survey was also conducted to allow young people who were not able to attend the forum to have their say on the topic and reach a more diverse range of young people.

While this report outlines the process of each consultation, the key findings which are presented are based on the whole consultation process.

## Background Information

Young people are considered to be a particularly disadvantaged cohort when it comes to gaining and maintaining employment. Research has shown that even when taking into consideration their experience, capacity and location, they experience greater disadvantage within the labour market (Greenwood 1996). Since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) in 2008, young people across Australia have been heavily impacted by the lack of new jobs and the lack of jobs that provide long term, sustainable employment. The Australian youth unemployment rate was at 12.4% in January 2014 which was significantly higher than the overall Australian unemployment rate of 6% at the same time (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2014a). In addition to this, the average length of time it takes to gain employment has also increased from 16 weeks in 2008 to 29 weeks in 2014 (Hernandez 2014) highlighting the increasing difficulty to enter the labour market.

In early 2014, Tasmania experienced the highest levels of youth unemployment in Australia. The youth unemployment rate at this time was between 18.2% and 21% in the different regions of Tasmania (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2014a). In addition to Tasmania's high rates of youth unemployment, there is an increasing trend for young people to be underemployed. This means that although young people might be in employment, they are not working as many hours as they would like. In May 2014, more than 15% of workers aged 15 to 24 were underemployed which is the highest rate recorded since the ABS data series started in 1978, when the rate was at 3.1%. Across Australia, this represents 310,000 young people aged 15 to 24 who are underemployed. This combined with young people who are unemployed represent over 25% of young people aged 15 to 24 in Australia (Brotherhood of St Laurence 2014b).

Young people who are employed are also more likely to be in casual and non-permanent positions. Nearly 60% of workers aged 15 to 24 are on non-permanent contracts (Brotherhood of St Laurence). While non-permanent jobs can benefit young people by being flexible around other commitments such as study, they are more vulnerable to losing their job and are less likely to offer career development, opportunities and training. This makes it difficult for young people to transition to long-term, sustainable employment.

## Scope

This report aims to communicate the ideas and views of young people who participated in the TYF *Youth Employment* Statewide Forum and Survey. Both the Survey and Forum engaged a diverse range of young people from across the State that were aged between 12 and 25.

## Consultation Process: Forum

Young people attended the *TYF Youth Employment* Forum on Tuesday 26 August 2014 from 10:00am to 3:30pm which was held at the Door of Hope in Launceston. Young people came from a diverse range of areas across Tasmania including Triabunna, Swansea, Oatlands, Brighton, Port Sorell, Burnie and Lachlan. TYF engaged a facilitator to assist in the running of the Forum. An agenda was developed for the day but was flexible to accommodate what participants wanted to discuss (see appendix 1). The Forum primarily focused on small discussion groups that were facilitated by a youth sector worker.

The forum started with an introduction to the day by Mo. Premier Will Hodgman had a recorded video to welcome participants to the Forum and speak about the importance of the topic of youth employment. Following this, participants had the opportunity to complete the Survey which was run in conjunction with the forum which is discussed in Consultation Process: Survey on page 17 in this report. Participants then formed discussion groups, facilitated by a worker, to brainstorm issues relating to youth employment.

Following morning tea, Bianca Welsh, who is a local restaurant manager and owner, spoke about the different job opportunities that are available within one industry. Despite working in the hospitality industry, Bianca talked about her role as a manager and being involved with a lot of Human Resources (HR) work within the businesses which has led her to go to university to study psychology. Having Bianca as a guest speaker provided participants with a conversation starter about the different pathways which may be available and the ideas for what could be done to help young people gain employment.

Participants then moved to discussion group topics (see appendix 2) to focus their discussion on what was working well, what needed to be changed and what they wanted to create to help young people think about what they would like to do in the future and gain employment.

In the afternoon, participants could stay in the same discussion group or move to another topic. These discussion groups then reported back their best idea to the other participants. Everyone was then given five votes to vote on the ideas they thought were the best. The day was concluded by wrapping up the forum and how the ideas would be used and filling in feedback forms.

## Initial Brainstorm of the Issues

Participants formed small discussion groups to brainstorm the issues that young people face when deciding what pathway they want to take after school, applying for their first job, working in the first job and transitioning to secure and permanent employment. Each of these discussion groups were facilitated by a worker.

Within these discussions, participants could identify a number of personal attributes that are needed for when you are seeking employment or are employed. This included being presentable, having good manners, following instructions, being on time and being friendly, but most of the responses focused on having confidence to ask questions, have a go, and

be independent at work. If young people had not had the chance to develop these skills then they were seen as a barrier to employment.

Participants also identified the importance of having education and experience to gain employment. The barriers which they identified to gaining experience included a lack of apprenticeships and traineeships offered, not having the opportunity to practice and develop relevant skills, difficulty in affording courses, challenges of going through further training or study and not knowing where to find opportunities to do these things.

Barriers to gaining employment or accessing job opportunities included competition from more experienced people, transport, distance from home to work, trying to find a job once training has been completed, lack of available jobs that suit the circumstances of individuals, discrimination, health issues, mental health issues, disability, being underemployed, low pay that does not cover living costs and stereotypes that effect young people.

A main concern of participants was their ability to achieve a work/life balance while continuing with their studies. Young people understood that it is important to have an education, get some form of work experience and maintain a healthy lifestyle but felt that this causes a lot of pressure.

*Finding 1: Young people understand that having an education and getting work experience are important for gaining employment.*

## Discussion Groups

To focus discussions on solutions and ideas, participants separated into topic groups. Participants could choose from ten different topics (see appendix 2) with two discussion tables running per topic and a worker on each table to facilitate discussions. These topics were formed prior to the Forum on the basis of background research and consultation with young people. The topics provided a guide for what young people would discuss but they were flexible to encompass other ideas and solutions that young people had.

Each discussion group was asked what they would retain, create and change in relation to their topic and youth employment more broadly. What young people wanted to retain focused discussions on what was already in place and working well for young people that they wanted to keep, discussions about change focused on what was in place but could be improved to better meet the needs of young people and discussions about create included coming up with new ideas to address the issues young people face. Participants then had the opportunity to change discussion groups to discuss a different topic or continue at the group they were already at.

The following discussion provides a summary of the main themes discussed by the topic groups on what they would want to retain, change and create.

### Discussion Groups: Retain

Participants could identify a number of things that they believed were already working well to help assist young people to think about their future or gain employment.

#### 1. Personal skills and attributes

The majority of the discussion groups identified that they and other young people had some skills and attributes that they wanted to retain because they identified that these would be



valuable when seeking work or when employed. This included attributes such as being well presented, being optimistic and having managers and skills such as time management skills, communication skills and job application skills such as writing resumes or attending interviews.

## **2. Learning about new careers and pathways**

Participants identified a number of ways that they could learn about different education and employment pathways which they wanted to retain. This included taster days for college and university, opportunities to visit colleges and workplaces, shadow days, and talking to people such as career planners, pathway planners and school counsellors.

## **3. Education and qualifications**

Participants identified a mix of traditional and flexible education and training opportunities that would help them, or had helped them, to transition to employment. This included being able to learn core skills at school such as numeracy and literacy skills, having access to good teachers, the Big Picture Program, being able to participate in VET classes and school-based apprenticeships and the ability to access opportunities for TasTAFE and tertiary education qualifications.

## **4. Positive practices from workplaces**

There are a number of positive things that workplaces and employers do to help young people transition to work or stay employed that were identified by participants. This included advertising jobs where young people search for jobs such as newspapers and online, having casual positions available which are flexible to work around the commitments of young people, providing feedback on job applications, having a good induction process which includes explaining things such as work health and safety and code of conduct, providing work placements for young people and providing support to young people in the workplace.

## **5. Gaining experience**

The opportunity to learn skills and get experience was something that participants identified as an important aspect of the process of becoming employed. Participants wanted to retain the opportunities to do this including work experience through school, internships and volunteering.

## **6. Support**

Participants identified different types of support that are needed when transitioning into the workforce and staying in the workforce. This included support from friends and family, counsellors, mentors, networks and financial support if they were not able to generate sufficient income on their own.

*Finding 2: Young people identified ways that individuals, government, workplaces, schools and businesses are helping young people to transition to the workforce, demonstrating that young people are aware of the bigger picture and are not just youth focused.*

## Discussion Groups: Change

Many discussions that took place around what young people would like to change built upon what was already there and involved small adjustments.

### 1. Opportunities

While participants identified that they wanted to retain opportunities to gain skills and experience, there were aspects of these that they wanted to change. This included expanding the work experience opportunities in school to have more placement opportunities and for longer times, have more opportunities closer to where young people are particularly in rural and regional areas so they are more accessible, better transport to access opportunities, and the ability to tailor their learning to address their employment aspirations.

*Finding 3: Young people want more opportunities to gain experience and develop their skills because they understand that this is important to help them prepare for the workplace.*

### 2. Workplaces

Participants identified things that workplaces could change in the employment process to make it easier for young people to transition to employment and stay employed. This included making job descriptions easier to understand and more reflective of an 'average' day, having flexibility to accommodate the needs of young people particularly in terms of their study commitments, using language which is easy to understand, being clear on things which relate to the job position such as break times and conditions of pay. They also identified that workplaces could increase the number of work experience opportunities so more young people could gain experience. Although some young people had identified they had positive experiences with workplaces who are already doing these things, young people still thought that workplaces could continue to improve.

### 3. Personal skills and attributes

Participants acknowledged that they and young people broadly, can always improve their own skills to help gain employment. This included developing skills such as time management, self care, creating a work/life balance and networking. They also identified that young people can think more broadly about the opportunities available when looking for work and making sure they are following the code of conduct for the workplace they are in, such as the dress code.

### 4. Support

Young people identified that they would like to see some changes in the support that they get when transitioning from school to the workplace. This included more support for personal issues and barriers such as coping with stress or mental health issues, increased one on one support available, the option to access more targeted support in career guidance, easier access to mentors or career guidance officers, the ability to cater for different learning styles and support to build confidence.

## Discussion Groups: Create

Participants were asked what they would like to create to help young people when they are planning for the future, trying to find work or are starting in their first job.

### 1. Things within School

Young people identified that there are things that could be created within schools to help young people learn skills and prepare for their future in the workforce. Some of these ideas were about accessing more opportunities while at school such as school based traineeships and apprenticeships, more opportunities to get Certificate I qualifications during high school, higher level qualifications in College, role play interviews to learn about the job application process and interactive learning days to develop practical skills related to the workplace. Other ideas were about creating opportunities in school to learn how to write a resume, address selection criteria, apply for jobs and learn about the different opportunities available in different industries.

Participants also identified structural things that could be created within schools such as creating smaller classes, interactive learning opportunities and having a specific focus in schools on skills needed for the workforce.

### 2. Support

Participants wanted to create more support structures for young people both inside and outside the workplace. Outside of the work place, mentors to help with long term planning, more opportunities to create support networks by meeting more people, access to transport to help young people get to job interviews or work, and financial support. Inside the workplace, participants wanted guidance from employers, having opportunities to talk to managers and get help from them, team building activities and having colleagues and managers who are approachable.

### 3. What workplaces can do

Participants identified that workplaces could create ways to help young people who were looking for work by recognising their previous experience if they were applying for a job even if it was quite limited, sharing details about jobs within the business or organisation to inform young people of potential pathways, provide opportunities for school based apprenticeships, and not discriminating young people based on their age or lack of opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Participants also wanted to create opportunities to talk with workers from different workplaces and backgrounds about what they do to broaden their opportunities.

When having a young person employed, participants said businesses could create opportunities to discuss the skills that young people would learn in their job, where the job or skills they learn can take them, a good working environment which made young people feel a valued member of the workplace and have mentors within the workplace to help young people who may be in the first job or in a new type of workplace.

### 4. Personal skills and attributes

Participants identified that young people could develop personal skills and attributes that could help them when transitioning to the workforce. This included being open-minded to

learning opportunities, having initiative, being confident, develop resilience, developing good work habits and good work ethic. Participants also identified that young people could create their own goals for what they wanted to achieve and work towards these while also taking self care.

## 5. More information

Participants wanted to create more ways for young people to access information in a way that suited their needs. Young people wanted more opportunities to hear directly from people in the workforce about their experience and jobs available by creating opportunities to listen to a wide range of guest speakers who talk about the knowledge and skills required for different jobs and how to develop these skills. Participants also identified that creating an online resource which has information about job opportunities, work experience opportunities, information about different careers particularly ones which are not common would be useful so that there was a single website to get all information on anything job related.

## 6. Work experience

Participants wanted to create more opportunities to get experience. This included more opportunities to volunteer in positions that suited the skills, interests and circumstances of young people, longer work placements to further develop skills, having a youth service to help young people find work and create ways to take on opportunities

*Finding 4: Young people want to gain relevant, meaningful experience and had suggestions on how career planning and support could be improved to better meet the needs of young people.*

## Analysis of Retain, Change and Create Discussions

Young people at the Forum came from a wide range of backgrounds and were of different ages so they had varying experiences with the issues that were identified across these discussions. For example, some young people discussed that they wanted to retain the way work experience is run because they have had a positive experience, where as other young people thought that it should be changed or re-created because they believe they could have a better experience by doing so.

The main two things that participants identified that they wanted to retain were their personal skills and attributes and learning about new careers and pathways. This demonstrates that young people are able to identify that they have something valuable to contribute when thinking about looking for work or starting work.

The two main things that participants wanted to change were the availability of different opportunities to them and what workplaces can do to help young people. Young people were keen to take on different opportunities to learn new skills and get more experience. Despite this, young people also identified that it is often difficult find these opportunities. By making these opportunities more accessible for young people they could find it easier to develop new skills and gain experience. Young people also wanted workplaces to change the way they communicated to make it easier for young people to understand, particularly if they were looking for their first job or were starting their first job. While some participants had positive experiences with workplaces who already did these things there were still significant discussions on how workplaces could improve their communication.

The two main things that participants wanted to create were more opportunities at school to learn things relevant to the workforce and create different support structures. The age of the participants could be part of the reason why there was a strong focus on creating more opportunities within school as there were many school aged participants but it is also at the time when young people first start thinking about what they would like to do in the future or start applying for jobs. Participants wanted to create more opportunities within school to learn new skills that are relevant for the workplace, how to apply for different jobs and gain qualifications. Participants also identified that they wanted to create new support structures by having mentors and workplace leaders to help young people plan for their future.

*Finding 5: Young people identified ways that individuals, government, workplaces, schools and businesses could improve their support for young people transitioning to the workplace, which highlights the need for a whole of community approach to youth employment.*

*Finding 6: Young people recognised that they needed more support to help them transition to the workplace, particularly one on one support.*

## Solutions

Following the discussions on what each group would like to retain, change and create, each discussion group was asked to focus on their best idea they came up with when discussing what they would like to create and develop this idea further. Due to the large number of participants and solutions groups, they have been categorised under four broad themes.

### 1. Transitional

There were five solutions presented that focused on the time of transition from school to work. These ideas included:

- Having greater involvement with the community and local businesses by involving mentors in the community who could help young people transition to work and plan what they are going to do after school. In addition, providing young people with the opportunity to visit local businesses and getting to do some work experience in growth industries such as tourism and eco-tourism.
- Developing a program which enables young people to participate in work experience across different industries while also getting support from people within different industries, government, community organisations and Centrelink which provides young people with a certificate that shows they have acquired basic work skills and have achieved a certain amount of work experience.
- Enabling young people to participate in a tailored transition program that allows them to learn basic work skills but also allows them to choose to learn about or get experience in jobs that interest them because young people have different preferences.
- Developing resume writing skills and learning about how to present yourself in the workplace and having some practical learning by going on longer periods of work experience, forming new networks on your placement and having a mentor through the placement who can help young people overcome difficulties.
- Giving young people the opportunity to meet more people from businesses and organisations by including them within the school community.

## 2. Work

There were seven solutions presented that focused on workplace based solutions. These ideas included:

- Having days at work which is more relaxed and provide the opportunity for young people to network and bond with colleagues.
- Workplaces providing more placements for young people which can be flexible and where young people can achieve a formal recognition through their experience through a document.
- Having on the job training that enables young people to work one or two days a week for a few months in order to develop their skills in a particular industry and to help them gain employment within that industry.
- Giving young people access to mentors who are matched to young people based on their experiences, knowledge, skills and interests.
- Helping young people develop a plan that identifies their pathway to further study or training in addition to their support structures including mentors, friends, families and support organisations, who can help make the transition to employment a positive experience.
- Allowing young people to feel as though they are able to talk to managers about issues they are facing, such as the impact of not having stable hours of employment, and the opportunity to work with the manager to make sure things are heading in a positive direction.
- Creating community mentors to raise the profile of local communities and opportunities that exist to develop and build skills, particularly through volunteering.

## 3. Resources

There were seven solutions presented that focused on having youth specific resources to find job information, opportunities for work experience, and job applications. These ideas included:

- Providing young people with the opportunity to talk with a wide variety of 'career experts' such as CEOs, people from Universities and TAFE, workplaces that provide work placement and directly from employees.
- Having a resource in the form of a website which has a directory of employers who would like to be mentors for young people to make it easier for young people to access mentors. Young people would be matched to mentors based on their skills, interests, and what they want to learn.
- Enabling young people to talk to career counsellors, managers and employees on a website so that they can get advice and access information about different types of jobs.
- Providing information about life skill development and functional literacy through a website which explains for young people how to access or do different things such as seeing a doctor, power companies, banks, higher education options, how to fill out passports, what fines are, household skills, booking flights and accommodation, protocols for social events, support hotlines and organisations.
- Getting employees to share their experiences in the workplace by creating videos that young people can access online to help inform young people of different career pathways and opportunities that are available.

- Giving young people the opportunity to find out from employers what they look for in job applicants, how Centrelink works, what different careers are available and the ability to have conversations with different people from different workplaces on information days.
- Creating a website which focuses on jobs that are available while you are at school or have just finished school and ask councils, television and radio stations to advertise the website.

*Finding 7: Young people identified the need to have an online youth specific resource which is more tailored to the needs of young people by having relevant information to their circumstances and connecting them to mentors and opportunities to gain experience in their community.*

*Finding 8: Young people identified that they did not know how to go about getting experience, even though they knew it was an important part to securing employment and that they wanted to take these opportunities.*

*Finding 9: Young people need a combination of face to face and online resources which can support them to find employment.*

#### **4. School**

There were three solutions which were presented that focused on creating options within schools. These ideas included:

- Having smaller classes so that students can have a more direct relationship with teachers to make learning more personalised and easier for young people to focus and including more Big Picture schools.
- Having a mentor program in school that focuses on helping young people think through their different pathway options during grade 10, 11 and 12 and beyond which demonstrates the different jobs available.
- Having classes which focus on life skills including how to budget your income, how to look for jobs, and the ability to achieve basic qualifications such as First Aid or Certificate I or II.

#### **Tips for employment and employees from young people**

Throughout the day there was an activity which provided young people with the opportunity to contribute their ideas to two questions on the wall about what young people need to know when they are first starting work. The following dot points were the main themes that young people made suggestions on.

Things young people said an employer needs to tell a young person when they start work:

- What is expected of you in a job. Explaining what are the tasks you will have to do and how to do them
- Support that will be provided for you while you are working, including how the employer will help the young person
- Details of the job including when your breaks are and for how long, what your pay is, when you get paid and where everything is located that you need while working
- What opportunities there may be in the future either within that workplace or outside and focusing on where the skills you learn will take you.

*Finding 10: Young people want to understand how their current learning or job relates to their future aspirations for employment.*

Advice young people would give to other young people starting in their first job:

- Be friendly, respectful and well presented for the workplace you are going to
- Ask questions if you need help
- Have confidence by being yourself
- Work hard and try your best at the tasks you are given
- Don't give up and don't let one bad day have a big impact on you

When participating in this activity, young people identified that they thought young people should get as much information as possible from employers to communicate what the job will be like on a day to day basis and how the job may fit within the young person's broader context. These ideas, as well as other ideas discussed during the Forum and in the Survey, were then collated into tips for young people and employers (see appendix 3).

*Finding 11: Young people need and want to know more about the workplace environment and what is expected of them during their first work experiences.*

## **Forum Feedback**

Participants were asked to complete a feedback form at the end of the Forum which aimed to determine some of the things that participants had gained from participating in the Forum and what they had enjoyed.

There were 78% of participants who said that they thought that they had more ideas about how they could find a job. This included networking, getting experience through different avenues, start thinking about options early, keep looking and be resilient, develop skills.

There were also 34% of participants who said that they learnt about a new job or industry that they would like to find out more about following the Forum. The main areas of work included hospitality and business which the guest speaker spoke about.

Some of the things that participants identified as being positive about the forum included getting to meet new people, the reassurance that there are other young people in similar circumstances across the state, group work, hearing the ideas of other people, the public speaker and catering.

Some of the things that participants identified that they could share with others included the different job opportunities that can be available in one business, the ability of skills from one job to be able to relate to another, the ideas and solutions that were discussed and some ways to improve chances of getting a job such as application and interview skills.

Young people also identified that the Forum could be improved by having more guest speakers, more activities, more workers at the Forum and have more young people attend to experience and access the opportunities.

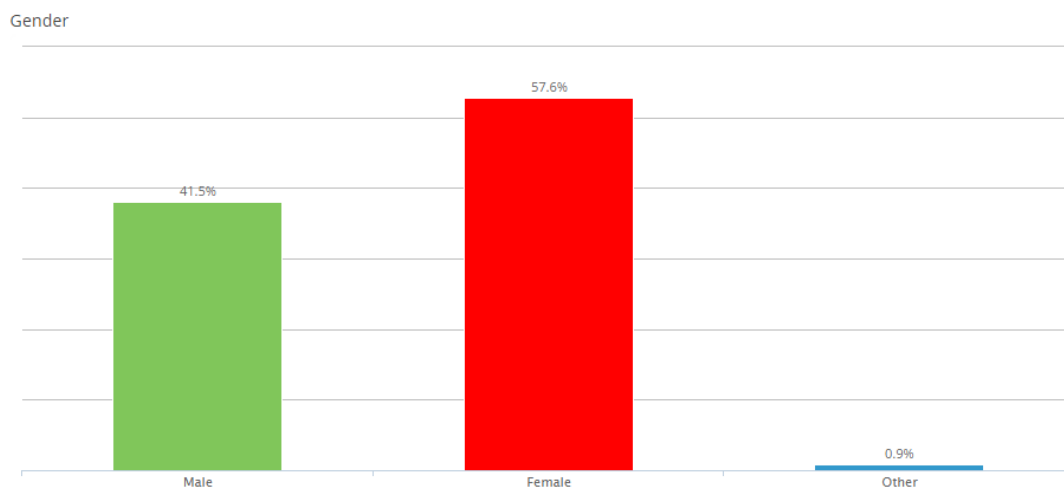
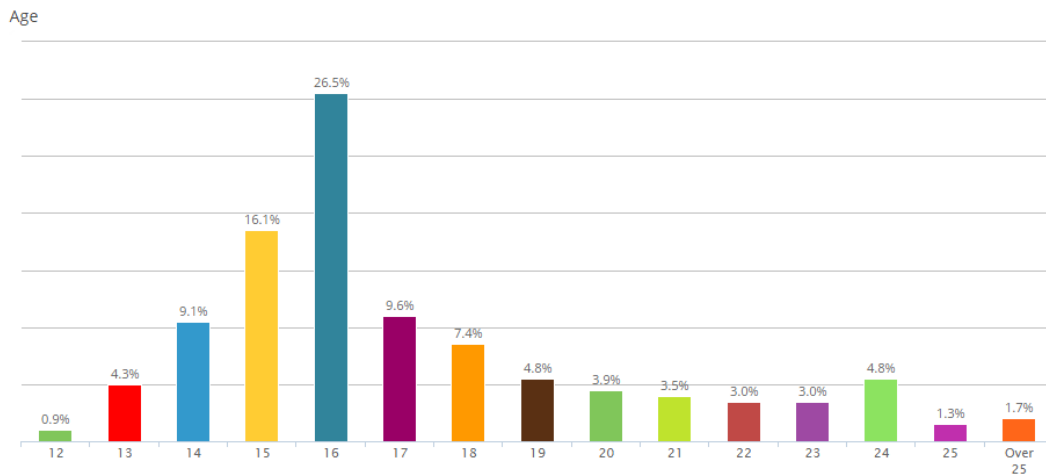
*Finding 12: After attending the Forum, young people were more likely to be aware of new ways to find job opportunities and different industries where opportunities could be available.*



## Consultation Process: Survey

TYF ran an online survey on the topic of youth employment in conjunction with the Forum to broaden the consultation. The survey received 258 responses, which included 148 participants who completed the survey at the Forum. The Survey enabled more young people to have their say, particularly young people from rural and regional areas such as Bruny Island, Orford, Huonville, Campbell Town, Flinders Island and Smithton.

As the Forum had a high number of participants aged 15 and 16, this is reflected in the survey respondents.



There were also:

- 8.3% of respondents who identified as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 6.7% of respondents who identified as having a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Background (CALD)
- 3.9% of respondents who identified as a young person with a disability

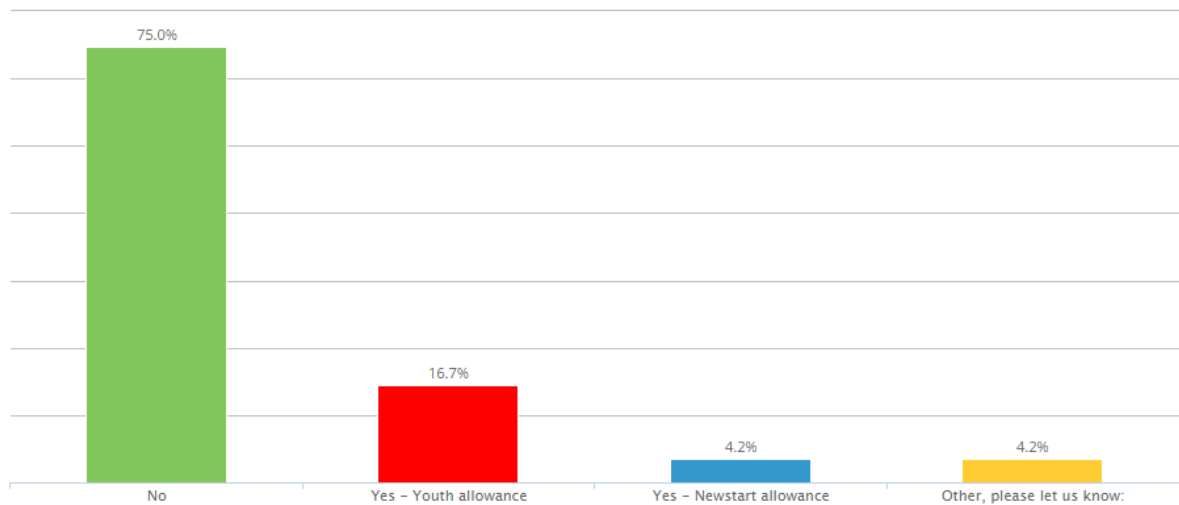
*Finding 13: Young people are thinking about employment from a very early age and are aware of the many factors that play a role in becoming employed, such as education.*

## Respondents and Working

Are you currently working?



Are you currently receiving income support?

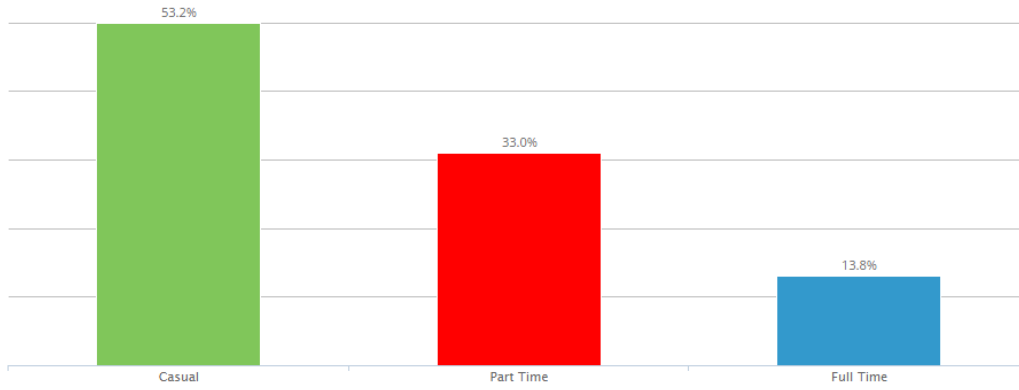


A large proportion of respondents identified as not currently working. This is because of the high proportion of respondents 15 to 17 years who were more likely to still be studying full time. There were also 14.3% of respondents who were between 12 and 14 years old who would be too young to work.

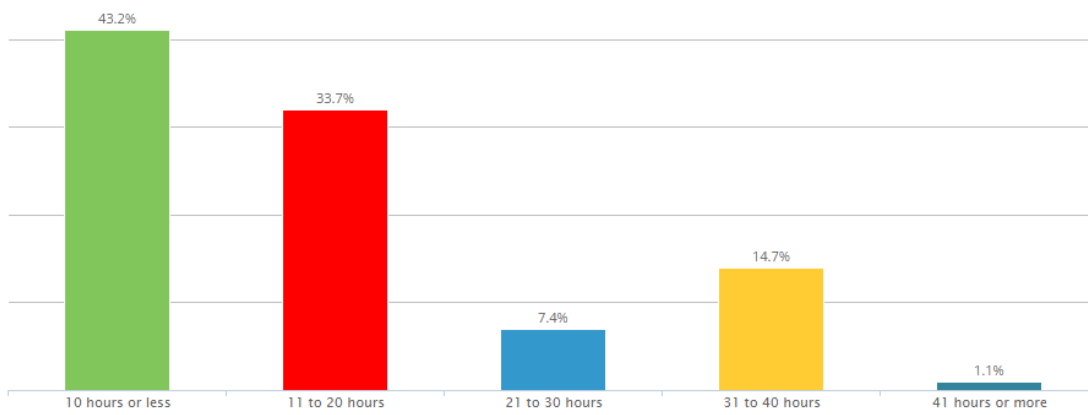
The majority of respondents identified that they were not receiving income support. Most respondents who were receiving income support had Youth Allowance. Other forms of income support included Disability Support Pension and Family Tax Benefits.

## Respondents who said they are currently working

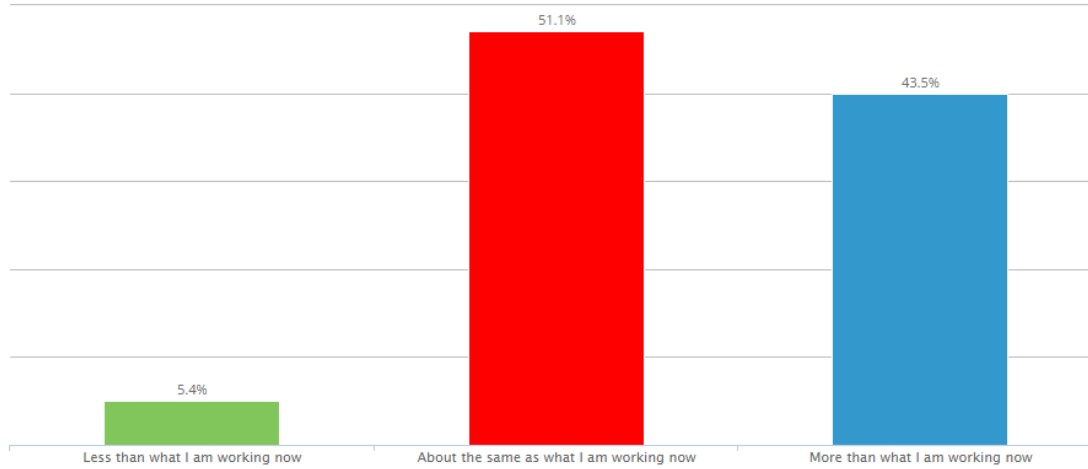
What is your position at work?



On average, how many hours do you work each week?



How much work would you like to have?

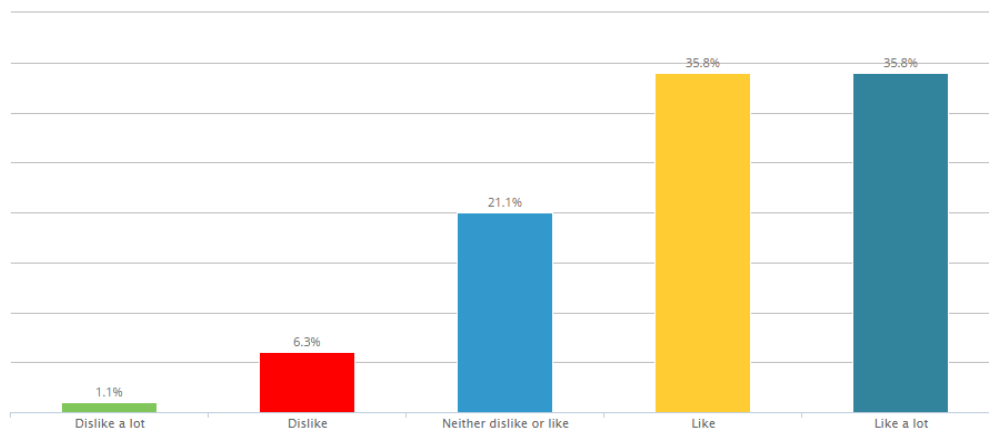


The majority of respondents identified that they were in casual or part-time work. The high number of responses for these may be linked to the high proportion of young people in the 14 to 18 age bracket where the majority of young people would still be in school.

Despite this, there were a significant number of respondents who indicated that they would like more work.

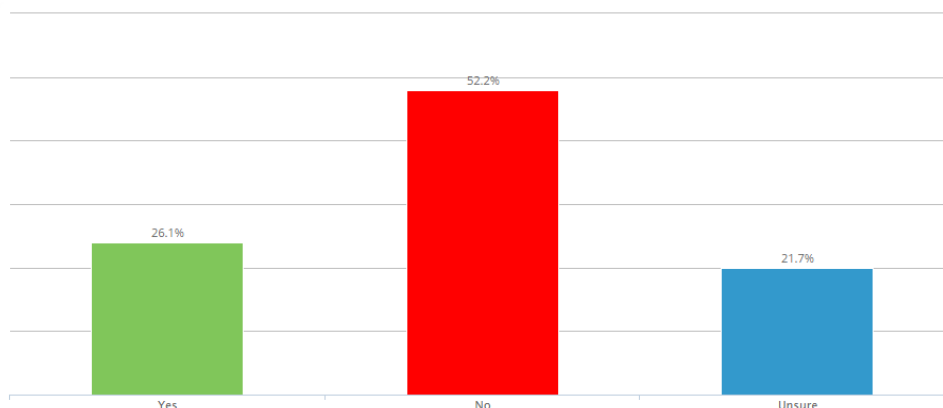
It can also be seen as positive that there were not a high number of respondents who indicated that they would like to have less work as having too many work hours could indicate that young people feel as though they cannot balance their commitments.

What do you think about your job?



Over 70% of respondents who said that they were currently employed said that they liked their job. This suggests that the majority of respondents are having positive experiences in the workplace. There were also 7.4% of respondents who identified that disliked their job. While it is positive that this is a smaller proportion of respondents, it suggests that some young people could be facing issues within their workplace which are not resolved.

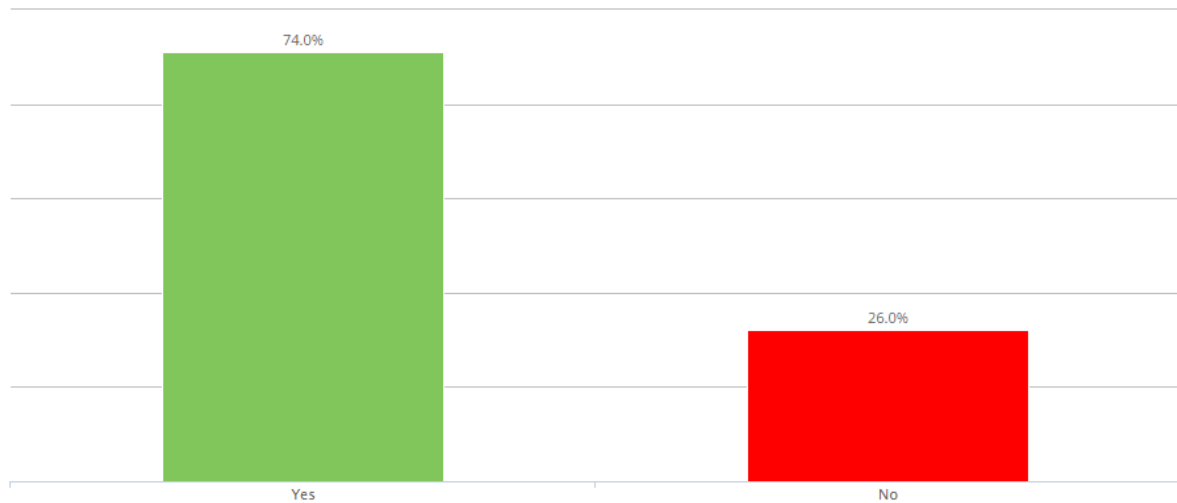
Is your job related to what you want to do in the future?



Almost 75% of respondents who identified that they are currently working said that they thought their job was not related to what they wanted to do in the future. While jobs may not be directly linked to what young people would like to do in the future, they can provide young people with the opportunity to develop skills which they can transfer to other jobs. By encouraging more young people to recognise this they may be able to see the link between the current job and any future pathways they are considering more clearly.

## Respondents who said they are not currently working

Are you looking for a job?

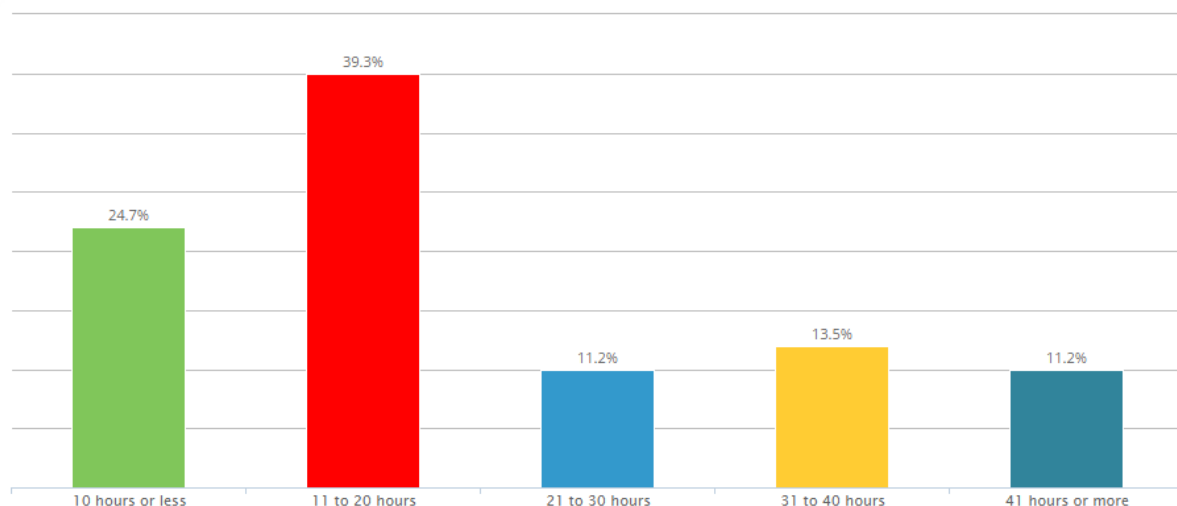


The majority of respondents who did not have a job said that they were looking for one. Respondents who said that they were not looking for work said that it was because they were too young, still in school, studying full time, had a disability or health issue which prevented them from working or had a caring responsibility.

*Finding 14: Young people who are not looking for work have personal barriers, commitments or health issues which prevent them from seeking employment.*

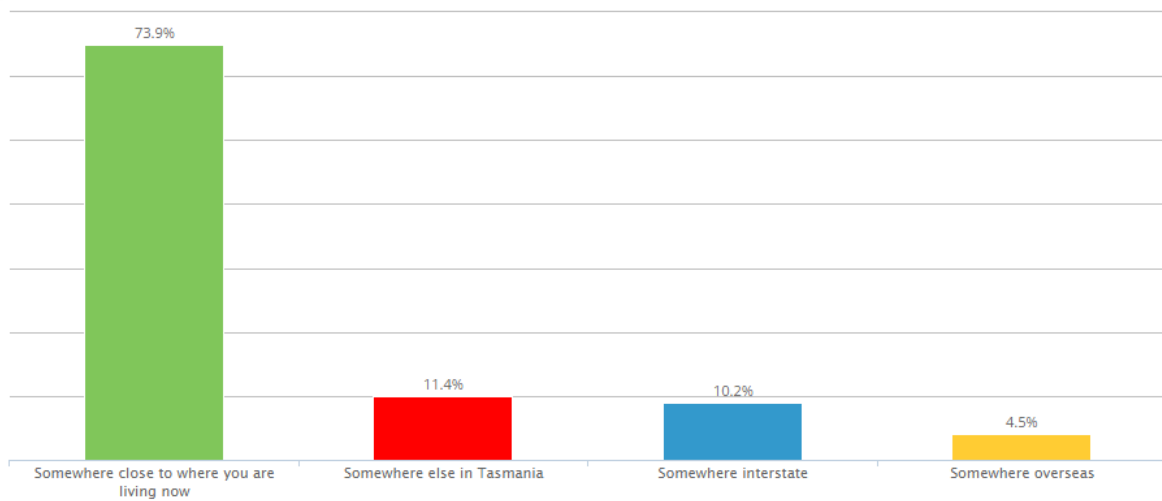
## Respondents who said they are not working but are looking for work

How many hours would you like to work?

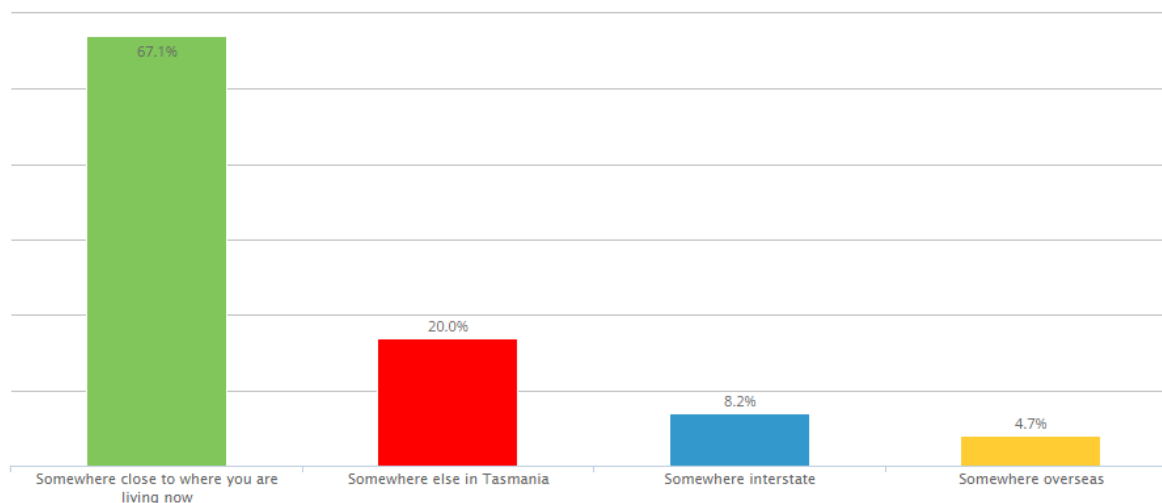


A high proportion of respondents who said that they were looking for work wanted to work between 0 and 20 hours per week. This may be because of the need to fit in work around other commitments such as study. It is interesting to note that 11.2% of respondents wanted to work 41 or more hours per week even when 40 hours is considered to be full time.

Where would like to get a job?



Where do you think you will find a job ?

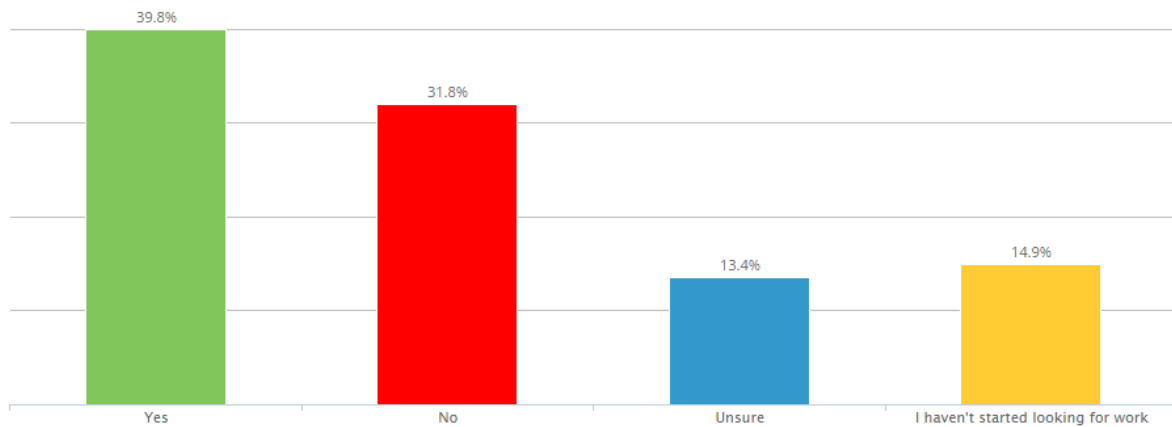


The majority of survey respondents who were currently looking for work said that they would like to work close to where they are currently living but 6.8% less respondents expected that they would gain employment there. There were 8.6% more respondents who thought that they would find employment elsewhere in Tasmania.

It is interesting to note that 10.2% of respondents would like to work somewhere interstate, but only 8.2% of respondents expected to find work there while more survey respondents expected to find work in Tasmania.

## All survey respondents

Have ever you experienced difficulties in finding work?



Most respondents who had looked for work identified that they had experienced difficulties when looking for work. Young people who said that they had difficulties when finding work said that they faced a lack of jobs to apply for that matched their experience, circumstances or abilities, that they had a lack of experience for jobs advertised, they were considered to be too young or too old for jobs they had applied for, the jobs available were not flexible to accommodate other commitments such as study, there were personal barriers which prevented them from working such as health issues and there was a lack of support.

*Finding 15: Young people face barriers to employment which they have little control over making it difficult for them to overcome these and gain employment.*

## Issues young people face when looking for employment

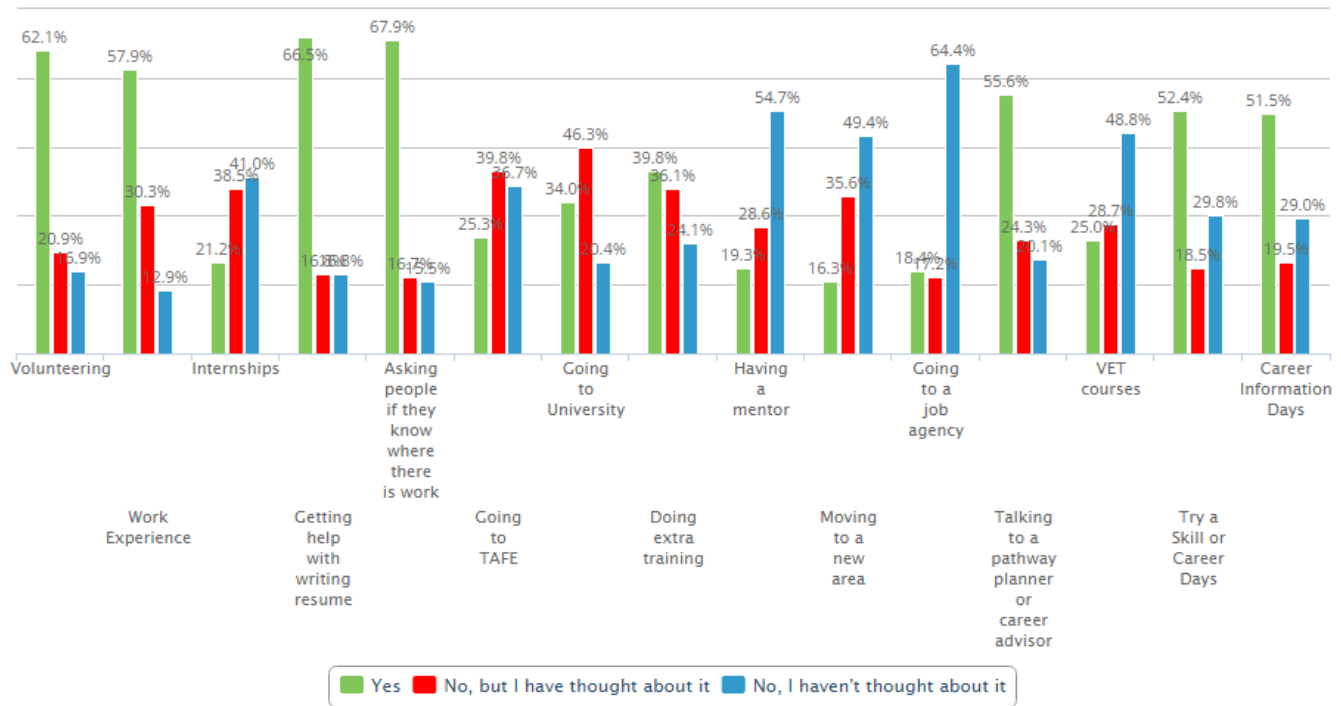
Respondents were asked what issues they thought other young people faced when they are looking for employment. The following issues were the ones most frequently mentioned by respondents:

1. Young people having a lack of skills or experience for the job they are applying for
2. A lack of available jobs that suit the circumstances of young people, such as being flexible to accommodate study
3. Discrimination from employers on the basis of young people's age, either being too young or too old, and gender, which prevents young people from gaining employment
4. Barriers to employment such as having a lack of supportive structures and networks, lack of transport, mental health issues and pressure of maintaining multiple commitments

These issues were also identified by participants who identified that they had experienced difficulties when looking for work.

*Finding 16: Young people need access to flexible services that accommodate their different needs but also recognise that young people have employment needs that are quite different to the general population.*

Have you tried any of the following things to help you get a job?



Respondents were asked what they had tried to help them gain employment and if they had not tried it, whether or not they had thought about it. Respondents identified with a number of different ways that they had tried to help them gain employment. Volunteering, asking people where there is work, completing work experience, talking to a pathway planner and getting help with writing resumes were things that a high number of respondents had tried. Other things that young people said that they had tried to help them get a job included asking for feedback on unsuccessful applications, practicing interviews, and trying different ways to find and apply for jobs.

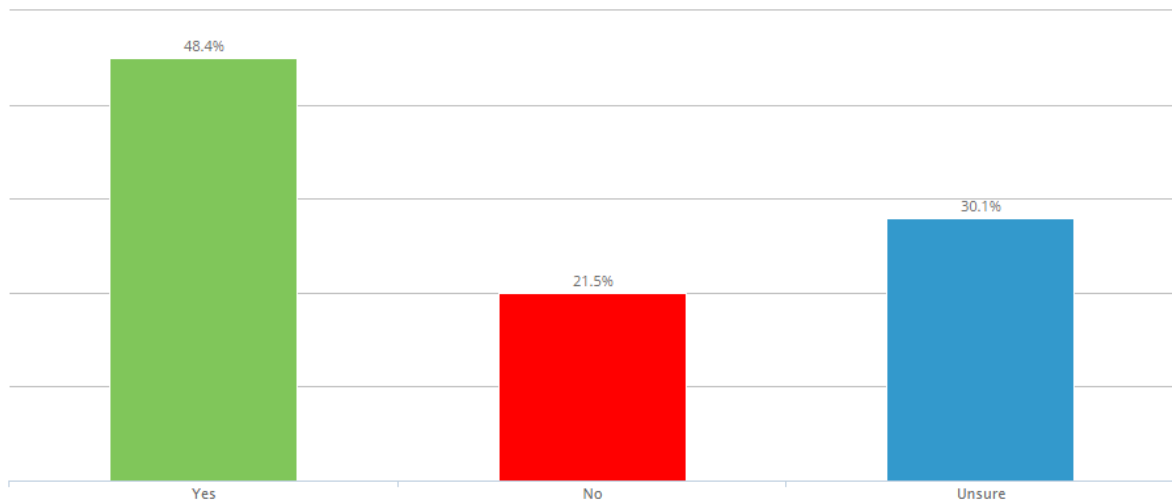
Going to a job agency and moving to a new area were things that a large number of respondents had not considered when looking for work. Going to a job agency and moving to a new area were the things that the least amount of respondents said would be helpful for young people to find a job (see page 25) indicating that they are not doing these things because they consider that there are better ways to get assistance.

*Finding 17: Even though young people had not considered going to a job agency for assistance, they still thought some of the better ways to get help included volunteering, work experience and training.*

*Finding 18: Young people are actively trying different strategies to help them gain employment and recognise the need for support.*



Do you think you have had enough support to help you find a job?

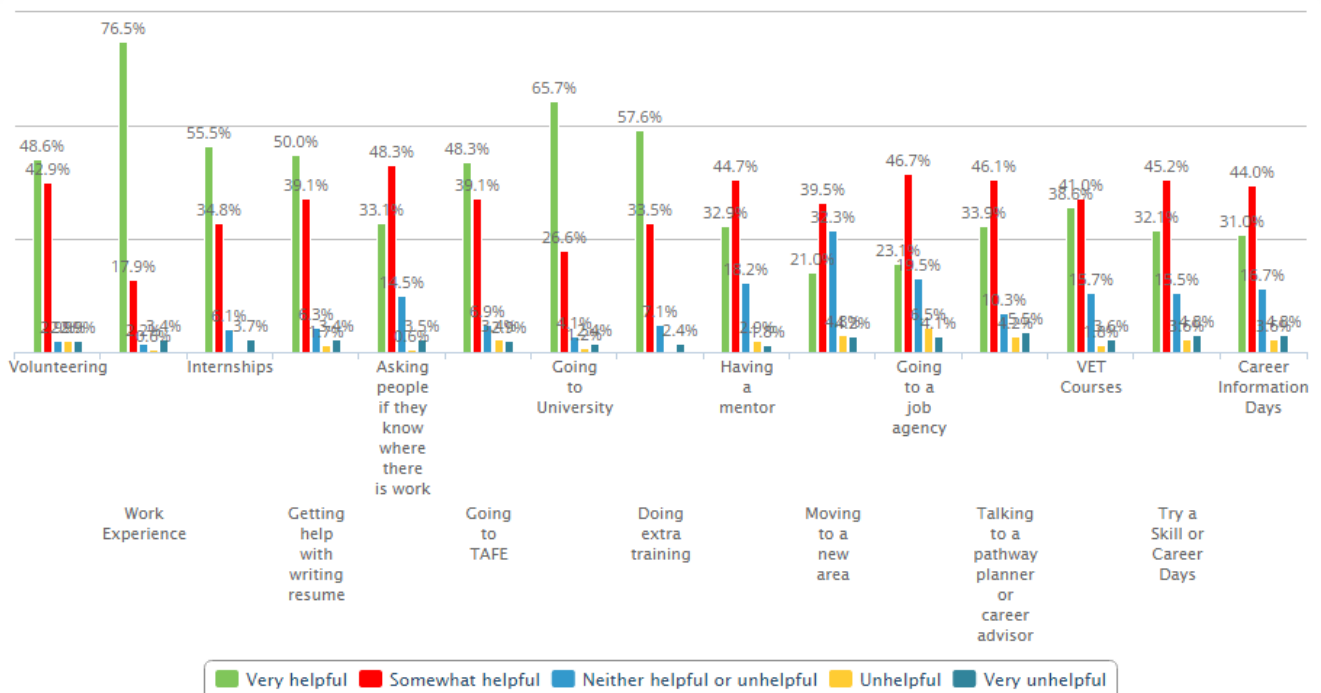


Approximately half of the respondents said that they thought they had enough help to find a job. Interestingly, there was a high number of respondents who said they were unsure if they had been provided with enough support to find a job. This may indicate that young people are not sure what help they may be able to access and may like to access extra support if it is available.

### Skills young people think would be useful to prepare them for work

Many respondents identified that having personal skills and attributes such as confidence, good manners and a good work ethic would be the most useful thing for young people when they preparing for work. This was followed by having some sort of relevant experience for the job. Respondents also identified that having as much information about the workplace or the job would be beneficial.

How helpful do you think the following things are to help young people get a job?



Gaining work experience was identified as being very helpful for helping young people get a job by the most number of respondents. This was followed by going to University or doing extra training. Other forms of gaining experience were also identified by a high number of respondents which included volunteering and internships which can also provide the opportunity to develop skills. It is important to note that many young people who have completed University or training still find it difficult to find entry level positions relevant to their qualifications.

## **Young people's thoughts about issues of youth unemployment**

Respondents were given the opportunity to comment on the issue of youth unemployment. The vast majority of respondents identified that youth unemployment is something which is a big problem and complex but also urgent. Respondents also identified the lack of skills, experience and qualifications that young people have as one of the main barriers which contributes to the rates of youth unemployment. Some responses also indicated concern that the stereotypes of young people can prevent young people from securing employment and that young people need to know their rights when they are seeking employment or are in the workplace as well as their responsibilities.

*Finding 19: Young people identified the need to know their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.*

## **Advice young people would give to others in their first job**

Most responses to this question suggested that young people should try and learn and gain as much experience as they can. This includes trying new things and learning from these opportunities, listening to the advice of others and be open to opportunities.

Other advice respondents would give included being well presented for interviews, try hard at the task you are given, be respectful, be friendly, try your best, have confidence, ask questions if you are unsure and find out as much information you can about the job. These responses reflect what young people said that they could do themselves.

## **Things that could be done to help young people gain and maintain employment**

Respondents were asked what they thought could be done to help young people gain employment and stay employed. A large number of respondents identified that businesses could help support young people by being flexible to accommodate the needs of young people, provide opportunities for young people to apply for jobs, treat young people fairly and equally in the workplace and spend more time training and mentoring them in the workplace to ensure the transition to work is smooth. They also acknowledged that businesses could also be better supported by the government to employ younger and less experienced workers and create more entry level positions for them.

Respondents also identified that young people needed to understand what is required of them if they are working and try to maintain a healthy work/life balance so that work does not become too demanding. Other things that were identified that could help young people get a job included creating a LinkedIn profile, developing interview skills, demonstrate their commitment and their desire to learn.

Support for young people was also seen as an essential part of helping young people gain and maintain employment so that any issues can be addressed before they become too big for the young person to deal with. Respondents identified that young people need to be supported from when they first start applying for jobs to when they are working in their first job. This support could come from managers, colleagues, family, friends, mentors, schools and organisations.

Respondents identified that increasing the opportunities to gain experience such as work experience, volunteering and internships could also help young people prepare for employed to be better prepared for the challenges in the workplace.

*Finding 20: Young people identified aspects of the employment process and developing work readiness skills that could be improved to better support young people to gain employment.*

## Findings

*Finding 1: Young people understand that having an education and getting work experience are important for gaining employment.*

*Finding 2: Young people identified ways that individuals, government, workplaces, schools and businesses are helping young people to transition to the workforce, demonstrating that young people are aware of the bigger picture and are not just youth focused.*

*Finding 3: Young people want more opportunities to gain experience and develop their skills because they understand that this is important to help them prepare for the workplace.*

*Finding 4: Young people want to gain relevant, meaningful experience and had suggestions on how career planning and support could be improved to better meet the needs of young people.*

*Finding 5: Young people identified ways that individuals, government, workplaces, schools and businesses could improve their support for young people transitioning to the workplace, which highlights the need for a whole of community approach to youth employment.*

*Finding 6: Young people recognised that they needed more support to help them transition to the workplace, particularly one on one support.*

*Finding 7: Young people identified the need to have an online youth specific resource which is more tailored to the needs of young people by having relevant information to their circumstances and connecting them to mentors and opportunities to gain experience in their community.*

*Finding 8: Young people identified that they did not know how to go about getting experience, even though they knew it was an important part to securing employment and that they wanted to take these opportunities.*

*Finding 9: Young people need a combination of face to face and online resources which can support them to find employment.*

*Finding 10: Young people want to understand how their current learning or job relates to their future aspirations for employment.*

*Finding 11: Young people need and want to know more about the workplace environment and what is expected of them during their first work experiences.*

*Finding 12: After attending the Forum, young people were more likely to be aware of new ways to find job opportunities and different industries where opportunities could be available.*

*Finding 13: Young people are thinking about employment from a very early age and are aware of the many factors that play a role in becoming employed, such as education.*

*Finding 14: Young people who are not looking for work have personal barriers, commitments or health issues which prevent them from seeking employment.*

*Finding 15: Young people face barriers to employment which they have little control over making it difficult for them to overcome these and gain employment.*

*Finding 16: Young people need access to flexible services that accommodate their different needs but also recognise that young people have employment needs that are quite different to the general population.*

*Finding 17: Even though young people had not considered going to a job agency for assistance, they still thought some of the better ways to get help included volunteering, work experience and training.*

*Finding 18: Young people are actively trying different strategies to help them gain employment and recognise the need for support.*

*Finding 19: Young people identified the need to know their rights and responsibilities in the workplace.*

*Finding 20: Young people identified aspects of the employment process and developing work readiness skills that could be improved to better support young people to gain employment.*

## **Conclusion**

The report demonstrates that young people are thinking about these issues and ideas very broadly and from a young age. Young people involved with the Forum and Survey were able to identify what young people, businesses, community and government are doing well to support young people to gain employment. Despite this, many young people also identified ways that young people, businesses, community and government could improve to help young people transition to the work place. Although gaining experience was identified by young people as an important part to helping them gain employment, many did not know where to find opportunities to increase their skills and wanted to create new ways for young people to find out and access these opportunities, especially through an online resource. Although there are tools and resources available that are considered to be youth friendly, they are either not reaching their target or not meeting their needs. Young people wanted online resources to connect them with people they could talk to and face to face opportunities to learn, gain experience and receive support. Although it can be much more challenging for some, young people are keen to be involved and do what they can but are not always sure how to do this.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Agenda for the TYF *Youth Employment* Forum

| <b>Time</b>   | <b>Activity</b>   |
|---------------|---|
| 9:30-10:00    | Registration  |
| 10.00 - 10.05 | Arrival and taking of seats   |
| 10.05 – 10.30 | Introduction by Facilitator, Mo   |
| 10.30 - 10.45 | Fill out the TYF youth employment survey  |
| 10.45 – 11.05 | Big Picture Brainstorming   |
| 11.05 – 11.25 | Morning Tea   |
| 11.25 – 11.40 | Guest Speaker: Bianca Welsh - Stillwater  |
| 11.40 – 12.10 | Solutions Group - Session 1   |
| 12.10 – 12.50 | Lunch Break : Time to look at the Jobs Board (BEACON), Then and Now (YNOT posters), 'the ideas walls', Vox pops |
| 12.50 - 1.20  | Solutions Group - Session 2   |
| 1.20 – 2.20   | Solutions Groups Report Back  |
| 2.20 – 2.40   | Afternoon tea   |
| 2.40 – 3.00   | Forum Wrap Up   |
| 3.00 – 3.20   | Feedback forms  |
| 3.20 – 3.30   | Thank you and conclusion by YNOT and TYF  |
| 3.30 – 4.00   | Depart  |

Appendix 2: Topics for the discussion groups at the TYF *Youth Employment* Forum

| TOPICS                      | DESCRIPTION  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Not Working</b>          | Looking for and applying for jobs  |
| <b>Form your own Future</b> | Creating your own future and opportunities from where you are                          |
| <b>Getting Experience</b>   | Work experience, volunteering, internships and what you can do to improve your options |
| <b>On the Job Training</b>  | Gaining qualifications through working, such as apprenticeships and traineeships       |
| <b>Study and Beyond</b>     | General education, Staying till year 12, University, and TAFE                          |
| <b>Personal Commitments</b> | Being able to balance work/life commitments, and looking after you                     |
| <b>Preparing for Work</b>   | Getting work ready, understanding workplace culture, health and safety                 |
| <b>Skill Development</b>    | Skills, qualifications, being workplace ready  |
| <b>Expanding Horizons</b>   | Thinking wider about your job options  |
| <b>Working Hard</b>         | Being a good employee and keeping your job   |
| <b>Under-employed</b>       | Working, but wanting more hours, or a different job                                    |

## TYF Employment Tips for Young People

### **Learn about different jobs**

You can research the different types of jobs that are available and this can help you understand what jobs and careers you might be interested in. Getting more information about different jobs or workplaces can help you get ideas about where you might like to work. Getting more information will also tell you more about the kinds of tasks you might be doing in different jobs. You can do this by looking at jobs that are advertised in the newspaper and online and looking at websites that have lists of different jobs and searching for information. This will help you get an idea of what employers are looking for and the things that you can do now which will help you when you are looking for a job. If you are applying for a job, find out about the business, organisation or workplace and what the job might involve. You could do this by looking at their website or giving them a call. This will give you a better idea of what you might have to do in the job.

### **Call to get some more information**

Job ads don't always give you a lot of information. If you read a job ad and have some questions about the job it is a good idea to call the organisation, business or workplace and ask some questions. Job ads usually have the name and phone number of a contact person on them, this is the person to call with questions. It is important to have a think about the questions you want to ask before calling and write them down if you need to. Remember to be polite and respectful on the phone and to introduce yourself before asking your questions. It might be a good idea to have a pen and paper ready so you can make notes of the answers they give you.

### **Make a good impression**

Making a good impression shows employers that you understand what they are looking for in the workplace and that you are putting in a lot of effort to get the job. Make sure your job application is professional by checking your application for spelling mistakes, neatly setting your resume and having the details of people that employers can contact for more information. Also check that your email address is appropriate by making sure it is simple and not offensive. You can also ask to see the manager to hand in your application to them if you don't have to submit it online. Employers want to see that you can dress neatly, be friendly and have good manners when you apply for the job and while in the workplace.

### **Get experience and build your skills**

Getting experience and building your skills can help you get ideas about the types of jobs you might like to do and where your strengths are. This shows employers what you can bring to the workplace and that you want to learn new things and give things a go. Sometimes businesses and organisations will have the opportunity to do some work experience or volunteering with them. This might be for one day or something that is longer. You can look for these opportunities online by looking for volunteering, work experience or internships in your local area. Sometimes you need to call workplaces and ask them. Volunteering can be a great way for you to learn new skills, meet and learn from other people and to make yourself known to the organisation.



## **Know what your strengths, skills and interests are and what you still need to learn and work hard at**

Keeping track of what you are good at and what you can improve on is a good way of recognising what you can contribute to a job. If you aren't sure what your strengths are you can ask people around you what they think you are good at. You might like to keep a list of these things so you can remember to mention them on job applications and in interviews. It is also a good idea to think of a time you used each skill so you can provide an example when talking about your strengths and skills. If you know what you still need to learn and work hard at you can do this to improve your skills. You can see if you can get some extra help from friends, family or teachers if you are stuck in learning something. Every job will help you learn and develop different skills and you can often use some of these skills in different jobs.

## **Get advice from people you know**

Everyone who has a job has been through the job application process and learning what it is like to have your first job. You can ask your friends and family who have worked if they have any advice and what they found helped them when they were looking for work and starting in their first job. You could also ask them to help you write your resume and ask if they have any tips. They are also good people to ask about what their job is like, what they have to do if they know anyone who works in a job you would like to know more about. Finding out what other people around you have learnt is a great way to get some ideas about what is needed in the workplace.

## **Ask questions**

When you first start thinking about working there are a lot of things to learn. If you aren't sure about how to do something, make sure you ask questions. Everyone has to learn how to apply for a job or what they have to do when they start working and it's ok if you don't know something. Sometimes when you start working employers might forget to tell you things. This is probably just because they do these things every day and they forget they need tell you too. It's not because they expect you to know everything and they will be happy that you reminded them to tell you. When you start working you might forget some of the things your employer tells you. There are a lot of new things to learn and remember when starting a new job so if you forget something they have told you it is okay to ask them to tell you again.

## **Know what your rights and responsibilities are**

When you are looking for a job or if you are starting in a job there are things that the employer needs to do and things that you need to do. A lot of these things are needed by the law which means they have to be done. Employers should give you this information but a lot of it can be found on websites such as Centrelink, Workplace Health and Safety, the Australian Taxation Office and Australian Government website. If you aren't sure what you need to know, ask someone who has been working or who knows the information such as your family, teacher or career guidance counsellor. It is important to find this information so you know you are being treated fairly in the workplace.

## **Work out who you can go to for support**

Everyone needs help at some stage. You might come across issues when you are applying for jobs or when you just start work or you might have some personal issues which are affecting your ability to find work or go to work. It's important you work out who you can go to for support if you need it. This might be your family, friends, teachers, youth workers, career

guidance counsellors or mentors. All of these people offer different types of support and they can help you with different things if you need some help. It's ok to feel nervous when you first start to look for a job or are in your first job but it is important to give it a go and try your best and these people can help you do that.

### **Ask for feedback**

Every job application will help you learn something new. When you find out if you have got the job or not, you can ask for feedback on your application. Even if you do get the job it is a good idea to see how you can improve it so you know for the future. It can be disappointing if you don't get a job that you applied for. It is okay to be disappointed but it is important that you don't give up applying for jobs. Remember that there will be a lot of people applying for the same job as you and if you don't get a job you applied for that you can ask for feedback. Getting feedback can be a really good way to learn what you might do differently next time or learn things that you could improve on.

## **TYF Employment Tips for Employers**

*Employers looking to employ young people*

### **Clearly explain what the job is about**

Young people often have limited experience with workplaces and what is required for different jobs so it is important to be clear about what they will be required to do so that they can apply for jobs which they are capable of. Being very clear and detailed in position descriptions makes this easier for young people. It is also important to go over the job requirements in more detail in the interview process and discuss examples of what the young person may be required to do on an 'average' day.

### **Provide young people with the opportunity to do work experience**

Young people are often keen to find out what the workplace is all about and get some experience in a work environment. Providing work experience opportunities means that young people are better prepared when they apply for jobs and enter the workforce which makes it easier for them and employers. The set up for work experience can vary and can be negotiated. It could be one afternoon or day or a placement which is one day a week or one week long.

### **Give feedback to young people who have applied for a job**

Young people usually do not have much experience in applying for jobs. They may not understand how they could improve their application or communication in an interview. Spending time giving feedback means that young people can improve their applications in the future. Sometimes young people do not have people who can help them write their application or help them to improve in the future so they rely on the feedback from employers. This also means that employers will be helping young people to provide applications of high quality in the future.

### **Being too formal can be intimidating**

Young people rarely have the opportunity before the workforce to develop their professional image. Being overly professional and serious can therefore be quite intimidating for young people as they are not sure how they should behave. By creating an environment which is a bit more relaxed and light-hearted can make it easier for the young person to be open to learning and communicating in the workforce. This can be done by including the young

person in more casual conversations and not making a big fuss if they make a small mistake that can be easily fixed.

### *Employing a young person*

#### **Provide lots of information and opportunities to ask questions**

Young people who are starting in their first job will not know much about the workplace and will rely on employers to give them information. It is a good idea to provide young people with copies of key documents or websites that they should be familiar with or provide them with a list of these documents so they can refer back to the information when they need to. Keep asking them if they have any questions about anything that has been discussed and if they are clear about what they need to do. Young people might want to ask a question but not feel comfortable without being prompted. Even though you have answered their question before it may take a few times before they remember, especially if it is not something which they will come across on a regular basis in their job.

#### **Acknowledge the young person as a valuable member of your team**

Young people want to feel included in the workplace and often when they are starting in their first job they can feel very out of place. Ensure that a conscious effort is made to include the young person in discussions and events that are happening within the workplace. Young people want to feel valued so make sure that the young person is acknowledged when they do something correctly or do something good. This helps them know they are on the right track and that you are not just paying attention to the things they might make mistakes on.

#### **Show young employees what you mean**

Explaining what you want the young person to do is not always clear, especially if they have not done a similar task before. It is better if you or another staff member can demonstrate what you would like the young person to do. This way they can have a better understanding of the correct way to do things. It is also a good idea to ask the young employee to show you or another staff member how to do something so they have the opportunity to show what they have observed and to ask any questions if they need to. It may take a few of demonstrations before they master it but this will mean it is likely that the task will be done correctly in the future.

#### **Clear communication is important**

It is important to have clear communication with young people when they first start in a job so they can understand what they are required to do. There may be terms or phrases which are specific to the workplace that the young person has not come across before. Young people may need things explained in more detail so that they have a better understanding of what is needed.

#### **Have a good induction process**

When a young person is starting in the workplace it is important to have a youth friendly induction process so that they feel welcomed and can get all the information that they need to start in their job. An induction process should involve giving young people key information about the workplace, a tour of the work place and an opportunity to discuss tasks that the young person will start with. Young people may not think to ask questions or know what questions they should ask so it is important to give them the knowledge they need. It can also be useful to have a mentor or buddy for the young person in the workplace who can

help guide them when they first start. It's also important to check in to see how they are going along the way and provide opportunities to discuss the tasks.

**Remember that it is the young person's first job**

Everyone has to start somewhere. Young people rely on their employers to be good role models and teach them what they need to know in the workplace so that they can become good employees. If all workplaces help young people to develop their skills and knowledge, they will become better workers.

