

## Budget brings youth employment focus but punitive welfare measures remain

The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT), has cautiously welcomed the Commonwealth Government's budget announcement of a Youth Employment Strategy.

The \$330 million package will include a Youth Transition to Work program, new intensive support trials and an Early School Leavers Program.

It is unclear how the Youth Employment Strategy will address the personal and social barriers preventing young people to participate in employment and study but it appears to be heading in right direction.

Joanna Siejka, CEO, said that, "YNOT has strongly advocated over the past 12 months for youth employment support services for young people to include case management, be flexible and have a holistic approach, and it is positive that these aspects have been identified within the proposed Youth Employment Strategy".

The Youth Employment Strategy will not start until 1 January 2016 which YNOT believes is twelve months too late for many young people.

Ms Siejka said, "By the time the strategy is underway, vulnerable and disengaged young people will have been without support for 12 months. In this time many young people will have fallen through the gaps, which is simply not good enough."

YNOT is also very concerned to see that young unemployed people, up to the age of 25 years, will be subject to a four week waiting period for income support, during which they will be required to undertake extra 'job-seeking' activities and that the age of eligibility of Newstart Allowance will increase from 22 to 25.

YNOT fears this is part of a new, highly-punitive approach to young people who need income support.

Ms Siejka said, "These approaches to income support will impact on vulnerable young people who will be penalized due to their circumstances through no fault of their own".

YNOT also notes that there is again no funding for a mechanism for Government to engage and consult with, or for a youth peak body.



**For more information:**

Joanna Siejka

CEO

Phone: 0458 235 511

(only available for phone interviews)

**Other budget highlights for young people and the youth sector include:**

- \$262.7 million over five years to provide more support for families with dependent young people who qualify for certain income support payments
- \$105.7 million to improve employment, educational and social outcomes for parents and young people who are unemployed, have a mental health condition, are refugees or are 'vulnerable' migrants. Including:
  - \$55.2 million for community organisations to engage early with disadvantaged young people who have multiple barriers to employment
  - \$19.4 million for two employment support trials to help improve employment outcomes for young people with mental illness, at risk of disengaging from education and/or at risk of long term welfare dependency;
  - \$22.1 million to support young refugees and migrants to build skills to equip them to participate in education or work
- \$230.0 million to extend the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness to 30 June 2017.
- \$2.2 million to allow young people with a disability to receive up to 6 months of Disability Employment Services (DES) support while participating concurrently in state and territory post-school employment or transition to work programmes.
- \$5 billion over 2014-17 through the funding loading for students with a disability.
- Funding for the National Partnership on pay equity for the social and community services sector.