



Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper

University of Tasmania Submission
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UNIVERSITY of
TASMANIA 

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Introductory Statement

The University of Tasmania supports the development of a Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy - an important strategy for the future of our young people, and for the future of our island. We appreciate the consultative approach taken to the development of this strategy, led by Jobs Tasmania, which has actively sought to include the voices of Tasmania's young people throughout the process.

It is widely understood that Tasmanians face a range of barriers to employment and further education. Tasmania has the highest proportion nationally of people living in the most disadvantaged areas (30%)¹, and young people aged 12 to 24 comprise 25% of all Tasmanian people experiencing homelessness.²

In part because of these structural barriers, we achieve lower levels of educational attainment, with only 21.9% of Tasmanians holding a university degree (compared to 26.3% nationally), and 15.9% of our population have no formal education post Year 10 (the highest share of any state or territory). Participation in employment among young Tasmanians is also below the national average, with 12.5% of 15–24-year-olds not engaged in employment, education, or training (NEET) compared to 9.6% nationally.³

Our state is facing significant challenges in increasing educational attainment and workforce participation and, without ambitious, evidence-based solutions, these challenges are likely to intensify in the future.

Evidence shows that intergenerational poverty, experienced in many disadvantaged areas in Tasmania, deprives individuals of equal opportunity, and childhood poverty is linked to lower educational attainment and employment outcomes.⁴ Literature on social mobility and education shows that one of the best ways to break these poverty cycles is through ensuring access to education, particularly post-school education.⁵

As currently framed, the consultation paper does not deliver the level of aspiration around improving educational participation and attainment, which is needed to significantly change the future for our young people. The strategy needs to provide stronger direction on how to improve educational pathways and attainment outcomes for young people, which will contribute to ending intergenerational poverty cycles and in turn, will improve long term employment outcomes for our population.

The overarching objective of the Youth Jobs Strategy should be to drive the development of an integrated and distinctive Tasmanian system for supporting students and young people as they make the transition from school into appropriate combinations of further education, training and/or employment.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics Census – Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (2021), www.abs.gov.au

² Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data (2021), www.abs.gov.au

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics Census Data (2021), www.abs.gov.au

⁴ Vera-Toscano, E. & Wilkins, R. (2020) Does poverty in childhood beget poverty in adulthood in Australia? https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/3522482/Breaking-Down-Barriers-Report-1-October-2020.pdf

⁵ De Vuijst, E., van Ham, M. & Kleinhaus, R. (2017) The moderating effect of higher education on the intergenerational transmission of residing in poverty neighbourhoods. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0308518X17715638>

The model should be place-based, responding to distinctive regional needs as well as the specific requirements of young Tasmanians. There must be a clear focus on enhancing equity and improving access among groups who are underrepresented in work and further education. We should strive to create a system which addresses barriers to employment and training, promotes aspiration and capability and is both flexible and easy to navigate.

A Youth Jobs Strategy for Tasmania which focuses on the diverse needs of young people in Tasmania should aim to improve participation in employment, education and training while promoting equity and economic inclusion and Tasmania's long-term prosperity. The strategy should be informed by the current needs of young Tasmanians and employers while also maintaining an explicit long-term focus on the ongoing training and educational needs of young workers over their careers, and the skills and workforce needs of the industries and jobs of the future.

Considering the broad range of challenges our young people are facing, it will be important for this strategy to align with and complement current reviews that consider and contribute to positive outcomes in education and employment – including the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System, the Australian Universities Accord, the National Skills Agreement, and the Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities. At the University of Tasmania, we are committed to supporting engagement in further education for all Tasmanians and we regularly advocate for education and employment systems and funding which improve equitable access and increased participation for Tasmanians. Recent papers which detail our solutions for equitable and accessible education, and the outcomes this will have on employment, include our April 2023 [Submission to the Australian Universities Accord Panel](#), and our February 2023 [Submission in response to Jobs and Skills Australia Discussion Paper](#).

This submission to the Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy discussion provides feedback and suggested approaches to the development of a Youth Jobs and Education strategy consistent with our vision of creating an integrated, place-based system for supporting young Tasmanians into further education and employment.

Tasmania's Youth Jobs strategy needs to deliver a regionally networked, place-based approach, including linking up existing employment and education programs, to support outcomes within local communities.

We endorse a place-based approach to a Tasmanian Youth Jobs Strategy, and propose this approach is taken at a sub-regional level to deliver truly effective, local solutions. In Tasmania, areas of high disadvantage (and resultant low participation in work or further education) are geographically concentrated in specific regions and suburbs. Services need to be located within these regions to reach and support young people in work and education pathways that are aligned to local employment opportunities.

We know that job seekers in regional and rural Tasmania face additional barriers to entering the workforce. These barriers vary between communities, and addressing them requires place-based, localised approaches. The Regional Jobs Hub Network, supported by Jobs Tasmania, is one example of a regional, place-based approach to delivering support

services to Tasmanian communities. This program is providing high quality, localised support for young job seekers, and is improving employment outcomes in these regions.

There are opportunities to further develop the support provided through existing regional initiatives such as the Jobs Hubs, to deliver a tailored suite of services based on community need. In addition to providing connection to local employment opportunities, these services can also provide linkages to educational programs. Involving both education and employment services in community-led multi-use hubs would connect students with potential employers, inform education providers on the skills and education needs of local industry, and provide holistic, outcomes-based services for the community.

One example of this model being trialled is through Business and Employment Southeast Tasmania (BEST), a Jobs Hub in Sorell. At the Sorell Jobs Hub, BEST is supporting access to education for their community. This includes providing information about study options in areas of local need, supporting individuals with application processes and facilitating connections between students and employers to support graduate outcomes in the region. BEST have previously worked closely with our university to successfully encourage student participation in pre-degree programs in areas of workforce need for the southeast region including health, community support, technology, and business. TasTAFE is also trialling a pilot program in partnership with BEST, with a TAFE staff member based at the Jobs Hub one day per week to provide advice to potential students on course enquiries, pathways to study and application support.

Additionally, the Regional University Study Hubs currently operating in Zeehan and Smithton provide localised education and pathways support for students and hold strong connections to the local community. Developing strong links between these and other existing offerings will provide more comprehensive support services for our young people seeking education and employment opportunities.

The Federal Government has recently announced an expansion of the Regional University Study Hubs program, for which applications are currently open.⁶ We are strongly advocating for additional Study Hubs to be considered for Tasmania and would welcome further advocacy and consideration of how these facilities can connect with Regional Jobs Hubs and other place-based community initiatives to provide a connected point of contact to support employment and education pathways for young people from Tasmanian regions.

To improve employment pathways and outcomes for Tasmanians, we need to provide equitable access to education and training to meet future workforce needs.

The National Skills Commission projects that over the five years to November 2026, 91.7% of new jobs will require post-school education, and more than three-fifths of projected employment growth will be in high skill level jobs (i.e., requiring a bachelor's degree or higher).⁷ Providing support for young Tasmanians into entry-level, lower-skilled employment is an important first step in a career and the rapidly evolving world of work, but we should aim to establish a holistic jobs and skills system that provides accessible and relevant

⁶ <https://www.education.gov.au/regional-university-study-hubs-2023-applications>

⁷ National Skills Commission (2022) Employment Projections <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/topics/employment-projections>

training and education opportunities to Tasmanians throughout their careers. Improving access to flexible education and training will be essential to lifting workforce participation and productivity, both of which are crucial to Tasmania's future prosperity.

The relationship between education and employment is increasingly integrated, and initiatives to support youth jobs pathways need to address education participation. To prepare our young people for the future of work, we need to take a more direct, proactive approach now, and provide pathways for young people to access further education and increase workforce participation.

The current focus of the Youth Jobs Strategy is solely on transitions to work and does not directly consider the role that further education and training will play in this transition, or on future job outcomes for young people. We recommend the scope and ambition of the Youth Jobs strategy is expanded beyond the current focus on immediate employment outcomes and suggest an approach that includes longer-term consideration of future workforce needs.

The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities recognises that universities and vocational training providers will play a key role in helping to meet future workforce skills and labour needs.⁸ To create a skilled and sustainable workforce for Tasmania, it is important to consider current and future workforce needs and work closely with education providers in the state to ensure young people are adequately prepared for the skills and capabilities required in the future.

Equitable access and participation in education will improve skills development, encourage lifelong learning, and have a positive impact on long-term employment outcomes.

As the only university based in Tasmania, we strongly advocate for and invest in programs and facilities to promote educational access and equitable participation, to improve life-long learning and skills development across the state.

Current pathways for young people from school education to further education, employment, or a combination of the two are often disconnected and challenging to navigate and access, leaving students overwhelmed with information. Alongside the existing barriers to employment and education that Tasmanians face, the complexity of the various education and employment support systems create additional challenges.

Research shows that a student's ability to access and succeed in the further education system relies on coordinated, well-resourced support from the moment they enter the education system - including early childhood education and care.⁹ To support young Tasmanians, we need a more connected system which focuses on their needs and provides the right information at the right time – in other words, a system in which it is easier and quicker for students to find the right door for them.

⁸ Working Future: The Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities. (2023). <https://treasury.gov.au/employment-whitepaper/final-report>

⁹ OECD (2018) Equity in Education: Breaking down barriers to social mobility, Australia. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Equity-in-Education-country-note-Australia.pdf>

Reflecting the need for greater integration between the VET and University sectors identified by both the Universities Accord and the National Skills Agreement, in partnership with TasTAFE and the Department of Children and Young People (DECYP) we are working together on initiatives to simplify and improve pathways from school to TAFE or university.

The first stage involves refreshing articulation pathways from TAFE courses to university courses, to simplify the process for students who complete a TAFE Diploma and wish to continue studying at university. We are also progressing a joint pathway mapping project, to map a student's journey from Year 11/12 through to TAFE and/or university for specific disciplines. The intended outcome of this project is a shared resource which can be used in schools, study centres and jobs hubs to assist with future student planning. This resource, designed with input from local industry, will clearly articulate the many and varied pathways an individual can take towards their chosen profession.

In working closely with TasTAFE and DECYP on shared initiatives, we are seeking to design a Tasmanian education system that enables TAFE and university offerings to complement each other and provide flexible, simplified pathways and information for students so they can access the education they need to develop the skills required for their chosen profession. A shared objective of the Youth Jobs Strategy should be to build on these existing initiatives and work collaboratively towards a flexible, accessible system to support young Tasmanians into work and the further education required for jobs of the future.

Working together as one aligned education system for Tasmania is the best way to drive the significant change that we need to improve education and employment outcomes for our young people.

Conclusion

Bringing together government, schools, education providers and industry in a connected way is an important step in providing holistic and accessible support services for our young people. By considering the existing initiatives within Tasmanian communities, and connecting these together, we can provide clearer pathways to work while supporting flexible, lifelong learning and skills development for young Tasmanians. This can achieve increased education and employment outcomes across our regions and contribute to creating a skilled workforce in critical areas of need for Tasmania.

Developing a new system to provide comprehensive support and pathways for young Tasmanians into work and further education which is attuned to the distinctive needs of specific cohorts and communities will require careful design and ongoing assessment and adaptation. Ultimately Tasmania's Youth Jobs strategy should be assessed against clear, medium-term targets. For example, by 2030 the strategy should commit to:

- Increasing the percentage of Tasmanians 15-24 engaged in employment, education, or training to achieve or exceed the national average.
- Closing the gap in Tasmanians aged 15-24 not in education, employment, or training (NEET) between regional and urban areas.
- Increasing the percentage of Tasmanians studying a non-school qualification at Certificate Level III and above (including university).

As this submission has explored, to achieve these important outcomes we need initiatives that are place-based and connected, to support young people across all Tasmanian communities. This needs to consider the demand and skills required for future jobs, to place Tasmania's young people in good standing for the needs of the future workforce.

Achieving this goal will require collaboration and a commitment to working together on designing one connected, student-centric, Tasmanian education system – from early learning centres and schools through to university, TAFE and other training providers. This will require shared and significant investment into developing accessible pathways from school through to education, training and employment, building on work currently being led in partnership by the University, DECYP and TasTAFE.

It will also be important that education for Tasmanians, including schools, university and TAFE, is adequately funded to address the systemic population and regional challenges we face, and to ensure the delivery of an equitable education system which supports all young Tasmanians to further study and work.

We are pleased to provide this submission to the Youth Jobs Strategy consultation and, given our deep commitment to working with others to improve educational and employment outcomes in Tasmania, would welcome the opportunity to engage further as the strategy is developed.