



Voices on Work:

Young People in Tasmania

ID1: A photo of a person with a black hoodie reading "TROUBLESMITHS" and a black cap. They have shoulder length hair and a beard. In the foreground there is the logo for Social Ventures Australia (SVA). There is a graphic of a blue and orange triangle overlaying the image. The text below reads: "Voices on Work: Young People in Tasmania".

TROUBLE
SMITHS

Acknowledgements

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) acknowledge and pay respect to the past and present traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work.

This project has been funded by the Tasmanian Government through Jobs Tasmania and the Employer of Choice program, along with the Paul Ramsay Foundation and the Macquarie Group Foundation.

Special thanks to Workskills, Troublesmiths, National Disability Service, Working it Out, Migrant Resource Centre, Glenorchy City Council, City Mission, Youth, Family and Community Connections and National Joblink.

Report Authors

Dr Jacqueline Mackaway, School of Communication, Society and Culture, Macquarie University

Dr Jacqueline Mackaway is a social researcher interested in workplace diversity and inclusion, work and employment, and the future of work. She has also published extensively on work-integrated learning. When Jacqueline's not researching, she's busy teaching at the School of Communication, Society and Culture at Macquarie University. Prior to teaching and researching, she worked in human resource management across a range of sectors and ran her own small consulting business

Dr María Florencia Amigó, Education, Enterprise & Engagement, University of Sydney

Dr Maria Florencia Amigó is a sociocultural anthropologist and research consultant. She is currently a senior interdisciplinary lecturer at the Education, Enterprise and Engagement Portfolio at the University of Sydney. Maria has worked on work and employment-related topics for almost two decades. She has conducted research on children, youth and migrants' work and employment, as well as on work-integrated learning, and the transition between education and work. She is part of the steering committee of Multicultural Integration Community Support (MICS) --a community organisation that assists with migrant settlement in the Northern suburbs of Sydney--, MOSAIC --a network promoting multicultural engagement at the University of Sydney--, and is a member of the Multicultural Advisory Committee of Ku-ring-gai Council.

About Social Ventures Australia (SVA)

SVA was created to solve challenging social problems. We speed-up innovation in the social sector so more people in Australia can live their best life. As Australia's most innovative social impact organisation, we help solve challenging social problems. Putting our extensive know-how to work re-designing systems. Helping institutions think differently. Working hand in hand with our partners and communities to take real action on social change.

SVA's Employment team works to create an Australia in which everyone can realise their full potential at work, with access to good quality employment that provides an opportunity for economic mobility.

For more information contact careerladder@socialventures.org.au



Contents

Executive summary	5
Introduction.....	6
Research approach and questions asked	7
Who took part in the research	8
Strengths and Limitations	9
What young people recommend	10
Unpacking Key Findings.....	11
Challenges in Finding Work.....	11
Personal Circumstances: The Hidden Barrier to Youth Employment	11
Recruitment practices: Challenges for young Tasmanians	12
"Lack of work experience"	15
Job scarcity: "It's all about who you know"	16
Challenges to sustaining work	17
Poor-Quality Jobs and Employers Dominating Youth Employment	17
Young people feel let down by "disconnected" employers.....	19
Discrimination is alive and kicking in the workplace.....	21
Positive Role Models: Employers who make a difference.....	22
Insights for employers.....	22
References	25



Executive summary

This report commissioned by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) provides insights into the experiences of young people in Tasmania regarding employment. These were derived from information provided by 28 participants of a small-scale study aimed at supporting SVA's Employer Innovation Lab—an evidence-based program helping employers improve their recruitment and retention by lifting barriers faced by young people.

The study was conducted in Hobart between 30 September and 12 October 2024, using semi-structured interviews, a focus group, and a small-scale survey. The study aimed to give a voice to the lived experiences of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, focusing on employment goals, experiences of work, problems and barriers encountered when finding and keeping a job, and ideas on how employment for young people could be improved.

Interviewees revealed that young people in Tasmania face significant challenges when it comes to finding and sustaining work. A shortage of available entry level jobs, nepotism, discrimination, and exploitative working conditions were among the obstacles faced by many young people. Rapid recruitment processes that ignored individual circumstances were a significant issue across the board. Additionally, personal circumstances, such as caring responsibilities and disability, were found to be significant barriers to obtaining and keeping employment.

The report suggests that employers' understanding of the needs of young Tasmanians and flexibility around work arrangements to take into account personal circumstances could greatly improve employment prospects for young people. Further, the voices represented in the study suggest that a change in attitudes towards young people and an understanding of the circumstances affecting employment opportunities are necessary to support good quality work for young people.

Based on both positive and negative experiences of work reported on by the study's participants, the report concludes with insights about key actions employers can take to address the employment barriers facing young people in Tasmania. Three first steps are recommended to employers: recruit based on ability and potential rather than on age and experience, acknowledge the whole person and invest time and resources into training.



ID2: A photo of a person with long blonde hair, clear-framed glasses, and a seashell necklace looks past the camera. They are wearing a black top.



Introduction

This report examines the key factors shaping the experiences and challenges faced by young Tasmanians entering the labour market, particularly focusing on the contributing factors leading to youth disengagement with work and unemployment. The most recent (2021) census figures show that less than half of Tasmanian students are finishing year 12.¹ A large proportion (30%) of young Tasmanians who are considered disengaged or partially engaged in work and/or education have caring responsibilities, and 20% live with a disability.² Other important indicators of the Tasmanian population overall show that 19% live with high psychological distress and 9% are exposed to severe food insecurity.³ Tasmania has the second highest rate of early school leaving (31%) after year 10 in the country (following the NT)⁴, and only 53% of students complete Year 12. Clearly, some students face barriers to continuing their education into Year 11 and 12, such as lack of support, financial hardship, or disengagement. This is reflected in the persistent literacy and numeracy challenges that restrict young Tasmanian's acquisition of the skills and confidence needed for employment⁵.

Beyond education, young people face additional hurdles in securing and maintaining stable employment. High rates of mental health issues, limited access to transport, food and housing insecurity and intergenerational unemployment contribute to a challenging environment. The lack of bulk-billing GPs and long waiting lists for mental health services prevent many young people from getting the care they need to overcome personal barriers to employment. These interconnected challenges — poor education outcomes, limited healthcare access, mental health struggles, and social barriers — create a difficult landscape for young people seeking stable work. Young Tasmanians therefore face a range of systemic barriers that limit their employment prospects. Many young people rely on Centrelink payments, either Youth Allowance or Jobseeker, with a significant proportion of youth unable to find sustainable employment. Addressing these issues is crucial to providing meaningful employment opportunities for young Tasmanians and improving their prospects for long-term economic stability^{6 7 8 9 10}.

¹ ABS Region Summary - Tasmania. Retrieved from <https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=ste&rgn=6>

² Tasmanian Government (2024). Youth Job Strategy. Retrieved from https://www.youthjobsstrategy.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/536521/Youth-Jobs-Strategy24.pdf

³ Tasmanian Government Department of Health (2023). Report on the Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2022. Retrieved from https://www.health.tas.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-01/report_on_the_tasmanian_population_health_survey_2022.pdf

⁴ Australian Productivity Commission (2024). Report on Government Services. Retrieved from: <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2024/child-care-education-and-training/school-education#retention>

⁵ Rowan, Michael & Ramsay, Eleanor. (2018). Educational inequality in Tasmania: evidence and explanations. *The Australian Educational Researcher*. 45. 1-19. 10.1007/s13384-018-0267-x.

⁶ Savaglio, M., Yap, M., Smith, T. et al. (2023) "I literally had no support": barriers and facilitators to supporting the psychosocial wellbeing of young people with mental illness in Tasmania, Australia. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* 17, 67. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-023-00621-y>

⁷ Thomas, D., Kilpatrick, S. (2023). Why Tasmania Has a Particular Need to Increase Educational Participation. In: Kember, D., Ellis, R.A., Fan, S., Trimble, A. (eds) *Adapting to Online and Blended Learning in Higher Education*. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0898-1_3

⁸ Horton, J. (2021). Young people in housing crisis in Tasmania. *Parity*, 34(3), 24–25. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.770063454319680>

⁹ Kent, Katherine; Seivwright, Ami; Visentin, Denis; Murray, Sandra (2024). "There is no food bank I can access...": Food Insecurity and Use of Emergency Food Relief in Tasmania. University of Wollongong. Report. <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/uow.27813666.v1>

¹⁰ Nahum, D. (2020, November 9). The choices we make: The economic future of Tasmania. The Australia Institute, Centre for Future Work. https://futurework.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/Economic_Future_of_Tasmania.pdf



ID3: A large group of people poses together on outdoor steps in bright sunlight. They are smiling. Many wear name tags, and the group includes different ages and styles, from casual to professional clothing. A person in the front wears sunglasses and holds a plate of food and a drink.



Research approach and questions asked

The research was conducted using mixed methods, through semi-structured interviews and a focus group, followed by a small-scale survey. The data collection occurred between 30 September and 4 October 2024, in Hobart and Glenorchy. To accommodate participants located in Launceston or others who could not travel to Hobart, phone interviews were conducted, and the survey was completed over the phone through to 12 October 2024.

The aim of this research was to give voice to the lived experiences of young people. The interview and focus group were designed to encourage young people to share their experiences of (un)employment and ideas about how jobs and employers could improve for young people. Questions centered around the main themes of experiences of work, employment goals, problems and barriers encountered in terms of finding and keeping work, and ideas on how employment for young people could work best.

The interview and focus group were followed by a survey. The survey questions were designed to gather basic demographic information to help form a picture of the young people from Tasmania. Information was gathered on postcode of residence, age, gender identification, cultural and linguistic background, level of education, caring responsibilities and disability. Respondents were also asked to provide information on their work and education history; current employment status; length of (un)employment; sector/s they worked or were working in; vocational training completed and/or currently underway.

Who took part in the research

Social Ventures Australia commissioned the study to inform its work with Tasmanian employers through the Employer Innovation Lab¹¹ which supports employers to create good quality jobs for young people who might otherwise miss out. Social Ventures Australia worked with a wide range of youth-focused organisations (including Transition to Work program providers) to promote participation amongst disadvantaged youth who faced challenges in finding and sustaining good quality employment.

Participants were aged 17-25 who were either working, looking for work and/or studying in some form of education/training other than university. University-educated young people were not part of the study. All participants provided written and/or verbal consent for the interview, confirming their understanding of the purpose of the study, how their data would be used, and confidentiality.

Twenty-eight (28) young people participated in the study. Interviews were conducted with 19 participants and one focus group was conducted with 9 participants.

Twenty-five (25) of 28 participants recorded their post code on the survey with 71% of those indicating that they lived in Hobart or the greater Hobart area. The remainder of participants came from Launceston (n=2), Devonport (n=1) or central Tasmania (n=3).

Age	
Under 18	4%
18 - 20	64%
21 - 23	14%
24 - 25	18%

Gender	
Female	50%
Male	43%
Gender fluid	3.5%
Prefer not to say	3.5%

CALD	
First Nations	18%
Born overseas or parent born overseas	40%
Speaks language other than English at home	18%

- Only 26% of participants did not identify as living with a disability
- 36% of participants indicated living with a mental health condition
- Almost one third of participants (30%) indicated living with multiple disabilities such as physical, intellectual, cognitive or learning
- 28.5% indicated caring responsibilities with half caring for a parent and the remainder caring for a child, a sibling or a spouse
- 21% of participants reported that they have never worked
- 21% of participants had not had paid work for over 12 months with one third of this group being unemployed for 2 or more years
- Just over 30% of the participants were looking for work and studying
- 39% were looking for work and not currently studying, however almost all participants indicated having undertaken some type of study in the past including at university, VET or through a youth service provider
- Only 7% of participants were in permanent jobs (part-time) with 22% casually employed
- 10% indicated they were not employed but were volunteering
- Approximately two thirds of participants indicated that their job was either not in their preferred industry or they were unsure

Strengths and Limitations

The semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity to gather rich qualitative data from the participants, and sufficient flexibility and support to tailor the conversation to meet the specific needs and circumstances of each young person.

The majority of the participants were based in Hobart given this is the major Tasmanian city and where the targeted employers are located. However a handful of research participants were based in the north of Tasmania (i.e., Launceston and Devonport), so that the experiences of young Tasmanians in other localities –presumably more challenging in terms of finding work – were also recorded. More generally, the sample is small and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to reflect the experiences of all young people in Tasmania.

Earlier this year the Tasmanian Government released the *Youth Jobs Strategy*, which provides context and the rationale for the State’s ambition to improve youth engagement and participation in education, training or employment. The *Youth Jobs Strategy* offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities both young people and employers face in the local job market and should be read alongside the findings of this study.

¹¹ <https://www.socialventures.org.au/about/programs/employer-innovation-lab/>



ID4: A photo of a person with dark brown, shoulder-length hair smiling while seated. They are wearing a floral-patterned top. Other people are visible in conversation in the blurred background.



What young people recommend

In the interviews and focus group young Tasmanians told us a range of actions that employers could take to improve the experiences of young people looking for work and staying in work. Some of their recommendations require both attitudinal and practical changes.

Young people recommend:

- Employers remove unnecessary requirements of job applicants –like expectations of extensive experience- and recruit based on ability and potential. Paid work trials were suggested.
- Employers be sensitive to the location and limited financial circumstances of many young people, exacerbated by today's cost of living crisis. This means removing financial obstacles –like requiring young people to pay for a White Card.
- Young people want to be recognised as 'whole people' with aspirations, preferences and responsibilities. They want employers to be more flexible with hours/shifts and inclusive with work conditions. Negotiated start/end times to accommodate caring responsibilities or public transport routes or timetables were suggested.
- Employers offer opportunities for young people to develop skills and build a career.
- Employers improve their mental health literacy and build supportive environments where it is safe for young people to learn, work and be themselves. Supervisors need to be compassionate, empathetic and listen to young workers to find out their needs was suggested.
- Employers invest time and resources into training young people. Patience and support is asked for while they develop technical and employability skills. Provide a buddy when first starting and check that a young person is ready to work independently was suggested.



Unpacking Key Findings

Challenges in Finding Work

For many of the young Tasmanians interviewed, finding work is a significant challenge, often compounded by a range of complex personal circumstances. Many face barriers such as compromised physical or mental health, caring responsibilities, or unstable housing and food security, which can make it difficult to focus on job searching or maintain consistent employment. Limited access to training, skills development, and networking opportunities further complicates their chances of employment. For some, the technology required to search for or apply for jobs is simply out of reach, leaving them at a disadvantage in a digital-first job market. These challenges are exacerbated by the broader issue of job scarcity, as young people interviewed reported that many young people compete for a limited number of positions. As a result, job search efforts can feel frustrating and disheartening, with many young people struggling to find work that aligns with their aspirations or meets their basic needs.

Personal Circumstances: The Hidden Barrier to Youth Employment

Young people face multiple personal circumstances and challenges that make finding work difficult. While the process of looking for work might seem straightforward — such as seeing an ad on a website and applying, or being referred to a job by a friend or relative — young candidates often encounter numerous barriers that can make the process difficult or impossible, curtailing their chances of securing employment from the start.

A significant number of young people in Tasmania (about 21%) live under the poverty line¹². This reality means that willing young applicants may not be eating regular meals or have enough money to buy suitable clothing for attending an interview. They may also experience “digital poverty,” with limited access to the technology needed to look for and apply for work. Many young people do not own laptops and cannot afford to regularly add credit to their mobile phones to make phone calls, reply to texts, or send emails. “Digital poverty” can also be a barrier when needing to respond to a potential employer’s requests, such as recruitment screening by asking candidates to send videos answering questions.

My partner applied for [retail store], and he got asked to do a video of him answering questions and stuff ... We don't even have a laptop to video on ... and his phone camera is broken ... so he had to use my phone, and then the video was too long, so he couldn't send it (Female #4, 20, Launceston)

Interviews with young Tasmanians revealed the complexities in their personal lives that may impede their job search and the types of work they can actually get. Conversations disclosed a range of mental and physical health issues that affect their daily lives and intersect with their aspirations to work and be self-sufficient. Young people living with chronic health conditions, such as chronic fatigue or back injuries, expressed that within the limited pool of jobs available,

their particular conditions further limited their options. They had to immediately discard jobs that their health would not permit them to complete or that did not offer enough flexibility or support.

I tried to just do little jobs around farms and people's houses, and I just couldn't handle it, because my mental health was not good (Female #1, 20, Greater Hobart)

I had an interview with [business] but they were not interested after I had to tell them I have a back injury (Male #12, 21, Devonport)

Young adults living with disability, neurodiversity, or mental health conditions — sometimes stemming from trauma-related domestic circumstances — find these obstacles to getting a job. They often need to disguise, minimise, or hide these conditions in applications or interviews. Job seekers with these conditions may also be despondent about applying for jobs when they are unsure of the support they will receive if hired.

[I have to] reduce or hide who I am, just to get a job, ... I have to mask my autism. I have to like, dress conservatively... (Female #7, 18, Hobart)

Caring responsibilities also emerged as barriers to employment for many young people interviewed. Most of those interviewed were carers for a sick or disabled parent, child, spouse, or sibling. These responsibilities limited the time they could devote to work and the schedules they could commit to, as some were the sole carers. When discussing job searches, they saw these responsibilities as significant deterrents, noting that employers usually wanted workers to adhere to rigid schedules.

[I am looking for a job that is] part time or casual, because I do have other responsibilities at home, such as caring for a parent ... [I need] something that doesn't start too early (Male #8, 16, Greater Hobart)

¹² Australian Council of Social Services Website. Poverty and Inequality. Retrieved from <https://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/>

I'm basically a full-time carer for my husband, because he got covid and got really, really sick ... I would love to work full time, but I just can't because I'm taking care of my husband ... it depends on whether my husband ever gets better (Female #3, 24, Greater Hobart)

I care for mum, so it makes it a bit, kind of like difficult ... The hours and sometimes the pay rates, it's a bit low and doesn't really help you with this expensive city ... I'm happy with a casual position because I can't really commit to a full time or part time because I'm a carer for mum ... that makes it really difficult for me, everything is on my shoulders, so I deal with everything ... because I'm the only child who is speaking English in the family (Female #11, 18, Hobart)

I was caring for children [at the childcare centre], then going home and caring for mum (Female #12, 21, Hobart)

Material conditions also impacted how young people looked for work and their perceptions of the types of work they could get. Unstable or remote housing arrangements were mentioned as barriers. Many interviewees suggested their housing situation was fragile, involving couch surfing, recent moves from the mainland, living in temporary accommodation, or moving between homes of different family members. This instability affected their job search continuity, as

Recruitment practices: Challenges for young Tasmanians

Interviewees often found their experiences of recruitment processes to be adverse to their particular realities, describing them as socially challenging and onerous. Tasmania has a high proportion of the population living on income support, and most of the participants in this study were currently on unemployment benefits and had a family history of unemployment. Participants receiving unemployment benefits mentioned the obligations related to job seeking in order to maintain their payments. These included applying for a set number of jobs each month and participating in activities arranged by their employment services provider. For some, these expectations felt challenging, such as needing to apply for 20 jobs each month or accepting any job deemed 'suitable' to continue receiving benefits, even if they were outside their skills, capabilities, or interests. While these requirements are intended to encourage job search efforts, they place significant pressure on some young people who rely on government payments for basic survival, rent, and many times supporting other family members. Some of the participants' comments about this issue bring awareness around the challenges and pressures some applicants face during their job search process.

I had been trying to [get a job]. I hadn't found anything for so long and I had heard some scary things about Jobseeker [Allowance]... like the organizations not ticking a box for you if you didn't

not having a stable place to live was impractical for job searching and providing a fixed address to an employer.

I was a cleaner and I left because the, yeah, they were just calling me in on random, like, random last minute waiting. I just had to stay at my nan's and they wanted me to fill in at the last minute, but because I was not home, I sometimes have to stay at my nan's, and then I'd have to stay there for the night, so I couldn't ... You can't really plan your life. (Male #7, 18, no postcode).

Even those with stable living arrangements often lived far from where jobs were available, and the limited public transport network and frequencies in Hobart and regional centres made many job opportunities unfeasible.

I live rurally ... transport is a big issue ... even if I had a shift after school the last bus is at 5.30 (Female #15, 17, Launceston)

I've always been punctual, yeah? I would get up at 6.30 in the morning and figure out a way to get to work. Yeah ... I remember I used to spend probably an hour or two worth of wages on taxis to just get to work (Male #2, 20, Greater Hobart)

We have some buses and stuff ... that's pretty much it, apart from taxis. But with taxis being so expensive and whatnot, I usually just walk everywhere (Female #13, 20, Devonport).

take a job that they had offered you, even though you couldn't do it. And so I was a bit scared... they have to tick boxes for you to get your Centrelink payment ... I was a bit worried .. For instance, if you don't go to an appointment, then a lot of them won't tick that box for you... (Female #3, 24, greater Hobart)

Looking at the government ... all they want is for you is to get a skill and work. But I prefer ... I want to study more, but the government wants you to get a skill and then get to work immediately. Because they sent me to [employment program provider], so sometimes it's like, so frustrating... And then from there, they have a program like, they support migrants to get the job. And one of the jobs, which they applied for us, was construction. And I have no idea what I'm going to face, because it's more of, like, hard job, and I'm not prepared for that... I have to pay the rent from the Centrelink, which is still government supported ... Let's have people decide what they want. For example, somebody wants to further their education, let them (Male #3, 24, Greater Hobart).

Another barrier identified to landing a job is the number of credentials and background checks required for certain types of jobs. Credentials such as the "White Card" (needed for working on construction sites) or "Working with vulnerable people" (needed for working in a range of organisations that provide social services),

and background checks such as criminal records, were often required for securing many available jobs. Young participants spoke of these as gatekeeping and costly processes that, in many cases, should not be needed for the jobs they were applying for.

At times, whenever you apply for some jobs, the requirement is you must have a license, because they know if you have a license you will be on time at the job (Male #2, 24, Greater Hobart)

Ever since I came back to Tasmania I found out, like [to apply for a job] you're gonna need your passport, you're gonna need your proof of age, you're gonna need some Australian ID. Like, there's ... Working with children, police checks, all those things cost ... And then if they say you're on a construction site or whatever, you need the white card, that's 100 bucks ... The white card in Tas is the number one thing you need to have, you get access to most construction places in Tasmania (Male #5, 24, Greater Hobart).

Interviewees also found the process of applying for jobs and being interviewed lengthy and discouraging. Extensive online forms had to be completed repeatedly for each job application, repetitive questions during interviews, and the assumption that young people had the financial resources to invest in this process (technology, paying for credentials, transport) was discouraging. This was especially true when the odds of hearing back about a job compared to the number of applications submitted were poor. Some interviewees mentioned applying for hundreds of jobs and hearing nothing back, not even an acknowledgment of the application. Others, when taking a resume in person, felt it would shortly be discarded.

I'm not looking to be, you know, a NASA employee. I'm just looking for a simple job. And I genuinely, even though that seems like quite easy... it almost feels like I'm trying to get a job at NASA... I'm using websites like Seek... I handed my applications physically, because I think it leaves a bit of a better impression ... I don't get any interviews. One time I almost didn't want to leave one of my applications because I genuinely just thought they were going to put it in the bin. I just think they don't care... But I still think it'd be nice if we could, you know, have a bit more acknowledgement for people trying to hand in applications, of actually trying to work (Male #6, 19, Greater Hobart).

[I would like to get] feedback ... when you apply for something, I think that even if you are not considered for the position, they should get back to you, whether it be in a positive or negative way. You just need to hear something back. Because the more you apply, and the less you hear, the less you're going to want

to apply for more and then, like ... I might as well just give up, because I can't get anything. I'm not hearing anything back. So, yeah, whether it be positive or negative, I think that they should give you feedback of some kind (Female #9, 18, Hobart).

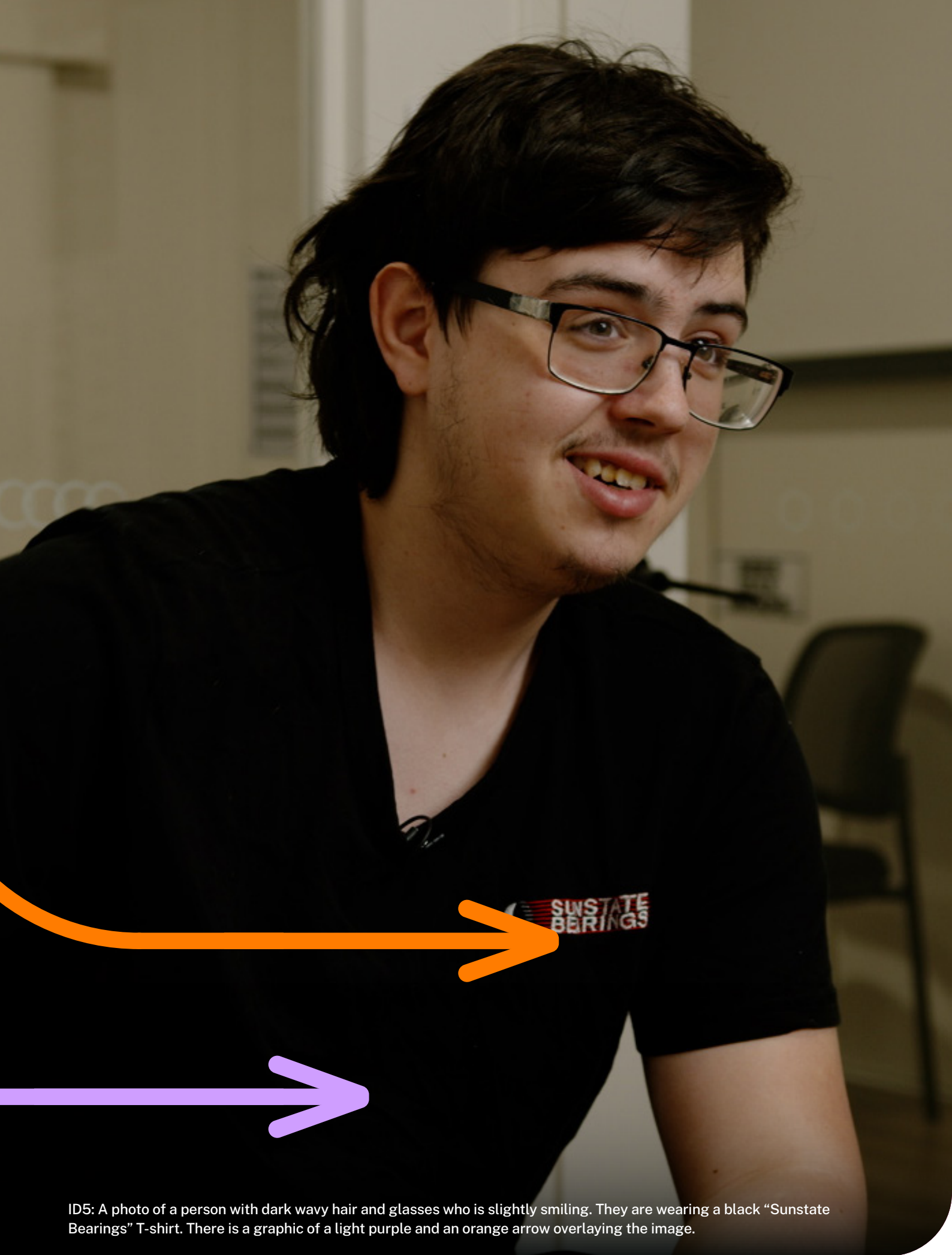
In the last eight months I have applied for 200 jobs and only got 2 interviews ... I just miss from when I was like 15 or something like that ... you just walked in and handed in your resume, and then, you know, you get a text message or an email back ... this whole online process, it just takes too long, and it makes people not want to apply for their job (Female #4, 20 Launceston).

If I just had an interview, I'd be able to talk to them and show them that I could work it. Because, you know, anyone could write anything on a resume, [but] you only get to know how that person works and stuff by allowing them that opportunity. And so I often just kind of think, like, you know, if they just gave me one chance ... It's not getting that chance. That's, that's the issue (Female #16, 17, Launceston).

Some young people also referred to Tasmania as being still quite conservative in relation to dress codes, gender stereotypes or acceptable personality traits, and mentioned that when applying for certain jobs or when being interviewed, they needed to hide some of their personality. Although employers may have understandable concerns about how clients might react to customer-facing staff with unconventional looks, this highlights another barrier some young job seekers face in trying to balance expressing their identity with conforming to conventional dress codes in order to secure a job.

We don't get to express ourselves in a way that we feel comfortable with while still being accepted... Like, I want to do all these piercings and get all these awesome tattoos. I've got so many ideas. But because, like, my goal is to work with young people ... for some reason, nobody wants somebody who looks like that to be around [young] people. Because, like, they naturally, they naturally see us as dangerous (Male #9, 19, Hobart).

I do present quite goth and stuff ... But I do feel a sense of distrust whenever I go to, like, you know, grocery shops or something like that, like ... a lot of people, see my kind of steel shit, and it's kind of difficult to find employment. You immediately go to [look for work in] pubs, mostly old shops, but it's kind of difficult to cherry pick, and I can't really afford to do that. I don't have anything that is 'normie' in my closet (Female #8, 18, Greater Hobart).



ID5: A photo of a person with dark wavy hair and glasses who is slightly smiling. They are wearing a black “Sunstate Bearings” T-shirt. There is a graphic of a light purple and an orange arrow overlaying the image.

“Lack of work experience”

The request for work experience was singled out as the major sticking point when searching for and applying for jobs. Even when experience was not specifically advertised for a job, participants mentioned that employers did want the candidate to have had specific work experience.

Yes, like some places I've seen advertised entry level but [these places] want experience for entry level jobs, and they won't give you experience which is what you need to be able to have a job, but then you need all these different things nowadays, compared to when my parents were kids walking into a job ... Lately it's been you need a year 11 or 12 pass, or certain levels, and say you need a TAFE You need to have [done a job] for certain time. Or you have to be able to, like have been a dishwasher at a restaurant to be able to go on to a kitchenhand...(Female #14, 24, Hobart).

Sometimes there's requirements that are kind of ... for example, if someone's just trying to get in, like, if someone's just trying to get in a job ... Tassie is a place where if you'd want a stable job or whatever, I feel like you're gonna have to have a lot of experience ... it's just the requirements for certain jobs ... they ask a bit too much (Male #5, 24, Greater Hobart).

Well, usually like, oh, I can see advertisements [for jobs that are not] complicated ... they [employers] can just explain it to you. It's not, it's not that complicated. I would love it if you could get it even if you don't have experience ... it's hard to get experience (Female #10, 19, Hobart).

A vast majority of the interviewees had engaged or were engaged in volunteering activities, some of them made available by the same organisations helping young people to get jobs, such as Workskills. Participants mentioned these unpaid activities helped them acquire evidence of experience in the workplace, to make it easier to get a job in the future. For some of the volunteering positions, participants mentioned that credentials such as “working with vulnerable people” were required.

I volunteer at a sports club ... in the canteen area, just like cooking food, serving customers, making coffee ... there are people that are there a lot, you get to know everyone. It's nice... I started because my sister played there and they needed help because they didn't have any volunteers. I wasn't doing anything outside of school... so being able to do something (Female #6, 19, Greater Hobart).

I briefly volunteered at a radio station, I was a co-host on a radio thing. I didn't understand much about it. I couldn't stay because in order to grow I had to “Uber”, and I didn't have enough money to get Uber. But I got that one through connections, through a separate job where I packaged condoms, which was [another] volunteer jobs. I wasn't actually getting paid, it was public service. If I got lots done I got paid. I was just hoping it would do anything for my resume (Female #8, 18, Greater Hobart).

“The reason I came here [as a volunteer] was to get something in my resume. Because I haven't worked before” (Female #10, 19, Hobart).

I have started [applying] for a volunteering role at a foodbank place ... just to see if I can get a job and stuff ... and to test my [injured] back. Yes, I will have a job there volunteering for a little while, get a job and see if I am able to do it ... I haven't started yet, I have to get my “working with vulnerable persons card” and police check. The police check I have it. (Male #12, 21, Devonport).

Even when volunteering was mentioned as part of a “mutual obligation”, participants suggested they hoped these unpaid jobs would lead to better opportunities. Participants in the study had been engaged in volunteering in organisations assisting vulnerable people, animals, or in work related to nature and the environment. In some cases interviewees mentioned they needed to obtain checks or credentials to be able to volunteer with the hope of eventually landing a paid job.

In addition to work experience, some referred the challenge in accessing training needed to get into a particular area of interest.

So there could be a bloke who's been working on cars for 10 years. He didn't go to school to do it, but he knows everything ... But he wouldn't be able to get the job because he doesn't have a certificate... [This] can definitely backfire a bit ... So you've got [to get] TAFE, [which is] a fee free automotive course I want to be doing. But because it's fee free, there's obviously a lot of people interested, it's hard to get in. Yeah, I remember I applied months and months ago, and I just can't get in, yeah, because there's just so many people that want to go (Male #2, 20, Greater Hobart).

Job scarcity: “It’s all about who you know”

Many participants suggested that the job market has become increasingly competitive, with a real scarcity of opportunities for young people. Interviewees suggested this has resulted in intense competition for very basic jobs, and this has created a situation where individuals who take on multiple jobs to make ends meet generate resentment from others who struggle to find even one position. Some young people interviewed mentioned that businesses sometimes prioritise lower-cost, younger employees (e.g. those on junior rates), which further limits opportunities for those seeking full-time or more stable roles. As the pool of job seekers grows, the already limited opportunities become even harder to access, leaving many feeling disheartened and skeptical about their chances of employment.

...it's because [Tasmania] is small, maybe that's why jobs are so scarce and, it's harder to find something. So I've been recently looking for a job, and I found it quite hard, not the best, jobs are very scarce ... and the jobs that I have been trying to find ... they [employers] don't care too much ... they just seem to push me to the side ... the employers themselves, like the whole companies ... it's like they have the jobs. It's sort of them being selfish ... I don't know ... It's not really wanting anyone else to enter that space (Male #6, 19, Greater Hobart).

I find is there are a lot of people my age that live around my area, or like I've gone to school with some of them ... and have three jobs, yeah ... and I'm sitting there like, “you still live at home, why do you need three jobs?! Let someone else have a chance”. I know several people like that of varying ages ... from kind of 15 to like the 20 mark (Female #5, 19, Central Tasmania).

There's so many people looking for jobs, especially when it comes to Christmas casuals and stuff... So if you don't really get in there straight away, it's hard to get a job, because there's so, so many people without jobs that are trying to apply for the same places, and a lot of the time I do get declined for jobs because of that reason (Female #13, 20, Devonport)

But it's also like us, older people, need the money to be able to pay for bills and stuff. But we just cost too much money to have at the shop. So they hire young kids, like younger people (Female #4, 20, Launceston).

Almost all young people interviewed reported that family or personal contacts are the main way that people find employment in Tasmania. Having friends or relatives who own local businesses or work for them clearly enables beginners’ jobs for the young people in their networks. Being a small economy without an abundance of businesses and jobs leads to a sense of “unfairness” among young people who are not lucky enough to benefit from that social capital, which is usually the case for young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

...because [Tasmania] is so small, there's a lot of people looking for work, and not so many people hiring ... so there's definitely a shortage of jobs, right? And if you know someone, then you're more likely to get a job (Male #2, 20, Greater Hobart).

... To get a good job, I feel like there's a bit of nepotism. Yeah, you kind of have to know someone who knows someone, or be related to someone who knows someone ... that's how I got this job (Female #2, 24, Greater Hobart)

I have friends and like, acquaintances and stuff like that that I've seen get jobs just because they're in the know, they know someone ... It's who you know, what you know ... I don't think that should be a thing, really... It creates something almost very unfair. It's very unfair. You could have someone very talented versus someone who, you know, yeah... who do you think is going to get the job? (Male #6, 19, Greater Hobart).

This sense of unfairness also leads to frustration and loss of hope in the local labour market. The lack of social networks for employment purposes was particularly evident for young people with a migrant or refugee background.

When I stayed in Nairobi, which is capital city of Kenya. I loved being in a more populated area. Imagine I'm here like I don't have friends in school or after school, people have some more things to do, maybe some work, so when I go home, I don't have friends. I have nowhere to go, I just step home and do nothing... it's also not having those networks, because you're a new person in this place, and you go home and who are you going to ring? or who are you going to visit? (Male #3, 24, Greater Hobart).

Some interviewees mentioned that the best option would be to move to the “mainland” or consider a seemingly more accessible and fair employment option, such as joining the army.

How I'm gonna say this? A lot of people are going to start joining the army soon, if this keeps on happening. I've already got many of my friends already in the ADF ... they use the army as, a startup to get away... I feel like, most people would join the army because the life that they are trying to achieve they couldn't achieve ... If you look at the stats Tasmania is starting to have the most employed by the ADF ... I'm probably closer to enlisting than I am finding a job (Male #5, 24, Greater Hobart).

For many participants originally from Tasmania, however, the attachment to the land and its people was clearly communicated as a reason for not leaving the island. Several young people interviewed suggested that they would persevere in their search for employment in Tasmania. Although this apparent reluctance to leave

could also be due to the unfeasibility of leaving due to a lack of financial resources or caring responsibilities, the feeling of attachment to place and willingness to building a life on the island was evident in many of the interviews.

...that's the thing, I could probably literally move over there [to the mainland] and go back into that job. And I don't want to. I really like it [here]. I just like it. It's good people and stuff we are like really close, beautiful nature and stuff, all close by. It's good, yeah. Like, I think I definitely will stay at this point (Male #11, 24, Greater Hobart).

The reason why I keep coming back to Tasmania is because it's home, of course, yeah? Like, you know, none of my family's here, other than, actually, no

Challenges to sustaining work

It can be a challenge for young people to find work and once found it can also be hard to retain. Most young people in the study encountered poor quality jobs and uncaring employers. They reported situations where they were stuck in jobs doing repetitive low skill tasks with limited opportunity to grow. While others were forced into industries that did not suit their skills or aspirations. Poor treatment such as underpayment, poor work scheduling and surveillance were not uncommon. Alarming many young people reported experiences of toxic and unsafe workplaces where their physical and

one's here anymore because my dad passed away, my mom and my brothers all moved back to the Solomon Islands ... but I was the one who decided to stay in Tasmania... I grew up here, you know, I went through primary school here, went through my high school years ... this is the place that gave me so many opportunities (Male #5, 24, Greater Hobart).

And if I was another person, and I didn't really have any attachment to this place, I think that's fine going to the mainland, or even going somewhere else completely ... if you have no attachment, or, you know, no one here ... no family. [But] I have my family here, I have my friends here. So, yeah, I would say I have an attachment to this place. I probably wouldn't leave (Male #6, 19, Greater Hobart).

psychological safety and wellbeing were either put at risk or directly impacted. Discriminatory and unfair work practices related to age, disability, race and disability also featured, which could result in a loss of work. The impact of these negative experiences of employment led to some young people missing out on access to entitlements, training, development opportunities and support. For others their physical and mental health was impacted with some losing confidence in themselves and the value of work more generally.

Poor-Quality Jobs and Employers Dominating Youth Employment

Young people in Tasmania want a 'good' job, they value work that is meaningful to them, where they feel productive and have opportunities to grow and feel positive about their future. However, their age makes them vulnerable to work that no one else is willing to do and the potential implication is that they become stuck in dead end jobs with limited or no career pathway. For some the lack of quality job opportunities has forced them to rethink the sort of life they had imagined for themselves.

Feeling like I'm needed, wanted...actually doing something, ah, something just productive...when I'm not doing something, I feel bad, because it's like, we don't have all the time in the world. (Male #6, age 19, Greater Hobart)

It was like a kitchen hand kind of job. But I was also the youngest one there, I was maybe 15 when I started. I was quite literally there to do the washing up that no one else wanted to do...and every single time I asked to do something else, like, 'Do you have something for me to do, trash or like, anything?' they would not give me anything. (Female #5, age 19, Central Tasmania)

The only jobs I could really get as a 15-year-old was hospitality, and I feel like that's the only experience I have. And I want something new to try, and I want to be

able to push myself out of my comfort zone...I just want to try something new. (Female #4, age 20, Launceston)

I thought I wanted kids. I literally can't. There's no way I could possibly have the resources to have kids. I can't. This is not possible. (Genderfluid, age 23, Hobart)

Interviews with young Tasmanians revealed that many felt like employers saw them as disposable. Their young age means they cost less to hire and while this initially gets them the job, they get fewer shifts or none at all as their hourly rate increases with age. The prevalence of casual or part-time employment amongst the study's participants also meant they struggled financially – made more difficult when they lived independently or wanted to pursue study. Some needed help from family to cover basic cost of living expenses while others worked several jobs to make ends meet.

But if it was an older person, like from 18 and up, trying to get a job there, they will be declined because they're older and they don't want to pay for an older person... So as soon as the kids are out of school, they'll slowly start dropping their hours ...but older people need the money to be able to pay for bills and stuff. But we just cost too much money to have at the shop, so they hire young kids. (Female #4, age 20, Launceston)

But there are people who I know, who get, one, two plus jobs because they're not getting paid enough in their first jobs, like [my sister] has to be looking for second job now, because her first job doesn't pay enough (Female #7, age 18, no postcode)

I have to ask my mum to help me pay for it, Uber. Sometimes I want to give up a night shift, but I just think about, I need the money. In three shifts, I'll get about \$380 and then I pay \$100 to rent, and then I'll pay like \$150 for groceries, and then the rest of the money will be topping up my bus card or catching Ubers to work. (Female #4, age 20, Launceston)

Young workers described a range of poor treatment by employers. Cash in hand jobs were common which generally meant they were being underpaid and not getting access to entitlements such as superannuation. Performing higher duty tasks while not being paid at the correct rate was also reported along with instances where workers were denied access to other entitlements such as breaks and leave. The impact of this type of abuse by an employer can have a profound effect on a young person - with long-term career plans questioned or even abandoned.

I was a level 2 but I was trialing and training new staff and that was on their base pay rate...the staff were expected to do a lot with little to no support from management and then when we asked for it, we didn't get it. (Male #11, Age 24, Greater Hobart)

Like, for students, you are meant to have two hours of study time every week. We never got that because we were so short staffed constantly. There will be days where we can barely get lunches in, like our breaks. (Female #12, age 21, Greater Hobart)

Poor work scheduling practices were commonly described by interviewees. Short notice of work, insufficient staffing levels to meet legal requirements or to cover the workload created stress, frustration and inconvenience to young people's lives – often making it impossible for them to plan more than a day ahead. And again, these practices had implications for a young person's health and wellbeing and also signaled to these young workers that their employer was not concerned about offering quality jobs or conditions.

I was a cleaner at that factory. And I ended up, like, quitting that because I didn't enjoy it, because basically, the hours were really, like, off, and they would call me in, like randomly ... And it was just annoying ... Yeah, I couldn't plan ahead or anything because they wouldn't make any schedule. (Male #7, age 18, no postcode)

On multiple occasions, I was left by myself at nighttime for about five hours. And legally, there has to be two people on at night...And I'd still get in trouble, even though I couldn't do it all by myself. It is a two-person job...they just didn't care...almost had me working for two weeks straight. (Female #14, age 21, Hobart)

*...within six months I had to access the employee assistance program because it was f**king awful...it was a real mess...newly opened venue...not planned well, weird and rough training to start with...there was understaffing and they refused to put more staff on, the bar manager and I asked for more people. (Male #11, age 24, Greater Hobart)*

Young workers felt forced into jobs that were not a good fit for them in terms of their skills, capabilities or interests. Indeed, some were prepared to leave Tasmania – a place they expressed a close attachment to – just for the chance to build a better life. Other young people were willing to quit 'bad' jobs or work for less money if it meant they could do something that met their needs, interests or skills.

I feel that (construction) is the only opportunity Tasmania gave to us...construction here is a big deal... (went to Brisbane to work)...the reason why I keep coming back to Tasmania is because it's home, of course, yeah... A lot of people are joining the army; a lot of my friends are joining that. The army is a startup to get away, it's a way of getting out of here...the life they are trying to achieve here they can't achieve here" (Male #5, age 24, Greater Hobart)

I want to study more but the government wants you to go get a skill and then get to work immediately... And one of the jobs which they (Centrelink) applied for us was construction. And I have no idea what I'm going to face, because it's more of, like, hard job, and I'm not prepared for that... And then all I feel is, let's have people decide what they want. For example, somebody wants to further their education let them (Male #3, age 24, Greater Hobart)

It's the type of work. Like, if I can do something that feels fulfilling, like creatively, or just in any way, like, I'll take, I'll take dirt cheap money for that....You can get Centrelink and feel like shit all the time, you can get a job and feel like shit all the time. So, it's like, what, I mean, yeah, why? (Male #1, age 22, Hobart)

Young people feel let down by “disconnected” employers

When young people talked about difficult work experiences it often involved employers or supervisors who were not paying attention to them or caring about their needs or preferences. Experiences of dealing with employers who were negligent or disconnected varied. For some interviewees it involved a lack of basic induction or support in the early days of starting a job while for others there was limited training relevant to the demands of their job and level of experience. These workplace experiences affected young people’s mental health and their desire to work.

I've been told to be at work at certain times, and that the boss or whoever will be there to help me in like, say, my first days working in the place, and they haven't shown up, and I've had to figure it out on my own...I quit. (Female #13, age 20, Devonport)

My colleague, she had to leave me to go and do the part of the job like going to another place. We were the only two working at that time...what if a customer comes in and pays and I don't know how to do the payment transaction? Yeah, and don't forget, it's my first day and during work experience previously I didn't do any kind of payment transaction...Stressful it was. (Male #3, age 24, Greater Hobart)

I've had a bunch of jobs that really make me not want to work...The debt recovery job was, like, just doing bad stuff for people and that kind of sucks. I remember I got a case that was like an old lady that was being paid to care for her husband, and he passed away, and she didn't call Centrelink, and I had to call her and tell her that she was in five grand of debt. And then I, like, quit the next day...They gave us, like, a little bit of a de-escalation training. That was the main thing that they really focused on, because I guess they kind of assumed, like, these guys are going to mess this up at some point so we might as well, like, try and teach them how to deal with the awful job that we're setting them up to do. (Male #1, age 22, Hobart)

In the eyes of the young workers interviewed, an ‘uncaring’ manager might also be someone who overly surveilled their staff, failed to do their job competently or to pull their weight, managed from afar and did not understand what their employees did. Young people felt that employers created unpleasant work environments where mistrust between employer and employee featured. Resentment and disillusionment were present in the tone of some discussions with young workers with implications for how they perceive the value of managers and work more generally.

I remember [my boss] used to go play golf every Wednesday. He'd come in the morning and then just like sneak out halfway through and go play golf for a couple hours. It's like, I can't wait for him to come back from playing his game and yell at me because I'm not doing something fast enough. Like, I'm so

excited for that... He doesn't have any idea, like, what I'm doing for him. (Male #1, age 22, Hobart)

It was so bit of like surveillance...Yeah, that's something I get very uncomfortable with in a workplace...watching you, like, standing there, waiting for you to do something, it's just like, trust that, yeah, I think there is a lot of distrust from employers to all employees (Male #11, age 24 Greater Hobart)

The whole point is that they [the manager] help with the things that other people can't do. Right? He couldn't help with anything... And he would never restock anything either. So, there was, like, always out of cleaning supplies and bin bags. It was really bad, yeah, and to be able to fix the machines as well... We could have not had a manager, and the restaurant would still have run. We just need the pin to the like, the register...you've got people working in jobs that shouldn't exist...so middle management (Genderfluid, age 23, Hobart)

Many of the participants in this project described disturbing stories of toxic and unsafe workplaces where their physical and psychological safety and wellbeing were either put at risk or directly impacted. Stories of aggressive or hostile supervisors who yelled or were impatient with their young employees were reported through extreme cases where physical assaults occurred. For young workers these experiences led to emotional exhaustion, job stress, decreased confidence and self-esteem with some quitting jobs or disengaging from employment. A workplace accident could also have a devastating long-term impact on a young person’s health and capacity to earn a living. For employers, frequent staff turnover comes with an impact to bottom line and reputation.

...and the boss was like, a just rampant misogynist...he called one of the female coworkers a ‘door bitch’ to a customer. And like, I was raised by a single mum, and I, like, didn't hold my tongue maybe as well as I should have, and that ended up with me leaving (Male #1, age 22, Hobart)

I've tried to work after I dropped out of school. And then a situation happened. I was scared. Ever since, I've been scared... I tried working like I loved working on the cash register. I loved stacking shelves, and I loved being able to spend time with my great grandfather after work, because he works there as well...That's the job that I got sexually assaulted at [by her manager]. I've just been trying to get the courage to work again. It's taken me two years, so I feel really disappointed in myself, but I also can understand where I'm coming from at the same time. (Female #1, age 20, Greater Hobart)

I did four weeks and then hurt my back. I was stacking a 15 kg pallet and hurt my back. I was put on workers' compensation but after a year they had



ID6: A photo of a person with long blonde hair wearing a black hoodie with a “One Piece” logo. They have a neutral expression and are looking off-camera. There is a graphic of a light purple and an orange arrow overlaying the image.

to take me off workers' comp. I had to have surgery... I am looking for retail, warehouse jobs. If it's the right job I can do it, if they are labour intensive, no. Lighter jobs yes... I have started on a volunteering role at a food bank place. Just to see if I can get a job and stuff. And to test my back. (Male #12, age 21, Devonport)

A lack of awareness or consideration for the personal circumstances of young people was a reoccurring theme, where employers failed to see them as 'whole people' with lives beyond the workplace. Employers hired more casuals rather than increase the hours of existing staff which was particularly difficult for those who are the sole or main bread winner their family. Some young workers needed time off for major life events such as a wedding or to attend medical appointments as part of managing an ongoing health issue.

I had wanted to up my work days, and I had been asked if I wanted to, and I said, Yeah, three days a week...And unfortunately, the GM and the like other finance person who was interviewing people didn't even ask them whether they would be willing to do

two days or three days... it would have been helpful for me to have a bit of extra. (Female #3, age 25, Greater Hobart)

Like, if they've got a lot of doctor's appointments don't start whining and, you know, and like being like, Oh, well, you've taken all the days off. You don't know their medical history, you don't know what they're going through. I know it's hard to cover them, and it is annoying sometimes, but again, I repeat, you don't know what someone's going through. (Female #12, age 21, Greater Hobart)

I booked a week off for my wedding. I got an email. She approved the RDOs (roster day off), and then I got rostered on for three days that week. And then I got a message from her saying, as we discussed, I can only give you two days off. And I said, we didn't discuss anything. You did not talk to me about this. I wanted three days off. I wanted the whole week off. It's my, you know, it's my wedding. And she says, Sorry, that's what I'm doing. (Female #12, age 21, Greater Hobart)

Discrimination is alive and kicking in the workplace

In addition to the age discrimination that some interviewees experienced when treated as a source of cheap labour, other forms of unfair treatment in the workplace related to gender, race and disability were also revealed. Inconsistent treatment by employers and colleagues was evident when it came to a range of employment practices including the management of disability accommodations -indicative of a general lack of knowledge amongst both parties about rights and responsibilities. These experiences impacted young workers' access to some of the material benefits of work such as training, ongoing work and career opportunities along with their sense of confidence in self and employers more generally.

So, the way that he [the manager] would treat people was with utter condescension and just not respecting that the people he worked with were people. Because he had this idea that he was a manager. Basically, one of the ways I specifically remember is that he would only ever force the girls to clean the toilets (Genderfluid, age 23, Hobart)

...a big tour company was 100% hiring women for their new tour guides ... genuinely half good-looking girls... just to be looking good on their boats, that was the hiring process...and I had good [relevant] references (Male #11, age 24, Greater Hobart)

And then one night out in the blue she [colleague] just said, Maybe you should just quit, because, like, you're just not up to speed, basically. And I was like, wow, that hurts... I was just a bit slow, yeah, because I had to pace myself...I had a disability... I ended up going to my boss, and I just said, Look, if, like, if people are going to get angry at me because I'm not up to scratch, I might as well just leave, like, yeah, because this is going to keep happening. (Female #3, age 25, Greater Hobart)

Positive Role Models: Employers who make a difference

Despite the bleak accounts of many of the young people interviewed, some of the young people shared positive work experiences, which entailed accounts of having encouraging and caring bosses who wanted to see the young people thrive, respect for personal circumstances, time dedicated to training the young person in the tasks required at the workplace, or genuine consideration for work, health and safety matters in the workplace. References to these positive experiences and role models are included in the report as way of indicating to employers how these considerations—some of them requiring minimal time, expense or gestures can make a bit difference in a young person's career path, sense of worth and attitude towards their job.

He just made sure that you knew what you were meant to be doing... If you didn't know what you meant to be doing, he'd tell you. ... [He] was proactive in keeping us working, working well. He kept us going. And so that's what I think a good supervisor is .. Me and him, we got along ... He was ... top, like really respectful. He loved to work hard, just like I did. And so me and him just got along really well, (Male #2, age 20, Greater Hobart)

Insights for employers

Young people in Tasmania face many challenges when it comes to finding and keeping work. These relate to place/location, socio-economic background, personal circumstances, a lack of experience, toxic/unsupportive work environments along with balancing work with other needs. Many of these barriers could be addressed, at least in part, by employers with improvements to employment practices and conditions. Three easy steps are outlined below for employers to consider:

Recruit based on ability and potential. This requires employers to drop unnecessary expectations around work experience or qualifications. In parallel this means that young people be given a chance to show what they are capable of and be given the opportunity to gain skills and experience.

Don't just pick people that have that experience, pick other people so they're able to gain that experience, to move out, move on from other jobs (Female #6, 20, Launceston)

Acknowledging the whole person. This includes workplaces offering flexible work schedules/rosters and supportive environments so young workers are able to better balance their needs and responsibilities outside of the workplace. Employers should consider the prevalence of caring responsibilities and mental health issues affecting young people and how these can be accommodated in the workplace.

Actually, they were really, really, really nice, because originally it was supposed to be a full time position. And I said to them 'Look, I love to work full time, but I just can't because I'm taking care of my husband'. And they said, 'Look, we're going to go to the other chick that we're interviewing, and we're going to see if she's able to job share'. And it worked out. It was just, yeah, just my, my boss is really, really lovely, and he has a lot of compassion (Female #3, age 25, Hobart)

... there are a lot of racking and pallets and things moving around... [but] they really care about your health. So that was one thing ... that I've always liked, because, like, every morning ... there's this thing ... we have to do stretches and all that. So we come in and, like, of course, when we get the boss, like, they're gonna tell us how many units we got today. But then at the same time, everybody gets just in a circle doing our stretches (Male #5, age 24, Greater Hobart).

[My new workplace] it is absolutely healthy. It's so healthy. The team leaders are absolutely amazing and understanding ... everyone's trying to help everyone. The people there are beautiful. The hours are so flexible. (Female #12, age 21, Greater Hobart)

They're a really big company, [and offer] cool benefits stuff. That sounds like good to see, like decent people ... I think within six months, I would access the employee assistance program for a psychologist (Male #11, 24, Greater Hobart)

Investing time and resources in training. This includes both structured and *ad hoc* ongoing support, delivered by experienced colleagues or having several 'buddy shifts' where you are supervised until confident to work independently. Some consideration to offering training in a variety of modes would also support neurodiverse young people. In parallel, it is important that employers also appreciate that young people are still being socialized into the world of work and learning the value of work to self and others. They need time, patience and support while they acquire and build new skills and capabilities. They deserve to be more than just a cheap source of labour.

I want a workplace that is friendly, where you're okay to make mistakes, someone you can, like, come to and talk to about your mistakes. Or like you can talk to and ask for help (Female #13, 20 -Devonport)



ID7: A photo of a person with a black vest over a blue T-shirt sitting with arms crossed, looking to the side. There is a graphic of a light purple and an orange arrow overlaying the image.



ID8: A photo of a person with blue and purple hair speaks into a microphone, wearing a black floral dress and a blazer. They have a nose piercing, bracelets, and a tattoo on their forearm. There is a graphic of a light purple and an orange arrow overlaying the image.

References

- Australian Productivity Commission. (2024). *Report on Government Services*. Retrieved from <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2024/child-care-education-and-training/school-education#retention>
- ABS. (n.d.). *Region Summary - Tasmania*. Retrieved from <https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=ste&rgn=6>
- Horton, J. (2021). Young people in housing crisis in Tasmania. *Parity*, 34(3), 24–25. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.770063454319680>
- Kent, K., Seiwright, A., Visentin, D., & Murray, S. (2024). “There is no food bank I can access...”: Food insecurity and use of emergency food relief in Tasmania. *University of Wollongong*. Report. <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/uow.27813666.v1>
- Nahum, D. (2020, November 9). *The choices we make: The economic future of Tasmania*. The Australia Institute, Centre for Future Work. https://futurework.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/Economic_Future_of_Tasmania.pdf
- Rowan, M., & Ramsay, E. (2018). Educational inequality in Tasmania: Evidence and explanations. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 45, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-018-0267-x>
- Savaglio, M., Yap, M., Smith, T., et al. (2023). “I literally had no support”: Barriers and facilitators to supporting the psychosocial wellbeing of young people with mental illness in Tasmania, Australia. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 17, 67. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-023-00621-y>
- Tasmanian Government. (2024). *Youth Job Strategy*. Retrieved from https://www.youthjobsstrategy.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/536521/Youth-Jobs-Strategy24.pdf
- Tasmanian Government Department of Health. (2023). *Report on the Tasmanian Population Health Survey 2022*. Retrieved from https://www.health.tas.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-01/report_on_the_tasmanian_population_health_survey_2022.pdf
- Thomas, D., & Kilpatrick, S. (2023). Why Tasmania has a particular need to increase educational participation. In D. Kember, R.A. Ellis, S. Fan, & A. Trimble (Eds.), *Adapting to online and blended learning in higher education* (pp. 27–38). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0898-1_3



Social Ventures Australia

Brisbane | Darwin | Melbourne | Perth | Sydney | ABN 94 100 487 572 | AFSL 428 865

makeadif@socialventures.org.au | socialventures.org.au