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NEW THINGS

# Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment

## Discussion Paper

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Strategy and Research

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# Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment:

## Discussion Paper

### Introduction

In 2015, more than 50,000 young people aged 15 to 24 years were in long-term unemployment in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Long-term unemployment is specifically defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (1995) and the Federal Department of Employment (2015a) as ongoing unemployment for at least 52 weeks. The long-term unemployment rate is highest for young people aged 15-24 years (28%) compared to other age groups. This rate has continued to increase since 2002, with recent ABS figures stating that on average 18% of young people in unemployment in 2015 were classified as being in long-term unemployment.

The consequences of long-term youth unemployment are a social problem with ongoing effects at not only the individual level but also the community and society levels (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002). The negative consequences of long-term youth unemployment include low self-esteem and confidence (Bolam & Sixsmith, 2002), as well as poor mental health and physical health, and low family and life satisfaction (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). Furthermore, the longer young people are in unemployment, the higher the risk that they will end up in long-term unemployment, due to the increasing gaps in their work history, and experience discouragement and decreased motivation (Carvalho, 2015; Covizzi, 2008; Kelly, McGuinness, & O'Connell, 2012; Leeves, 2002; Marton & McDonald, 2008).

### Purpose of the paper

The community and academic sectors have a strong focus on unemployment within different population groups, including youth, and these organisations use data from the ABS and the Department of Employment, as well as specific case studies and project data. To a lesser extent, peer-reviewed literature also focuses on long-term employment. However, they rarely focus on addressing long-term unemployment of young people. Lack of suitable data hinders research on long-term unemployment, particularly the effects of this issue (Covizzi, 2008). When the community and academic sectors discuss long-term unemployment, arbitrary definitions are used such as unemployed people in disadvantaged areas or people in unemployment for six months. The measure of long-term unemployment that is used by **yourtown** is consistent with that of the ABS and the Department of Employment. Data using this definition is available from young people in long-term unemployment who are a subset of the participants in a range of **yourtown** research studies, program evaluations, and data analyses conducted from 2007 to 2016.

**yourtown** tackles the issues affecting the lives of young people in Australia. Its programs and services address:

- *Unemployment and its causes* by providing assistance with finding jobs, work experience, training and skills, mentoring, counselling, referrals to other services, workshops, mental health issues, counselling, art therapy, youth work and intervention, case management, self-esteem and building resilience, and building connections and relationships;

- *Challenges facing families* by providing assistance via counselling, refuges, legal advocacy, crisis accommodation, respectful relationships, parenting skills and development, referral services, case management, individual and family support, workshops, and reconnecting with family and community; and
- *Learning challenges* by assisting with alternate education, workshops, re-engaging with schools, learning new skills, successful transition from school to work, confidence and self esteem, careers, succeeding at school, and engaging children, young people and families.

As part of its organisational priorities, **yourtown** is committed to using research as advocacy for those children, young people and families who are without a voice when it comes to topical issues. **yourtown** has developed this discussion paper in response to the increasing prevalence and incidence of young people in long-term unemployment and the lack of recent studies and discussion regarding effective interventions and strategies that specifically assist this group. The objective of this paper is to provide a voice for these young people that can be used to highlight their experiences and issues in relation to long-term unemployment. This paper reports relevant data and provides an analysis and discussion around the issues associated with long-term youth unemployment.

### **Scope of the paper**

The paper's literature review component contains critical analysis of international and Australian studies and commentaries in peer-reviewed and grey literature that have a specific focus on young people in long-term unemployment. Studies focusing on the broader topics of youth unemployment or long-term unemployment of all age groups are summarised to a lesser extent.

### **Outline of the paper**

While a macro-economic approach is used to contextualise the labour market conditions in which long-term youth unemployment occurs, this paper predominantly uses a micro-economic approach within cognitive-motivational and psycho-social theoretical frameworks to identify the issues associated with long-term youth unemployment, as well as analyses the reasons for engagement with and disengagement from various interventions. Consequently, the paper ascertains the gaps in the literature and notes these points for further discussion and exploration.

### **Definitions**

When measuring long-term youth unemployment, the majority of peer-reviewed studies refer to young people aged from 15 to 24 years. This may be linked to common age range measurements used in the United Kingdom and Europe when discussing young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET), and by national data agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics that compares data on youth cohorts across regions, and also international research bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that compares data on young people across nations. Studies that had young people as participants would rarely extend the age range beyond 24 years.

International research from more than ten years ago used various definitions that were vaguely-defined, shorter unemployment durations, or durations of 52 weeks or more when specifically measuring and investigating the issue of long-term unemployment. However, international and Australian contemporary peer-reviewed studies are now more likely to use the common definition of ongoing unemployment for 52 weeks or more, which is consistent with the definition that the Australian Government's Bureau of Statistics has used for more than 20 years. Specifically, the ABS defines long-term unemployment as the duration of unemployment of 12 months or more where an individual has not worked in a job for more than two weeks. The Australian Government's definition will be used when this paper refers to long-term unemployment. The definitions and statistical explanations for different long-term unemployment terms developed by the ABS (1995) are shown in Figure 1.

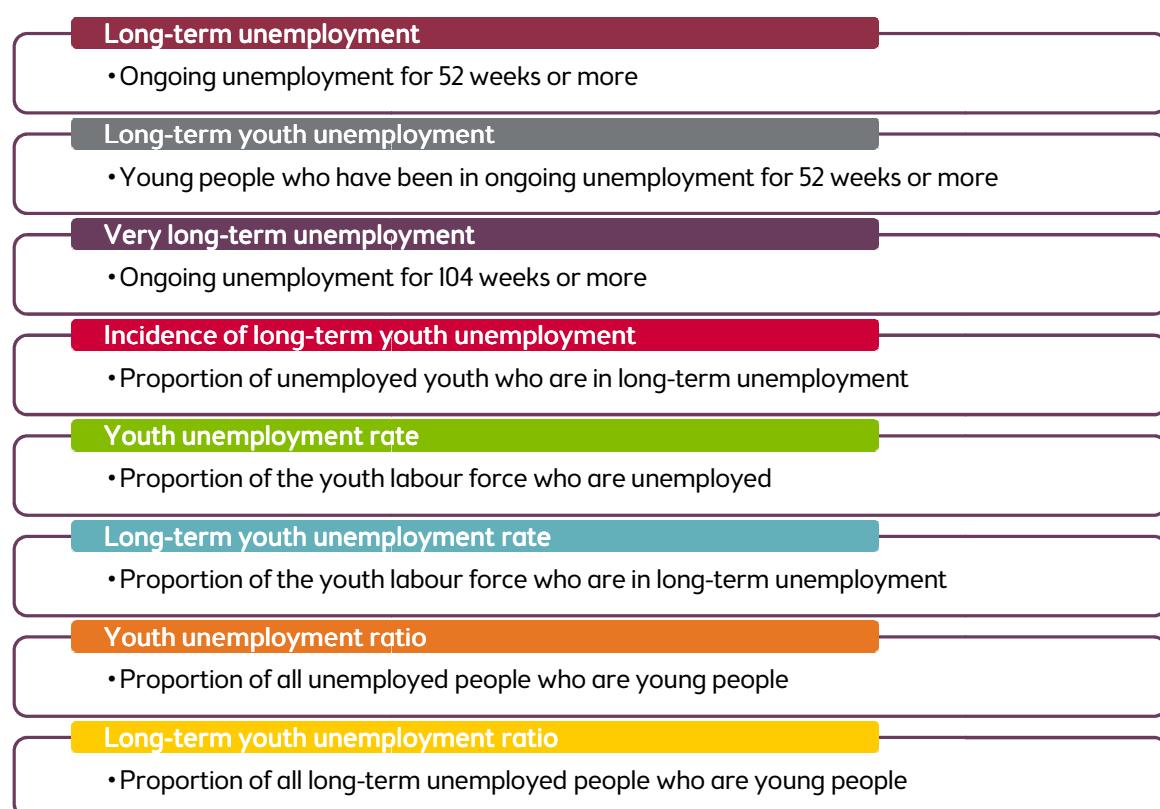


Figure 1. Terms and definitions associated with long-term unemployment.

## Incidence and rates of young people in long-term unemployment in Australia

ABS (2016) data indicate that the average youth unemployment (15-24 years) rate was 13.1% in 2015. This was higher than the all ages (15-65+ years) unemployment rate of 5.6% over the same period. The youth unemployment rate equated to more than 277,000 young people in unemployment. Of these young people, more than 50,000 were in long-term unemployment. The 2.4% long-term youth unemployment rate was higher than the 1.3% long-term unemployment rate for all ages in 2015. The incidence of long-term youth unemployment and other associated statistics are shown in Figure 2.

**Incidence of long-term youth unemployment**

- Proportion of unemployed youth who are in long-term unemployment
- 18%

**Youth unemployment rate**

- Proportion of the youth labour force who are unemployed
- 13.1%

**Long-term youth unemployment rate**

- Proportion of the youth labour force who are in long-term unemployment
- 2.4%

**Youth unemployment ratio**

- Proportion of all unemployed people who are young people
- 36.6%

**Long-term youth unemployment ratio**

- Proportion of all long-term unemployed people who are young people
- 28.2%

Figure 2. Terms and national statistics associated with long-term youth unemployment in 2015.

The youth unemployment rate is defined as the proportion of the youth labour force who are in unemployment, while the long-term unemployment rate is defined as the proportion of the youth labour force who are in long-term unemployment. In 2014, the proportion of all unemployed people who were aged between 15 and 24 years and had been unemployed for 52 weeks or more had risen above 2% for the first time. In 2015, the long-term youth unemployment rate continued to rise to its highest rate 2.4%, whereas the youth unemployment rate decreased for the first time since 2011 after it had increased sharply during the 2007-08 global financial crisis. It should also be noted that the prevalence and rate of long-term youth unemployment is higher now than it was during the global financial crisis and the following years. The trends from 2002 to 2015 in the youth unemployment rate and the long-term youth unemployment rate are displayed in Figure 3.

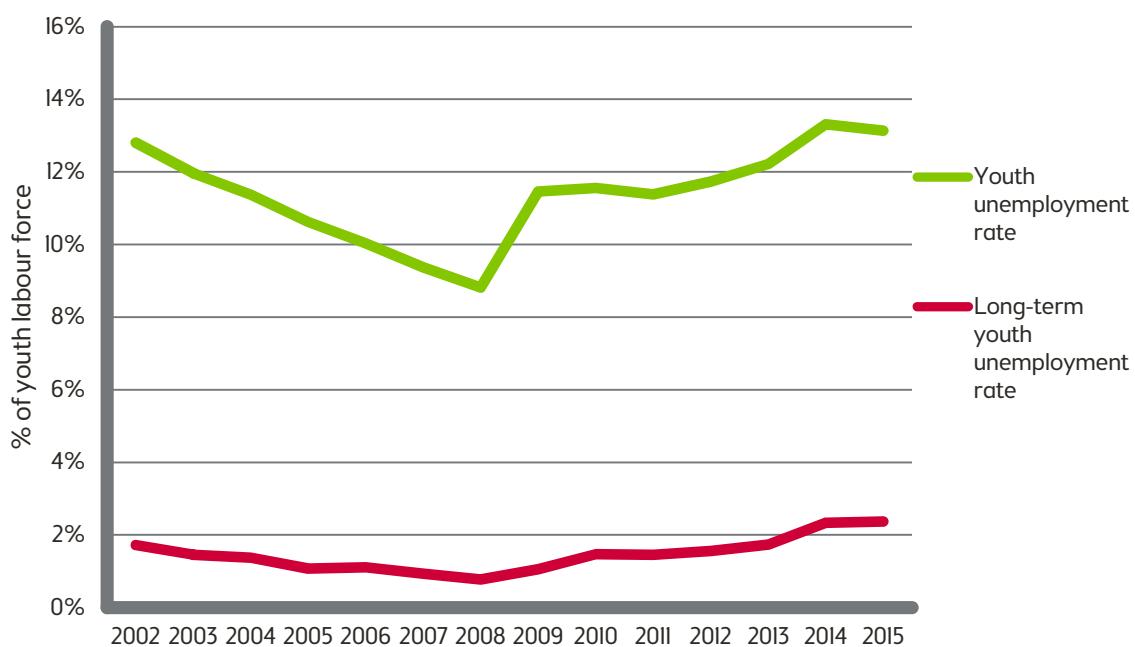


Figure 3. Trends in the youth unemployment rate and the long-term youth unemployment rate from 2002 to 2015.

The incidence of young people in long-term unemployment is measured as the proportion of unemployed youth who are in long-term unemployment. Long-term youth unemployment incidences have been rising steadily from 8.7% during the middle of the global financial crisis in 2008 to its highest point of 18% in 2015. The trend from 2002 to 2015 in the incidence of young people in long-term unemployment is displayed in Figure 4.

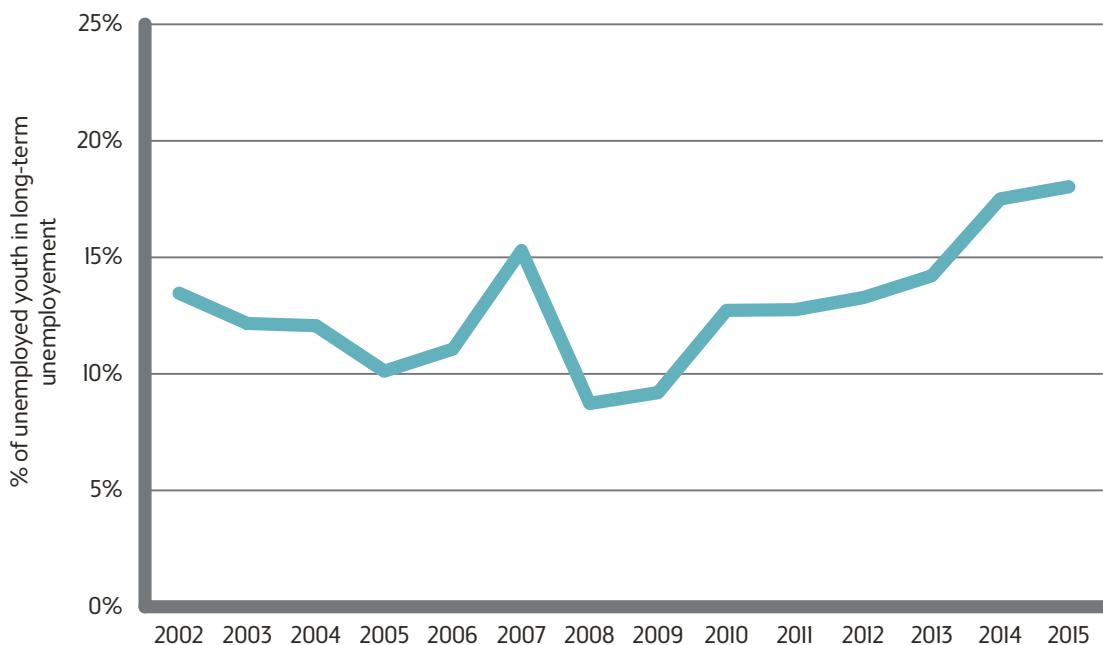


Figure 4. Incidence of young people in long-term unemployment from 2002 to 2015.

**Discussion Point**

The incidence and prevalence of young people in long-term unemployment have increased since 2007 and reached their highest points in 2015. It would be worthwhile investigating the factors that contribute to the rising incidence and prevalence of long-term youth unemployment.

Average yearly data for long-term unemployment of male and female young people is available from 2002 to 2014 (ABS, 2015). The incidence of male young people in long-term unemployment is measured as the proportion of unemployed male young people who are in long-term unemployment, and the incidence of female young people in long-term unemployment is measured as the proportion of unemployed female young people who are in long-term unemployment. In 2014, the incidence of long-term youth unemployment was higher among males (19.7%) than among females (15.1%). The incidence of long-term male youth unemployment had been rising steadily from 8.9% during the middle of the global financial crisis in 2008 to its highest point of 19.7% in 2014. For females, the incidence of long-term youth unemployment incidences followed a similar pattern but had not risen as high as the incidence of long-term unemployment for males. The differences in the prevalence of long-term unemployment between male and female young people were low around the time of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. This is also when the incidences of long-term youth unemployment for each group were at their lowest. The largest variance between males and females was a 4.6% difference in 2014. The trends from 2002 to 2014 in the incidences of male and female young people in long-term unemployment are shown in Figure 5.

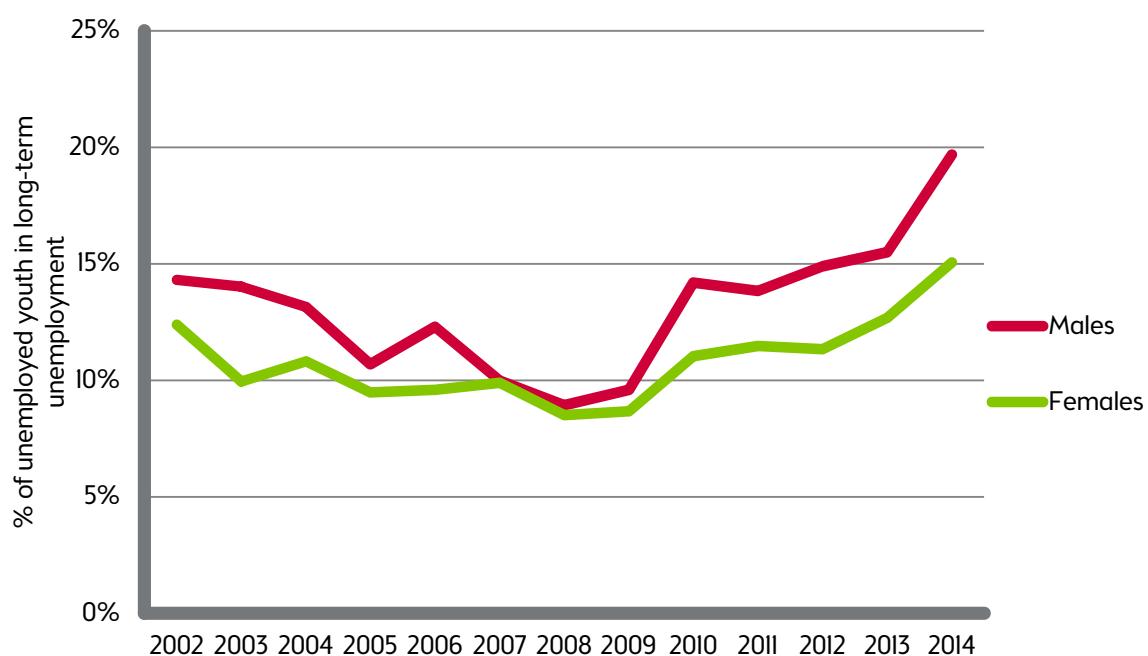


Figure 5. Incidence of male and female young people in long-term unemployment from 2002 to 2014.

**Discussion Point**

The incidence of male and female young people in long-term unemployment has increased since 2007 and reached its highest point in 2015, but the rising high incidences of male young people in long-term unemployment have been particularly concerning. It would be interesting to assess why the incidence of long-term youth unemployment is higher among males than females, and what specific factors contribute to the high incidence of long-term youth unemployment among males.

The ABS (2015) has data available for the incidence of long-term youth unemployment in each state and territory for the year of 2014. During this period, the average incidence of long-term youth unemployment was 17.5% across Australia. The incidence of long-term youth unemployment was higher than the national average in four states. Tasmania had the highest incidence of long-term youth unemployment (29.2%), indicating that unemployed young people in Tasmania were most at risk of becoming unemployed on a long-term basis. The other states that had higher than average incidences of long-term youth unemployment were South Australia (19.5%), Queensland (18.7%), and New South Wales (18.7%). The incidence of long-term youth unemployment for each state and territory are displayed in Figure 6.

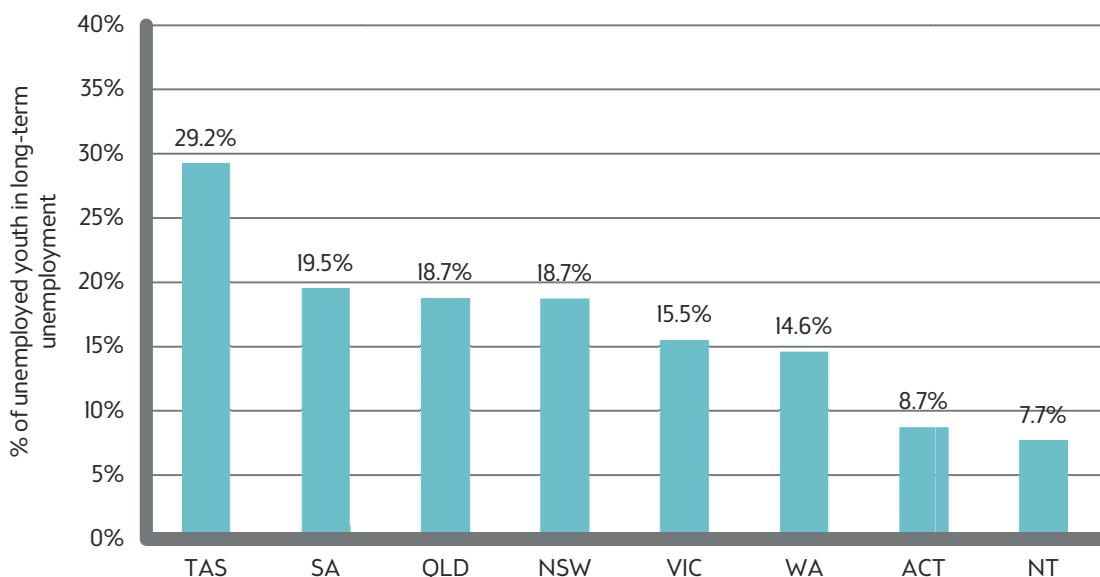


Figure 6. Incidence of long-term youth unemployment in 2014 for each state and territory.

**Discussion Point**

Higher than average incidences of long-term youth unemployment are seen in Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales, while the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have low incidences of long-term youth unemployment. A future direction for research would involve investigating why the incidences of long-term youth unemployment are higher in Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales, but lower in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. Moreover, the analysis could also focus on the factors that contribute to the high incidence of long-term youth unemployment in these states.

Further review of the incidences of long-term youth unemployment and other unemployment durations is possible for each state and territory. The greatest variances between states and territories occurred for long-term youth unemployment and for youth unemployment lasting under four weeks. The variances between states and territories were not large in relation to unemployment periods that last between four weeks and under 13 weeks, 13 weeks and under 26 weeks, and 26 weeks and under 52 weeks.

States with higher incidences of long-term youth unemployment had lower rates of youth unemployment that last for under four weeks. In 2014, 29.2% of unemployed young people in Tasmania were in long-term unemployment and only 17.5% had been in unemployment for less than four weeks. This unemployment duration equilibria can lead to young people in long-term unemployment becoming discouraged about finding work (Bjørnstad, 2006).

States and Territories that had lower incidences of long-term youth unemployment had higher rates of youth unemployment that last for under four weeks. For example, the incidence of long-term youth unemployment in the Northern Territory was 7.7% while the youth unemployment rate for periods under four weeks was 42.3%. The incidences of youth unemployment duration groups for each state and territory are shown in Figure 7.

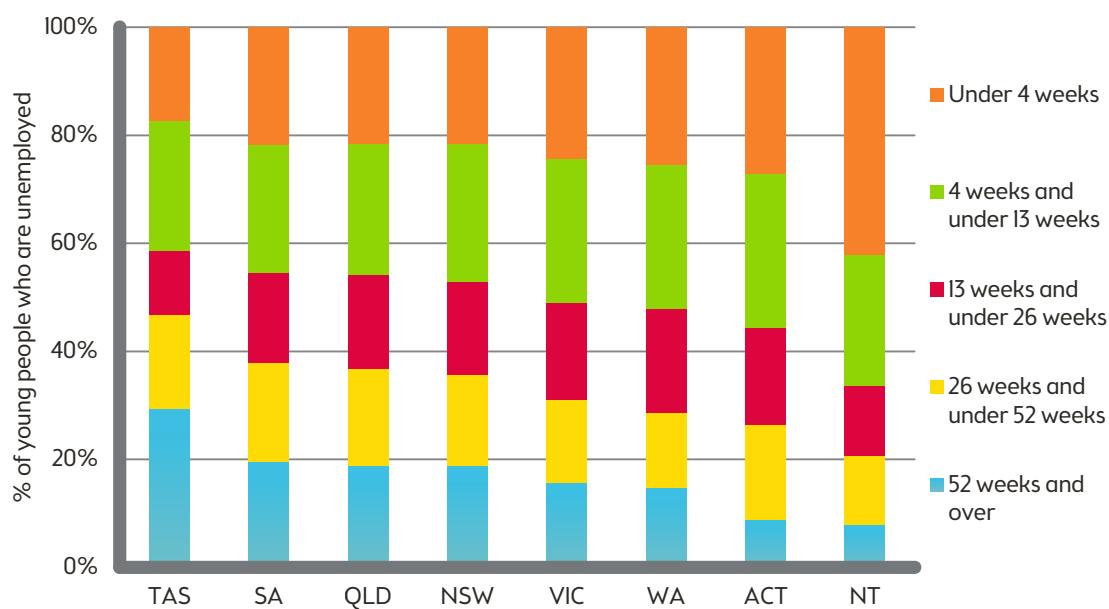


Figure 7. Incidence of youth unemployment durations in 2014 for each state and territory.

## Summary

The rate, incidence, and prevalence of young people in long-term unemployment have increased since 2007 and reached its highest point in 2015. Moreover, the rates and incidences have more than doubled during this time. A similar pattern has been seen across males and females, but the rising high incidences of male young people in long-term unemployment have been particularly concerning. Higher than average incidences of long-term youth unemployment are seen in Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales, while the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have incidences of long-term youth unemployment that are

lower than 10%. Tasmania has a particularly high incidence of long-term youth unemployment compared to other states and territories. Based on the ABS data and recent trends regarding long-term youth unemployment and specific cohorts, a number of key discussion points have arisen, such as:

- ❖ What factors contribute to the rising incidence of long-term youth unemployment?
- ❖ Why is the incidence of long-term youth unemployment higher among males than females? What factors contribute to the high incidence of long-term youth unemployment among males?
- ❖ Why are the incidences of long-term youth unemployment higher in states like Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales, but lower in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory? What factors contribute to the higher incidence of long-term youth unemployment in Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales?

## The labour market policy context

Youth unemployment has long been a focus of Australian Government labour market policies, and long-term unemployment is receiving more attention as a growing problem. Youth specific measures include Transition to Work, Intensive Support for Vulnerable Job Seekers, ParentsNext, Employment Support for Young People with Mental Illness, Transition Support for Young Refugees and other Vulnerable Migrants, and Engaging Early School Leavers (Department of Employment, 2015b).

Recently a specific focus on long-term youth unemployment has emerged in established policy frameworks. The Empowering YOuth Initiatives grant released in November 2015 is targeted at not-for-profit community agencies to provide services for young people aged 15 to 24 years who are in long-term unemployment or are at risk of long-term unemployment (Department of Employment, 2015c). This strategy was part of the section of the Government's Youth Employment Strategy that focused on intensive support trials for vulnerable job seekers. Many of the programs funded under this grant have used their funding to provide community-level services for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people and young people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. One common theme for these programs is that an employment program that adopts a holistic approach is provided where vocational skills are increased while addressing non-vocational barriers of young people in long-term unemployment. The other common theme for these programs is to provide mentoring for young people at risk of long-term unemployment to increase school retention rates.

Looking at the broader issue of how youth unemployment is responded to by jobactive, there are a range of procedures based on behavioural activation practices designed to increase young people's motivation to find work. Specific mutual obligation requirements need to be undertaken in order for young people to continue receiving income support payments (Department of Human Services, 2015). These requirements involve a combination of job search, paid work, and/or participating in activities such as Work for the Dole, voluntary work or vocational training. Mutual obligation requirements for Youth Allowance recipients include studying in a full-time

course, participating in approved full-time training, or a combination of these activities that is supplemented by part-time work to comprise a full-time requirement.

Mutual obligation requirements are increased for job seekers who have been in the employment services system for six months or more. This requirement takes the form of Work for the Dole or another approved activity for six months of the year (Department of Employment, 2015d). When it comes to mutual obligation requirements, the Department of Employment has extended the age range of youth to include young people aged up to 29 years. Under this scheme, young people under the age of 30 years will need to complete 25 hours per week of Work for the Dole or another approved activity to satisfy their mutual obligation requirements and to continue receiving income support payments.

Another approach involves assisting job seekers of all ages to gain very short-term work experience through the National Work Experience Program (Department of Employment, 2015e). This initiative involves job seekers going into unpaid work placements for a maximum of four weeks. Furthermore, job seekers spend a maximum of 25 hours per week in these placements. Employers may be eligible for wage subsidies in this scheme.

The other approach involves providing incentives for employers to hire unemployed groups on a longer basis (Department of Employment, 2015f). Currently, there is a Youth Wage Subsidy for employers who hire job seekers under 30 years of age. In addition, a Long-term Unemployed and Indigenous Wage Subside is available to encourage employers to hire job seekers who have been receiving assistance from employment services for at least 12 months (Department of Employment, 2015a). This wage subsidy can also be used when hiring Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander job seekers who have been receiving assistance from employment services for at least six months.

A range of activation initiatives are currently being implemented to encourage job seekers to find work, and to encourage employers to hire these job seekers. The broader strategies aimed at youth unemployment or unemployment in general may be less effective with young people in long-term unemployment because their situation in relation to finding work goes beyond a lack of work experience and employer referees, and deals more with multifaceted issues that may be non-vocational, ongoing, and severe in nature. Employment YOUTH Initiatives appears to deal with the wider range of issues experienced by young people in long-term unemployment. Depending on the results of the initiatives, this type of scheme could be implemented on a wider scale.

## Long-term youth unemployment and the labour market context

Young people are among the most disadvantaged in the labour market and make up the largest proportion in long-term unemployment compared to other age groups. Labour market factors such as required social capital, employer perceptions on long-term unemployed young people, credential inflation, and employment protection are barriers to young people finding work.

## Social capital

Young people are struggling in the labour market due to their lack of work experience and social capital (Eichhorst, Hinte, & Rinne, 2013). Capital is defined as accumulated labour, and the social form of capital is comprised by the resources that are developed from relationships with others (Bourdieu, 1986). Work experience and social capital enables young people to build their skill levels and knowledge about employment. However, they have limited opportunities in their school life to develop their experience and skills required by employers. The lack of opportunities for working also means that they cannot develop their social networks and interpersonal skills which could then increase their likelihood of social isolation (Šileika, Rupšys, & Gruževskis, 2004). Young people from intergenerational unemployment have particular difficulty in the labour market because their parents are also lacking in social capital, which means that this group of young people have limited contacts from whom they can learn about society's norms regarding workplace practices and expectations.

### Discussion Point

Young people in long-term unemployment are in a static position where employment would assist them to build their social capital and work experience, but they struggle to obtain employment because of their lack of social capital and skills. Based on this circular situation, it would be useful to determine what other ways young people in long-term unemployment can develop social capital and work experience to improve their employability in the views of employers.

## Employer's perceptions

Employers have been found to be resistant to hiring people who do not have recent work history (Carney, 2006). Employers hold negative views of people in long-term unemployment due to concerns about lengthy gaps in work history (Bonoli & Hinrichs, 2012; Carvalho, 2015). Specifically, employers view people in long-term unemployment as a risk to their organisation due to potential non-vocational issues that could impede work ability and productivity. Campbell (2010) suggests that the high incidence of long-term unemployment can be linked to employers discriminating against people with certain characteristics that are prevalent among unemployed people and that policy should promote positive approaches from employers towards these groups. However, Bonoli and Hinrichs (2012) have since found that the elimination of long-term unemployed people in the early stages of recruitment situations is due to selection processes detecting these perceived risks rather than personal biases of employers.

### Discussion Point

The research on employer's views of long-term unemployment focuses on people of all ages. It would be useful to investigate what hinders employers from hiring young people in long-term unemployment. In addition, it would also be useful to determine what strategies would encourage employers to overcome any negative views and consider hiring young people in long-term unemployment.

## Credential inflation

Young people also struggle to find work due to ‘credential inflation’ and ‘crowding out’ in the current labour market (Thijssen & Wolbers, 2015). Credential inflation has occurred because occupational formations have not increased at the same rate as the increasing numbers of the labour force who have been gaining higher qualifications. Consequently, crowding out has occurred where there are not enough jobs for highly educated people who then take middle level jobs requiring lower credentials, which then sees these displaced people taking lower level jobs. As a result, young people and people with low levels of formal education struggle to find work in this environment (Dolado, Felgueroso, & Jansen, 2013; Thijssen & Wolbers, 2015).

## Insiders and outsiders

An additional factor which plays a role in young people finding employment is employment protection. Countries with established processes for protecting ‘insider’ workers are more likely to have high long-term unemployment rates. These countries have established employment protection processes that favour ‘insiders’ rather than ‘outsiders’ (Chilosi, 2012; Dolado et al., 2013). ‘Insiders’ are people who are working under permanent contract arrangements, while ‘outsiders’ are people working under temporary contract arrangements or are unemployed. Many young people attempting to navigate the labour market would be in the ‘outsider’ category. Employment protection for ‘insider’ workers means decreased prospects for people who are already at a disadvantage in the labour market (Chilosi, 2012). The exception to employment protection putting ‘outsiders’ at a disadvantage occurs when countries create and implement policies with a strong focus on job generation to increase the prospects of this group. For example, Scandinavian countries have high employment protection but low long-term unemployment rates.

## Summary

Young people in long-term unemployment have a particularly difficult time in the labour market due to their low social capital and work experience. They are in a static position where employment would assist them to build their social capital and work experience but they struggle to obtain employment because of their lack of social capital and skills. Furthermore, employers hold negative views of people in long-term unemployment because of a perceived risk of low productivity and work ability. In addition, young people are competing against people with higher levels of work experience, qualifications, and skills due to an environment of credential inflation and crowding out. While environments with employment protection can favour insiders with work history in current permanent jobs, young people in long-term unemployment can be assisted in the labour market through the development and implementation of job creation policies. From this overview of labour market factors influencing young people in long-term unemployment, key discussion points can be raised. Specifically:

- ❖ In what ways can young people in long-term unemployment develop their social capital and work experience so that they are seen as more employable to employers?

- ❖ What factors hinder employers from hiring young people in long-term unemployment?
- What strategies would encourage employers to overcome any negative views and consider hiring young people in long-term unemployment?

## Issues associated with young people in long-term unemployment

The research investigating long-term unemployment has a focus on the risk factors, characteristics, and consequences of the issue. Studies looking at adults in long-term unemployment have found associations with depressive symptoms (Nagatomi et al., 2010), perceived inability to work (Szlachta, Gawlik-Chmiel, & Kallus, 2012), paranoia and cynicism (Hakulinen et al., 2013), and alcohol abuse (Nurmela, 2015). The more extensive literature on youth unemployment regardless of unemployment duration, particularly the studies in the United Kingdom and Europe that focus on young people who are NEET, had a stronger focus on the commonly occurring demographic features of young people in unemployment. For example, Kelly et al.'s (2013) research in Ireland with NEET young people indicates that the common characteristics are people who are female, aged between 20 and 24 years, immigrants, living in lower socio-economic areas, and have low levels of formal education (Kelly et al., 2013). In addition, Styczynska's (2013) research in Poland shows that females and young people who live in households that are reliant on social benefits are more likely to be in the NEET category. Sections of the limited literature on young people in long-term unemployment focus not only on their demographic details but also on wider ranging associated issues and risk factors. While these studies use different terminology, they use similar research methods where they assess the specific characteristics and issues of young people in long-term unemployment by analysing unemployment register data and/or surveying or interviewing a sample of these young people.

In another Australian study, Dockery and Webster (2002) found that people who had been in long-term unemployment for at least one year were not a homogenous group. Of the five groups that were identified within the long-term unemployed group, two groups were comprised by young people. One group was young people who were the least educated in the labour force and searching for their first job. The other group was young males with limited work history and low job skills. These young males were the most work deprived group in the labour force.

Creed (1999) conducted one of the earliest studies in Australia on long-term youth unemployment. The longitudinal study focused on 83 young people aged between 16 and 20 years who on average had spent 13 months in unemployment. The key variables measured as potential predictors of employment across a four month time period were psychological distress, self-esteem, general intelligence or cognitive ability, and literacy and numeracy. While none of these variables were predictors of gaining employment, key differences were identified in the profiles between participants at the commencement of the study. Specifically, the young people who remained in unemployment were more likely to have lower levels of cognitive ability and literacy at the commencement of the study in comparison to those who would eventually obtain employment.

Bolam and Sixsmith (2002) investigated the experiences of further education among young people in long-term unemployment. In this qualitative study utilising in-depth interviews with 16 young people aged between 18 and 25 years, the findings showed the main consequences of long-term unemployment were less income and low self-esteem and confidence. In addition, the

participants were at risk of remaining in unemployment if they perceived less control over their situation. While this is one of the earlier studies on long-term youth unemployment, the findings should be interpreted while keeping in mind that the definition of long-term unemployment used a shorter duration of unemployment, that is, people receiving social benefits for six months or more rather than 52 weeks or more.

**yourtown** is one organisation that aligns its definition of long-term unemployment with that of the Australian Government, that is, unemployment for 52 weeks or more. They collaborated with Griffith University on an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project entitled, 'Reconnecting Disaffected Youth Through Successful Transition to Work', that investigated the key aspects to engaging disadvantaged young people through the use of social enterprises, also known as intermediate labour markets programs (Bartlett, Dalgleish, & Mafi, 2012). These programs are conducted in a real life work environment where young people are paid for their work on contracted jobs while receiving added support for any barriers to employment. In this study, 542 young people completed two surveys at the commencement and exit of their program. From this cohort, 9% ( $n=49$ ) of these young people had been in unemployment for at least 52 weeks before commencing their program. The demographic details of these 49 young people in long-term unemployment show that 30% were female and 70% were male, the age range was from 15 and 24 years ( $M=19$ ), 13% were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 13% identified as being from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background. The other characteristics of these young people in long-term unemployment include limited work history and low levels of formal education. Specifically:

- 90.9% had not worked full-time and 48.5% had never worked;
- 27% came from families experiencing intergenerational unemployment;
- 1.5 years was the average time spent in unemployment;
- 83% had not completed the final year of secondary school; and
- 85% had no accredited qualifications.

In addition to these profile characteristics, the ARC project also assessed the cognitive-motivational and psycho-social characteristics of these young people in long-term unemployment. These characteristics translate to cooperation, negotiation, and problem-solving skills that are seen as essential employability assets in the workplace (Pohjola, 2010). Young people in long-term unemployment who were participating in **yourtown's** social enterprises completed a survey at entry and exit points of their program. These surveys included validated tests such as the Outcome Questionnaire (Lambert, Gregersen, & Burlingame, 2004) and the Interpersonal Agency and Personal Agency Scale (Smith, Kohn, Savage-Stevens, Finch, Ingate, & Lim, 2000) to measure the thinking patterns and motivation levels of individuals. These young people reported having low motivation and a negative view about themselves and their lives. In addition, they did not have a future outlook and they had difficulty with problem-solving and cooperating with other people. The data on the cognitive-motivational characteristics of these young people in long-term unemployment are shown in Figure 8.

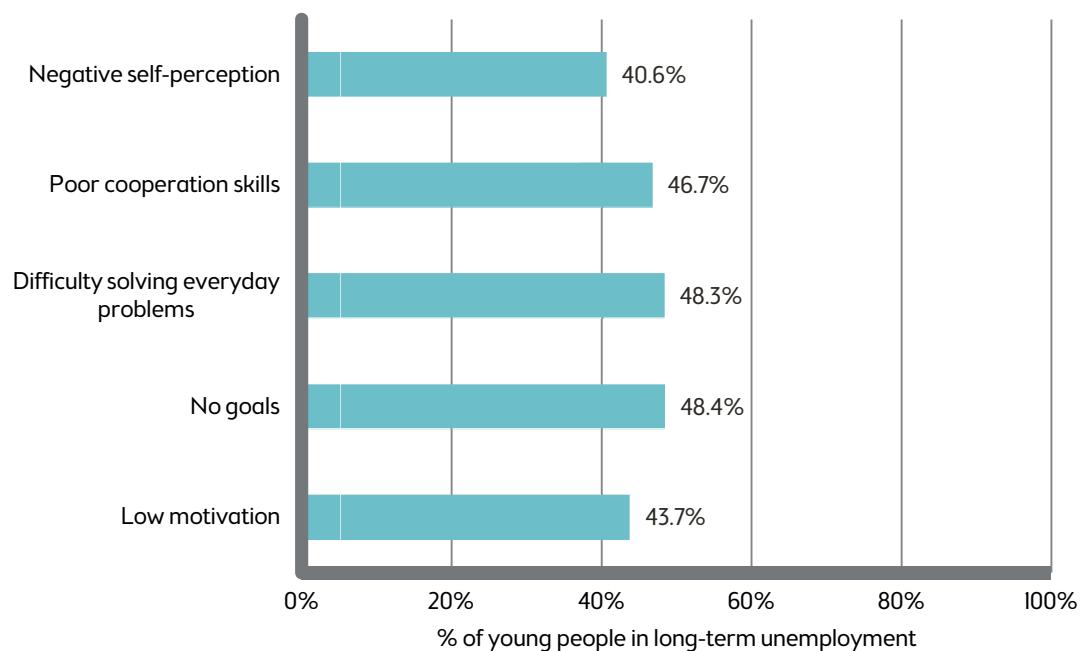


Figure 8. Proportion of young people in long-term unemployment participating in **yourtown's** social enterprises who report low levels across cognitive-motivational factors.

Young people in long-term unemployment who were participating in **yourtown's** social enterprises also completed a survey at entry and exit points of their program to measure any changes in their psycho-social factors. Validated tests such as the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg & Williams, 1988), and Outcome Questionnaire (Lambert, Gregersen, & Burlingame, 2004) were used to measure psycho-social characteristics such as self-esteem, emotional wellbeing, anger management, offending behaviour, and literacy and numeracy. The more prevalent characteristics that were reported by young people in long-term unemployment were low literacy and numeracy skills, difficulty controlling anger and acting on these impulses, and substance misuse interfering with work opportunities. The data on the psycho-social characteristics of these young people in long-term unemployment are shown in Figure 9.

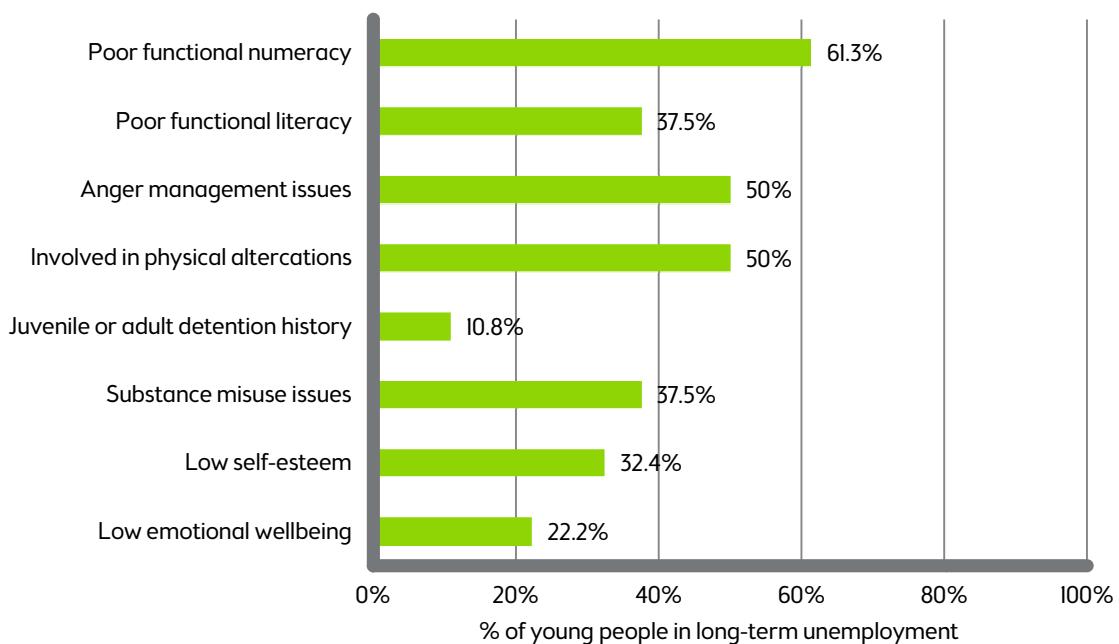


Figure 9. Proportion of young people in long-term unemployment participating in **yourtown's** social enterprises who report low levels across psycho-social factors.

A quantitative study by Reine, Novo, & Hammarström (2004) investigated the characteristics associated specifically with poor psychological health among people in long-term unemployment across age groups. In this longitudinal study in Sweden, 1,004 participants were surveyed when they were 16, 21 (representing young people) and 30 (representing adults) years of age. While this study is one of the few recent studies specifically focusing on the characteristics of young people in long-term unemployment, the long-term unemployment was defined as continuous unemployment for more than six months rather than 52 weeks or more. However, the study may still be a reasonable representation of young people in long-term unemployment because the average amount of time that the 21 year old survey cohort had been in unemployment was 59 weeks. Also, the average amount of time that the 30 year old survey cohort had been in unemployment was 120 weeks. The main findings of this study indicated that:

- Young people and older adults in long-term unemployment had more mental health issues compared to the cohorts who were not in long-term unemployment;
- Young people in long-term unemployment came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, when compared to young people who were not in long-term unemployment;
- These young people in long-term unemployment viewed themselves as having less control over their circumstances;
- In relation to gender-specific findings, 21 year old males in the youth long-term unemployment participant group had more mental health issues compared to 30 year old males in the adult long-term unemployment participant group; and

- The variable of age moderated the link between mental health issues and long-term unemployment. Specifically, the link between poor mental health and long-term unemployment was stronger in young people than older adults.

Kieselbach (2003) also conducted a study looking at the differences between groups of young people, aged between 20 and 24 years of age, who were registered as being unemployed for 12 months or more. These 300 young people in long-term unemployment living in Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Italy, Greece, and Spain who were at high risk, had increased risk, or showed low risk of social exclusion. Social exclusion was defined as a process of exclusion across various areas such as labour market exclusion (barriers to employment), economic exclusion (dependency on welfare support), institutional exclusion (reliance on Government institutions for support due to barriers to accessing private institutions), social isolation (lack of social networks and contacts), cultural exclusion (stigma due to not having resources to live according to social norms), and spatial exclusion (living in areas lacking in financial opportunities and infrastructure). In relation to young people in long-term unemployment who were at high risk of social exclusion, the findings of this study are as follows:

- Lack of qualifications was the main risk factor for social exclusion;
- Pessimistic outlook about employment opportunities influenced lack of effort when it came to seeking jobs and gaining accredited qualifications;
- This group had lower social and institutional support in comparison to those at low risk of social exclusion;
- Compared to the other groups of young people in long-term unemployment, young people at high risk of social exclusion had lower levels of self-esteem, mental health, and communication skills, and had a more negative future outlook;
- This group mostly had higher levels of social isolation; and
- Issues with physical health and mental health were more prevalent in this group.

Another important study was conducted by Kelly et al. (2012) and it identified the characteristics of young people in long-term unemployment in Ireland. They did this by analysing the unemployment register data from young people aged between 15 and 24 years who had been in unemployment for at least 52 weeks. A specific focus was on analysing data for marital status, number of children, spousal earnings and geographical locations. In addition, they also surveyed participants to measure educational attainment, literacy and numeracy skills, health, and work history. The main findings were:

- Male young people in long term unemployment were more likely to have poor literacy and numeracy skills, low formal education, and/or live in large urban areas;
- Female young people in long term unemployment were more likely to have children and to have poor literacy and numeracy skills, low formal education, and weekly earnings from a partner that exceed 350 Euros; and
- In comparison to older males, young males in long-term unemployment were more likely to lack accredited qualifications and have limited recent labour market participation.

A more recent quantitative analysis has been conducted by **yourtown** in February 2016 of the common characteristics among young people in long-term unemployment. A similar analytic process was used to the aforementioned Kelly et al. (2012) study. **yourtown** is a youth-specialist provider of Government-funded employment services, jobactive, and specifically focuses on young people under 30 years of age in eight of the most disadvantaged regions in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland. Data is collected on jobactive participants regarding their demographic details as well as issues that could be seen as barriers to finding and remaining in work. In **yourtown's** caseload of 10,600 young job seekers, 53.5% ( $n=5,668$ ) have been in unemployment for 52 weeks or more. The **yourtown** caseload demographic information from these young people in long-term unemployment show that 38.1% are female and 61.9% are male, 14.2% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 9% identify as being from a CALD background. The other characteristics of these 5,668 young people aged between 15 and 29 years in long-term unemployment are as follows:

- 80% do not have a driver licence;
- 24.9% have a disability or medical condition (which encompasses physical injuries; health conditions; intellectual, mental, sensory or physical disabilities; and addictions);
- 19.2% are classed as being in primary homelessness (having nowhere to stay or sleeping rough) or secondary homelessness (staying in emergency or supported accommodation; 'couch-surfing' where they move from home to home of people in their social network; or moving at least four times in the previous year);
- 15.3% have a criminal record;
- 13.9% are classed as an Early School Leaver, that is, a person younger than 22 years of age who has not completed their final year of secondary school or an equivalent level of education;
- 9.5% have a mental illness that affects their ability to work; and
- 4.6% have resettled in Australia on a Refugee or Humanitarian Visa.

In six of the regions that **yourtown** delivers jobactive services, the caseload proportion of young people in long-term unemployment is higher than the 53.5% of the caseload across all eight regions. These five employment regions are Hobart and Southern Tasmania, North and North Western Tasmania, Adelaide North, Hunter, Sydney Greater West, and Sydney South West. In Tasmania, 62.6% of **yourtown's** caseload in the Hobart and Southern Tasmania employment region and 55.1% of the caseload in the North and North Western Tasmania employment region are in long-term unemployment. These high incidences of long-term youth unemployment are consistent with ABS data that establish Tasmania as having the highest incidence of long-term youth unemployment in Australia compared to other states. More detailed analyses for each employment region within which **yourtown** delivers these services can be found in Appendix A.

## Summary

The research exploring the characteristics that are specific to young people in long-term unemployment goes beyond looking at demographic details. The characteristics range from educational and vocational issues to more severe and ongoing issues. Specifically, these

characteristics can be grouped around vocational, educational, contextual, practical, cognitive-motivational, psycho-social, and antisocial behavioural issues (see Figure 10 for groupings of issues and characteristics).

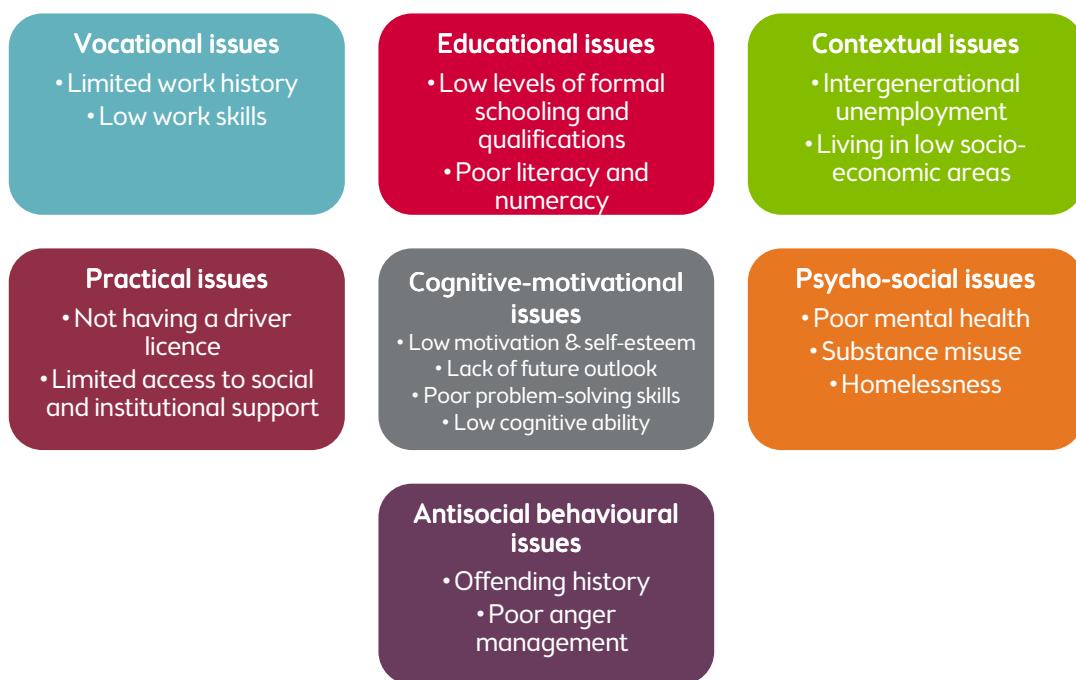


Figure 10. Issues faced by young people in long-term unemployment.

#### Discussion Point

The literature on young people in long-term unemployment indicates a range of issues experienced by this cohort. Further analysis could assess which issues are currently more prevalent for young people in long-term unemployment. In addition, the analysis could determine the extent that these issues affect the ability of long-term unemployed young people to obtain work.

The issues faced by young people in long-term unemployment are multifaceted and can potentially add to the risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market (OECD, 2002). The research by Kieselbach (2003) and Reine et al. (2004) as well as the analyses by **yourtown** demonstrate the complexity of the issues facing young people in long-term unemployment. The consequences of these barriers become exacerbated as the time spent in unemployment is prolonged (Aaronson, Mazumder, & Schechter, 2010). The longer time spent in unemployment and the complex and serious nature of the barriers to employment means it is more difficult for this cohort to leave unemployment and obtain meaningful work (Covizzi, 2008; Brotherhood of Saint Laurence, 2014). The low levels of formal education, lack of a driver licence and lengthier time spent in unemployment also means that these young people will have a harder time meeting the requirements that many employers have for qualifications, driver licence and work experience (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2014). Based on these findings, the key questions for further discussion are:

- ❖ What are the more prevalent barriers to employment experienced by young people in long-term unemployment? To what extent do these issues affect the ability of long-term unemployed young people to obtain work?

## Strategies and interventions

The literature contains numerous studies and commentaries on how to address the wider issue of youth unemployment. The common recommendations for ways to address youth unemployment revolve around various forms of vocational education pathways and employment programs, such as training courses (Dolado et al., 2013; Tamesberger, Leitgöb, & Bacher, 2014), apprenticeships (Cockx, 2013), and intermediate labour market programs (Bartlett et al., 2012). These programs are particularly successful when they combine the experiential learning and work experience components to ensure that the skills being developed meet the demand of employers (Dolado et al., 2013). In addition, programs that are delivered within a flexible structure and are person-centred rather than curriculum-centred will engage young people (Bartlett et al., 2012; Tamesberger et al., 2014). Chen (2011) suggests that NEET young people are not a homogenous group and therefore require tailored, person-centred support to address their wide-ranging issues. These assertions may explain why more general approaches have not been effective. Davidson's review of work-for-benefit strategies in the United Kingdom indicates that these schemes are not effective as improving the employment outcomes for unemployed people (Davidson, 2014). Similarly, Borland & Tseng (2003) in their study found that labour market outcomes for Work for the Dole participants did not increase and were no better than the outcomes achieved by participants in a control group who were not in Work for the Dole. These programs provide only limited periods of employment and do not have a specific focus on skills. Therefore, these programs do not facilitate skill development or enhance the employability of unemployed people. The notion of person-centred support for unemployed youth is also part of Scott et al.'s (2013) commentary on how to enhance outcomes for unemployed young people with poor mental health. They recommend individual and placement support models that cover mental health, social and general health issues in order to assist these young people to achieve sustainable employment outcomes. Moreover, Tamesberger et al. (2014) suggest that post placement support within a case management approach can enhance employment sustainability for young people. While the literature provides many recommendations for how to address youth unemployment, these studies do not specifically focus on long-term unemployment.

The literature reports strategies that have not been effective at addressing long-term unemployment. Dockery and Webster (2002) and Soukup (2011) suggests that people in long-term unemployment have more complex barriers and therefore require more intensive interventions than people in short-term unemployment. Job search training is more effective with people in short- to medium-term unemployment. While people in long-term unemployment could achieve social and employment outcomes through the process of matching jobs with people (involving job search, placement and support), these outcomes have only been shown to be short-term and do not last for the long-term (Campbell, 2010).

In Marton and McDonald's (2008) work, other interventions in the Australian employment services model were not perceived as effective by people in long-term unemployment. Specifically, job search training and contacts with Employment Consultants were not perceived as being tailored to the skills or experiences of the individuals (Marton & McDonald, 2008). This

resulted in job seekers feeling like they had little control over their options, especially when consultation time was spent mostly on requirements of the job seeker rather than assessing the issues and pathways to move forward. Consequently, these mutual obligation and activation techniques have seen the motivation of job seekers decrease rather than increase during this process. The shift from 'activation optimism' to 'paternalism optimism' occurred to address dependency on welfare through putting pressure on people to change rather than through social investment (Carney, 2006). Specific evaluations at both a macro and micro economic level are required to see if this approach has been effective at lessening dependency on welfare.

#### **Discussion Point**

The literature utilises the voice of people in long-term unemployment to state that intensive strategies are required to address the complex issues of the group. A similar method would be useful to determine the key elements of strategies that would assist young people in long-term unemployment. It would be worthwhile to ask young people in long-term unemployment to specific the key elements of strategies that are effective in assisting them to find work, and what elements are not as effective in assisting them.

The literature also covers interventions that have had success in engaging and finding employment for people in long-term unemployment. The key components for assisting long-term unemployed people to obtain employment are: tailored interventions for each individual; skills acquisition through training programs; active policies targeting the most disadvantaged; local flexibility and investment; employer involvement in the recruitment; and supporting the needs and addressing the barriers of individuals (Campbell, 2010).

Another intervention that has engaged long-term unemployed people is employment or labour market programs (Dockery & Webster, 2002). These programs provide people with opportunities for paid work experience while addressing non-vocational barriers to employment. One major concern was that participants would exit the program into short-term jobs and then return to unemployment, however, many participants went into longer-term employment. **yourtown** had similar results with their employment programs for young people in long-term unemployment.

While there are numerous studies detailing various strategies for addressing youth unemployment and long-term unemployment in general, the literature is scarce in relation to long-term youth unemployment strategies. In their ARC project collaboration with Griffith University, **yourtown** was able to measure changes in young people in long-term unemployment participating in their employment programs or social enterprises. Specifically, change was measured from the commencement to exit stages of the program across a range of cognitive-motivational and psycho-social variables. The self esteem of young people previously in long-term unemployment improved as they progressed through the social enterprises where they had a positive attitude and more respect for themselves. They saw changes in their problem solving skills where they found it easier to deal with and solve everyday problems. The young people also had developed knowledge about resources that were available to them and were using these resources. In addition, they realised the value of teamwork so their cooperation skills had improved. These thinking patterns translate to skills that can assist young people in long-term unemployment to develop their social capital, which in turn can increase their chances of finding

work (Eichhorst et al., 2013). Finally, these young people had developed an outlook for the future and had specific goals that they were working towards and they were now highly motivated to reach these goals. These statistically significant improvements are shown in Figure II.

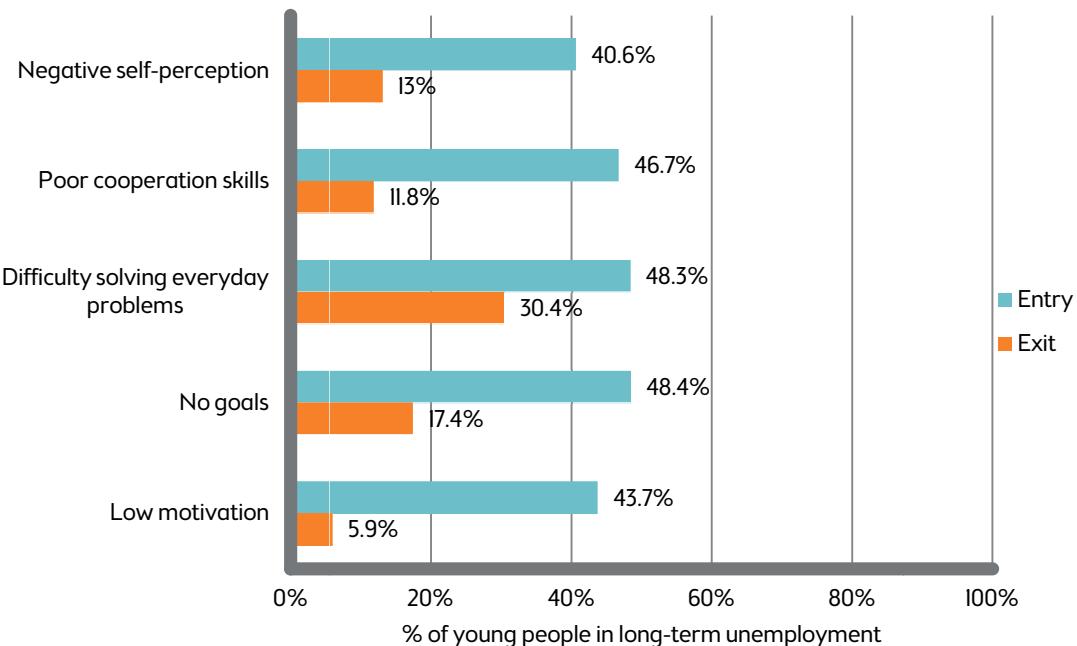


Figure II. Improvements in cognitive-motivational variables in long-term unemployed youth participating in social enterprises.

Improvements in anger management and offending were reported where long-term unemployed young people were having fewer arguments and avoiding physical altercations. Decreases were also seen in their use of illicit drugs. Young people also saw improvements in their applied literacy and numeracy skills. Small improvements were also indicated by young people in their self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. These changes in young people in long-term unemployment are shown in Figure I2.

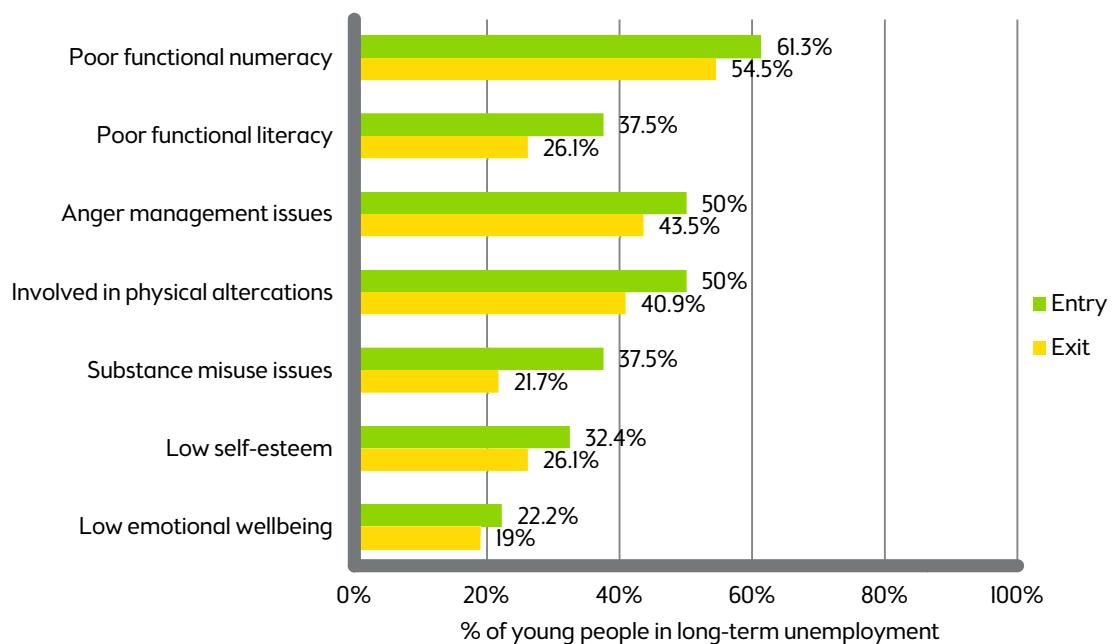


Figure I2. Changes in psycho-social variables in long-term unemployed youth participating in social enterprises.

The young people previously in long-term unemployment who were participating in **yourtown's** social enterprises experienced statistically significant improvement in their motivation and their thinking patterns, that is, their processes of reasoning or when considering various situations. However, the changes in these young people's self-concept and behaviours were not statistically significant. In one of the few studies looking at pathways for young people in long-term unemployment, Bolam and Sixsmith (2002) found that these self-concept and behavioural factors were prevalent in young people in long-term unemployment that disengaged from further education pathways. Specifically, the reasons for many young people in long-term unemployment dropping out of their further education pathway revolved around illicit drug use, unreliable social networks, poor self-esteem, low motivation, and previous negative experiences of school. Interestingly, the young people in long-term unemployment who succeeded in further education were able to link their studies to the potential attainment of a specific employment goal.

#### Discussion Point

Young people in long-term unemployment who have participated in employment programs indicate significant improvements in their thinking and motivation. However, this group still struggle in various interventions with their self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and behavioural issues. Further research could look at uncovering strategies that can assist young people in long-term unemployment to improve their self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and behaviour.

## Summary

While there have been many studies in the literature about potential pathways and interventions for unemployed young people and people in long-term unemployment, there are very few studies that focus specifically on interventions for young people in long-term unemployment. The research shows that there are specific issues that this cohort is facing which mean they would require specific techniques and interventions to help them address these issues and facilitate their pathway out of long-term unemployment. The key elements that assist young people in long-term unemployment are shown in Figure I3.



Figure I3. Key elements to assist young people in long-term unemployment.

Employment programs have had some success in improving this cohort's cognitive-motivational factors. In addition, future outlook is a key element to keeping these young people engaged in employment programs and further education. However, these improvements have not translated to changes in self-concept (self-esteem and emotional wellbeing) or behaviour (anger management, illicit drug use, and functional literacy and numeracy). The key questions to further explore these issues include:

- ❖ What do young people in long-term unemployment think are useful strategies for assisting them to find work? What elements of interventions are not as effective in assisting them?
- ❖ What strategies can assist young people to improve their motivation and thought patterns as well as their self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and behavioural issues?
- ❖ How can **yourtown** respond more effectively to young people in long-term unemployment?

## Concluding remarks

The national incidence and rate of young people in long-term unemployment is at an all-time high. These young people continue to be among the most disadvantaged in the labour market

due to numerous contextual factors such as lack of required work experience and social capital, credential inflation, and employment protection for established workers in the labour market. Furthermore, the issues associated with the long-term unemployment situation of young people are complex and wide-ranging. These issues can be grouped under vocational, educational, contextual, practical, cognitive-motivational, psycho-social and antisocial behavioural issues.

As expected, long-term unemployed young people with multifaceted issues who have to navigate a labour market where they are at a disadvantage require interventions and strategies that are tailored and intensive. While employment programs have had some success in improving the thinking patterns and motivation of young people in long-term unemployment and assisting them to obtain employment, there are other issues that still persist for these young people.

### Key questions

Researchers, organisations and government departments have yet to pinpoint the key elements of effective interventions that will assist young people in long-term unemployment to address their issues and obtain sustainable employment. A review of literature specific to young people in long-term unemployment has yielded a number of key questions that can guide the process of identifying key elements of effective interventions that will assist young people in long-term unemployment. These questions recognise that young people in long-term unemployment are not a homogenous group and that specific cohorts may require different approaches.

The incidence of young people in long-term unemployment continues to rise. The following questions have been developed to gain a better understanding of why this incidence is increasing:

- ❖ What factors contribute to the rising incidence of long-term youth unemployment?
- ❖ Why is the incidence of long-term youth unemployment higher among males than females?
- ❖ What factors contribute to the high incidence of long-term youth unemployment among males?
- ❖ Why are the incidences of long-term youth unemployment high in states like Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales, but low in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory?
- ❖ What factors contribute to the high incidence of long-term youth unemployment in Tasmania, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales?

The specific situations of young people in long-term unemployment in the labour market need to be assessed in order to find ways to help them overcome these barriers. Hence, the following questions have been developed:

- ❖ What factors hinder employers from hiring young people in long-term unemployment?
- ❖ In what ways can young people in long-term unemployment develop their social capital and work experience so that they are seen as more employable to employers?
- ❖ What strategies would encourage employers to overcome any negative views and consider hiring young people in long-term unemployment?

Developing intervention models for young people in long-term unemployment requires an understanding of their specific issues. It is also essential to obtain the views of young people in long-term unemployment to gain a clear picture of their experiences in interventions. The following questions have been developed to gain important information about long-term unemployed young people's experiences:

- ❖ What are the more prevalent barriers to employment experienced by young people in long-term unemployment? To what extent do these issues affect long-term unemployed young people's ability to obtain work?
- ❖ What do young people in long-term unemployment perceive as useful strategies for assisting them to find work? What elements of interventions are not as effective in assisting young people in long-term unemployment?
- ❖ What strategies can assist young people to improve their cognitive-motivational factors as well as their psycho-social factors?
- ❖ How can **yourtown** respond more effectively to young people in long-term unemployment?

### Next steps

This discussion paper will be used in consultations with relevant stakeholders regarding the nature of long-term youth unemployment and how to best address this issue to reduce its incidence. The discussion points raised in this discussion paper will be used to gain focused feedback from relevant stakeholders, particularly young people, organisations that work with this specific cohort, and policy makers. During this time, **yourtown** will undertake work within its organisation to determine how its service delivery can best cater to the needs of young people in long-term unemployment.

The outcome of these consultations will form the basis of a position paper which will contain key strategies to tackle the specific issue of long-term youth unemployment. **yourtown** will endeavour to work with its partners in government, research, the corporate sector, and service delivery to advance and enact these key strategies.

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## Appendix: Analysis of **yourtown's** jobactive caseload in long-term unemployment

### Hobart and Southern Tasmania employment region

In the Hobart and Southern Tasmania employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Glenorchy and Bridgewater. In **yourtown's** Hobart and Southern Tasmania jobactive long-term unemployment caseload, 40.5% are female and 59.5% are male, 15.1% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 7.2% identify as being from a CALD background.

Homelessness is a prevalent issue for this group in Tasmania. Of this long-term unemployment group, 17.9% are Early School Leavers. Specifically, 23.3% of young people in the Hobart and Southern Tasmania jobactive long-term unemployment caseload are experiencing homelessness. In addition, 17.9% have recorded offending histories. Also of concern is that 83.8% of the Hobart and Southern Tasmania jobactive long-term unemployment caseload do not have a driver licence.

### North and North Western Tasmania employment region

In the North and North Western Tasmania employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Launceston, Burnie, and Devonport. In **yourtown's** North and North Western Tasmania offices, 34.5% of young people in long-term unemployment are female and 65.5% are male.

Among the long-term unemployed group, 14.5% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 3.3% identify as coming from a CALD background. In addition, 23.2% have issues with homelessness, 17.1% are ex-offenders, and 10.8% have a clinically diagnosed mental illness.

### Hunter employment region

In the Hunter employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Maitland, Cessnock, and Muswellbrook. Altogether, 56.1% of the young people in **yourtown's** jobactive caseload in the Hunter employment region have been in unemployment for 52 weeks or more. Of these young people, 39.7% are female and 60.3% are male, 21.5% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 11.2% are from a CALD background.

One-in-four (26%) young people in long-term unemployment in **yourtown's** caseload are dealing with homelessness. In addition, 11.2% have been diagnosed with a mental illness and 34.7% have a disability that impacts on their ability to work. Criminal histories are another barrier with 17.8% being classed as ex-offenders.

### Sydney Greater West employment region

In the Sydney Greater West employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Blacktown and Mount Druitt. Altogether, 56.3% of the young people in **yourtown's** Sydney Greater West jobactive caseload are in long-term unemployment. Of this cohort, 42.8% are female and 57.2% are male, 17.9% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander,

and 9.5% are from a CALD background. In addition, 8% have resettled in Australia on a Refugee or Humanitarian Visa.

Previous offending behaviour is a prominent issue with 17.3% of young people in long-term unemployment in **yourtown's** Sydney Greater West caseload being ex-offenders. Low formal education and qualifications is another prevalent issue with 19.2% being classed as Early School Leavers. The lack of a driver licence is also a concern for 82.3% of the Sydney Greater West long-term unemployment caseload.

### **Sydney South West employment region**

In the Sydney South West employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Campbelltown, Claymore, and Fairfield. In **yourtown's** Sydney South West jobactive caseload, 56.3% of the young people are in long-term unemployment. Of these young people, 43.6% are female and 56.4% are male, 12.8% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 10.7% identify as being from a CALD background. In addition, 8.6% have resettled in Australia on a Refugee or Humanitarian Visa.

Low formal education and qualifications is another prevalent issue with 15.8% of the Sydney South West caseload being classed as Early School Leavers. Furthermore, 10.7% have been clinically diagnosed with a mental illness.

### **Adelaide North employment region**

In the Adelaide North employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Elizabeth, Enfield, and Kilkenny. Altogether, 55.3% of **yourtown's** caseload in the Adelaide North employment region is in long-term unemployment. In this cohort, 35.6% are female and 64.4% are male, 10.6% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 13.5% come from a CALD background. In addition, 7.9% have resettled in Australia via a Refugee or Humanitarian Visa.

Mental illness is a more prevalent issue for this group in the Adelaide North employment region. Specifically, 13.2% of these young people have been diagnosed with a mental illness. In addition, 26.9% have a disability that impacts on their ability to work.

### **Somerset employment region**

In the Somerset employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Caboolture, Deception Bay and Kippa-Ring. Altogether, 51.7% of **yourtown's** caseload in the Somerset employment region is in long-term unemployment. In the Somerset employment region long-term unemployment caseload, 36.6% are female and 63.4% are male, 14% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 8.1% identify as being from a CALD background.

In addition, 18.8% have dealing with issues related to homelessness, 14.5% are classed as Early School Leavers, and 8.5% have been diagnosed as having a mental illness.

### Brisbane South East employment region

In the Brisbane South East employment region, **yourtown** delivers jobactive employment services for young people in Capalaba, Victoria Point, Woodridge, Browns Plains, and Eagleby. Altogether, 48.8% of **yourtown's** caseload in the Brisbane South East employment region is in long-term unemployment. In the Brisbane South East long-term unemployment caseload, 39.8% are female and 60.2% are male, 15.2% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and 2.3% identify as being from a CALD background. In addition, 4% are in Australia on a Refugee or Humanitarian Visa. Furthermore, 81.7% of these job seekers do not have driver licence.