

About yourtown

yourtown is a national organisation and registered charity that aims to tackle the issues affecting the lives of children and young people. Established in 1961, **yourtown's** mission is to enable young people, especially those who are marginalised and without voice, to improve their life outcomes.

We are one of the largest providers of charitable youth services in Australia, employing over 700 staff across four states. We currently have 50 service centres in 36 locations across Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. Our service locations are focused in areas of high socio-economic disadvantage and our services include:

- Kids Helpline, a national 24/7 telephone and on-line counselling and support service for 5 to 25 year olds with special capacity for young people with mental health issues
- Employment and educational programs and social enterprises, which support young people to re-engage with education and/or employment, including programs for youthful offenders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services
- Accommodation responses to young parents with children who experience homelessness, and to women and children seeking refuge from domestic and family violence
- Young Parent Programs offering case work, individual and group work support and child development programs for young parents and their children
- Parentline, a telephone and online counselling and support service for parents and carers'
- Mental health service/s for children aged 0-11 years old, and their families, with moderate mental health needs
- Expressive Therapy interventions for young children and infants who have experienced trauma and abuse or been exposed to violence.

yourtown's work with unemployed young people

We have over 15 years of experience helping young people who face significant barriers to finding and keeping a job. We currently deliver youth specialist jobactive services under subcontract to MAX Employment in 26 locations and Transition to Work (TtW) in 12 locations across four states, as well as ParentsNext in Elizabeth in South Australia. As a result of our experience, we are currently piloting an innovative approach to addressing long-term youth unemployment in Elizabeth, South Australia, Caboolture in Queensland and Burnie-Devonport, Tasmania called *your job your way*.

We also run **social enterprises** that aim to tackle long-term youth unemployment and disadvantage by providing young people with paid work experience and training as a 'stepping stone' to open employment. Our social enterprises employ young people aged 15-25 years, who are not yet work-ready, and transitions them to sustainable employment through a combination of paid work, on the job training, and support to overcome personal barriers.

In addition, we are the largest provider of **labour market programs** within Queensland through the Government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) initiative. Since 2012, we have provided a range of SQW programs that assist young people experiencing unemployment and disadvantage to gain the confidence, skills and experience they need to successfully participate in the workforce. Our SQW model involves a dual support team of a youth worker and employment mentor, who are pro-social role models, building trust and rapport with participants as the basis for program engagement and positive outcomes. This includes post-placement support to help clients maintain employment.

Most of our face-to-face services specialise in working with young jobseekers who are at the highest risk of long term unemployment, including: early school leavers; young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; young offenders/ex-prisoners; those from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and single parents from jobless families.

Introduction

yourtown welcomes the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's inquiry into 'Sustainable Employment for Disadvantaged Jobseekers' and its recognition of the importance of employment and unemployment on social and economic outcomes for individuals, families and communities in Victoria. As a provider of a range of services to disadvantaged children, young people and families, and a specialist youth provider of jobactive in 26 locations and of Transition to Work in 12 locations across Australia, we see the transformational power of employment on young people's lives and, conversely, the long-lasting, detrimental effects that unemployment, underemployment, and particularly long-term unemployment, has on a wide range of life outcomes.

The youth unemployment rate has historically been higher than the overall unemployment rate and today stands at some 9.8% (June 2019), compared with 4.5% for all persons in Victoria.¹ Finding sustainable work can be especially difficult for any young person regardless of their qualifications or background; experience is a much valued attribute in the workforce, whilst changes to Australia's labour market such as increasing casualisation of employment, fewer low-skill, entry-level roles and credential inflation are reducing the pool of accessible jobs for young people. However, from our experience, jobseeking is most difficult for young people with disadvantaged backgrounds. This cohort has a number of significant personal (e.g. low educational attainment, mental health issues and intergenerational disadvantage) and societal challenges (e.g. low government financial support and employer stigma) they must overcome to find work, in addition to the many entrenched, structural and policy challenges affecting young people and jobseekers more broadly.

Indeed, given the number and complexity of the challenges that young, disadvantaged jobseekers face, **yourtown** has long been an advocate for changes to the current jobactive model owing to its notable lack of effective, holistic support to address the multi-faceted issues facing disadvantaged jobseekers. We have even developed, and are trialling and evaluating, a new model of support (your job, your way) for long-term unemployed young people - a cohort whose numbers continue to increase - which is designed to better address their barriers to sustainable employment. A tragic start to a young life and a factor we recognise as a barrier to finding work itself, long-term unemployment occurs disproportionately among young people who comprise 16% of the total population, but 26.1% of long-term unemployed people.²

Hence, whilst we recognise that the lack of appropriate employment is a key factor preventing young people from being successful in their job search, we know that disadvantaged young jobseekers require significant support to prepare for, and to be able to maintain, employment. We therefore share our insight and research with the Committee in our submission in the hope that, in addition to recognising the need for further government action in the development of more secure and meaningful jobs for young people, the Committee will fully understand the complexity of the issues that young disadvantaged jobseekers must overcome to secure work, so 'sustainable employment' not only includes the achievement of stable and meaningful work but also a raft of support measures both pre and post employment.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force data (June 2019)

² Australian Government (2018) The next generation of employment services. Discussion paper. Appendix G, 108

The benefits of stable employment for young people

Through our work with young people, we know that employment has the power to provide every young person with the opportunity to reach their potential in life and, like many others, we believe that employment is critically important to an individual's wellbeing. We see firsthand the transformational change that stable employment brings to the young people with whom we work, driving our motivation to deliver services in this area. Employment has an array of social and economic benefits for individuals, families and communities. These include:³

- **Providing income stability and security** – which enables individuals and families to plan for the future, to take control of their lives and to be independent, as well as contributing to better living standards and quality of life
- **Building and maintaining skills and knowledge** – to enable people to grow and develop and sustain meaningful work, develop passion, a sense of purpose and reinforce a sense of identity
- **Supporting participation** – employment opens up social networks and engagement at work and within the wider community, helps forge a sense of belonging and enables individuals to support their family and/or community economically
- **Improving health and wellbeing** – through providing the above benefits, a secure job provides significant health and wellbeing benefits, including in particular, benefits for mental health. With young people at particular risk of mental health problems and unemployment,⁴ this is important as research increasingly shows the links between poor mental health and unemployment. For example, of the 41% of young job seekers registered with employment programs,⁵ it is estimated that 75% are in psychological distress. With mental ill-health on the rise amongst young people, stable employment is undoubtedly a protective factor that could save individuals, families and communities the significant economic and social costs associated with lifelong mental illness.
- **Reducing the need for government welfare payments and support services across the board, while increasing productivity and tax collection.** This is particularly important in relation to disadvantaged jobseekers who are likely to have experienced intergenerational disadvantage, with sustainable employment having considerable potential to break cycles of disadvantage and therefore so too the need for government support for future family generations. This latter point is key to savings in public funds as families affected by intergenerational disadvantage need and draw from a range of government services throughout their lives. Furthermore, research into New Zealand's actuarial approach to calculating welfare costs found that 79% of the country's welfare liability is attached to individuals who entered the welfare system before the age of 20, demonstrating the potential savings to government if the unemployment cycle can be broken before adulthood.⁶

³ Anglicare Australia (2018) Jobs Availability Snapshot 2018, Australian Government Productivity Commission (April 2015) Housing Assistance and Employment in Australia: Productivity Commission Research Paper. Volume I: Chapters, Social Ventures Australia (February 2019). Fundamental principles for youth employment. and Waddell, G. & Burton, K. 2006. Is work good for your health and well-being? Executive Summary. Norwich: TSO

⁴ Rickwood D.J., Deane F.P., Wilson C.J. When and how do young people seek professional help for mental health problems? The Medical Journal of Australia. 2007;187(7 Suppl):S35-9.

⁵ Reavley N.J., Yap M.B., Wright A., Jorm A.F. Actions taken by young people to deal with mental disorders: findings from an Australian national survey of youth. Early intervention in psychiatry. 2011;5(4):335-42

⁶ Taylor Fry, (30 June 2013) Actuarial valuation of the Benefit System for Working-age Adults

Arguably, the positive effects of sustainable employment for disadvantaged cohorts are most evident as their lives stand to be most drastically changed in a range of different ways. Indeed, the full scale of the benefits of sustainable employment for disadvantaged young people can be seen in research that we undertook with Griffith University ('Reconnecting Disaffected Youth Through Successful Transition to Work' funded by the ARC, Project LP:0776519) with 542 clients who engaged with **yourtown** social enterprises.⁷ Our social enterprises provide paid employment to disadvantaged unemployed young people in a supported environment to prepare them to transition to the mainstream workforce.

Following completion of the social enterprise program, research findings showed significant shifts in client wellbeing and self-esteem and substantial improvement in client social interactions with characteristics of greater communicability, cooperation and planning. Upon completion of the social enterprise program, there were statistically significant improvements from commencement across a range of areas, such as:

- Anti-social and offending behaviour:
 - 77.9% had no trouble with the policy - 21.2% improvement
 - 73.9% had anger management problems - 18.8% improvement
 - 73.9% had avoided physical altercations - 28% improvement
- Substance abuse
 - 75% had not taken illicit drugs - 22.7% improvement
- Self-esteem and emotional wellbeing
 - 84.7% were able to face their problems - 19.% increase
 - 82.2% were satisfied with themselves overall - 15.5% increase
 - 70.3% had healthy self-respect - 27.7% improvement
 - 68% were no longer feeling useless - 26.1% improvement
- Language, literacy and numeracy
 - 83.5% had effective functional language and communication skills - 16.5% increase
 - 74.7% had effective functional literacy skills - 19.7% improvement
 - 51.4% had effective functional numeracy skills - 21.5% increase
- Personal agency
 - 82% were willing to learn new skills - 26.8% increase
 - 84.5% were utilising resources to reach their goals - 33.8% increase
- Interpersonal and relational agency
 - 78.3% were effective at cooperating with others to achieve goals - 28.6%
 - 71.1% were engaged in help-seeking behaviour to achieve goals = 22.5% increase
- Decision-making
 - 77.5% had effective data comprehension skills in decision-making - 34.1% increase
 - 88.9% felt in control of their decisions - 26.8%

⁷ <https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/BT-Reconnecting-Disaffected-Youth-Through-Successful-Transition-to-Work-Report.pdf>

It is important to note that clients in this research received a range of support during their participation of the program. This support is holistic and includes coordinated accredited training, education and employment preparation workshops alongside access to youth worker and counselling support.

Understanding what the barriers are that prevent young people from being able to engage with employment is clearly critical given the significant economic and social outcomes for individuals and communities that arise from secure work. To this end, in the following section, we set out the structural barriers that make young people a disadvantaged jobseeking cohort in their own right, as well as those barriers – systemic and personal – that place disadvantaged young people at higher risk of unemployment and long-term unemployment.

Barriers to employment for young people

Victoria is not alone in having a significantly higher youth unemployment rate than the unemployment rate for all other persons (9.8% and 4.5% respectively⁸). It is a pattern that affects the rest of Australia and many other similar nations, and is particularly evident following an economic crisis. For example, before the GFC, a young person spent an average of 13 weeks looking for work, less than 20% of whom were long-term unemployed. However, by February 2014, a young person spent an average of 29 weeks looking for work, and over 55% of them were as long-term unemployed.⁹

Barriers to young people successfully finding work are wide-ranging and include structural, systemic and personal barriers.

Structural barriers to youth employment

A number of structural barriers are held responsible for high youth unemployment and long-term youth unemployment, including:

- The increasing casualisation of work and underemployment
- An ageing workforce
- Fewer low skilled, entry-level jobs
- Higher demand for higher skilled employees and credential inflation
- Low levels of macroeconomic stimulation (e.g. public infrastructure spending)¹⁰

Together, these barriers result in there simply being too few appropriate jobs for young people.¹¹ Indeed, Anglicare's Jobs Availability Snapshot has continued to show (since 2016 when it began) that there are insufficient numbers of low-skill, entry-level jobs available for jobseekers with barriers to work.¹² In May 2018, there were 110,735 jobseekers with barriers to work but only 14% of jobs advertised were low-skill, entry-level jobs, with 4-5 people competing for each of these jobs.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force data (June 2019)

⁹ Social Ventures Australia (February 2019). Fundamental principles for youth employment.

¹⁰ Social Ventures Australia (February 2019). Fundamental principles for youth employment.

¹¹ Muir, K, Powell, A & Butler, R. (19 March 2015) A whacking stick is not enough to get young people into work

¹² Anglicare Australia (2018) Jobs Availability Snapshot 2018

Hence, there is a clear lack of appropriate employment for young people entering the workforce, and for disadvantage young jobseekers in particular. As our economy and society evolves – and unless government intervenes – young people are likely to be further squeezed in the labour market and will find it increasingly difficult to gain secure and meaningful work, creating a range of long-lasting social and economic outcomes that detrimentally impact their lives, their families and their communities as a result.

Systemic barriers to youth employment

We have identified the following systemic barriers to disadvantaged young people obtaining employment: school engagement, employment services and jobseeker payments.

- **School engagement**

School and other educational institutions and community organisations can help prepare young people to enter the workforce.¹⁵ However, we know that for too many young people – particularly those who have challenging circumstances at home (see personal barriers below) – school is not set up to support their engagement and many schools and their staff are ill-prepared to recognise and appropriately respond to the signs of student trauma and other serious issues. The result is that for too many children and young people school becomes a barrier and they disengage from school and leave without their Year 12 certificate.

However, as a provider of school reengagement programs for disadvantaged children and young people, we know that it is possible to provide this cohort with the support they need to achieve important educational outcomes. Hence, we believe that schools need to review their current ways of working with disadvantaged students so that they are better equipped to understand their backgrounds and accommodate their needs, rather than see them as a problem or as a disrupting force, and continue to seek to make them to conform to circumstances in which they are not able to cope and thrive.

Furthermore, this should include preparing all students for the workplace by providing education on employment and pre-employment (which can be independently delivered) and inviting local employers into the school so that they can meet with students and share with them their expectations of employees. Leaving young people to learn about the world of work outside the school only further disadvantages at risk cohorts of young people who are less likely to have role models who work and can tell them about what to expect. In turn, employers can be educated about how best to support young people at work, particularly those most disadvantaged, which could have notable mutual benefits for local employers in need of employees and local students in need of work. It would also help to reduce employers' stigma about recruiting through jobactive and employing disadvantaged jobseekers.

- **Employment services**

Through our delivery of jobactive as a youth specialist, we have been struck by the prevalence of mental health issues in long-term unemployed young people. Indeed, it is an area of the program that we have long highlighted to the Federal Government as in need of reform as research,

¹⁵ Social Ventures Australia (February 2019). Fundamental principles for youth employment.

including our own, shows that unemployed young people, and especially long-term unemployed young people, are disproportionately affected by mental ill-health compared with both their employed peers and older cohorts of unemployed people.¹⁴ However, given the structure and high caseload of jobactive, it is extremely difficult to meet the mental health needs of young people who present with them through the program due to the lack of funding to support psychological and/or psychiatric interventions.

For example, jobactive's assessment (the Job Seeker Classification Instrument), which is conducted by Centrelink, has been found to not accurately stream clients, and as a result many clients with complex issues such as mental health, homelessness or integrating back into the community post detention find themselves placed into Stream A (designed to assist job seekers with a high level of independence).¹⁵ In such incidences, we will reassess these clients so that their needs can be better met but even the scope for meeting complex needs in jobactive is limited given the caseload of jobactive staff (of around 130 clients), consisting of clients from a range of streams, whilst the reclassification process is slow meaning that supports may not be provided when they are needed.

This is of particular concern given young people are among the most disadvantaged in the labour market, that their mental health suffers the longer they remain unemployed and since long-term unemployment itself is a contributing factor to mental ill-health. Yet too many find themselves in a system that is not well equipped to support and address their mental health issues, and therefore to help them find work. Furthermore, whilst we recognise long-term unemployment as a barrier to finding work itself, the jobactive system does not and so long-term unemployed clients are not automatically provided the greater support that they need.

In its 2018 Discussion Paper 'The next generation of employment services', the Australian government suggests that more support should be provided to help disadvantaged job seekers to find work, noting that some job seekers face significant, complex barriers to both entering and sustaining work.¹⁶ Hence, the Australian government's Employment Services Expert Advisory Panel has suggested that a future employment services model could direct additional resources to the most disadvantaged job seekers. The OECD also recommends that government employment services "concentrate...scarce resources on job seekers who have become long-term unemployed, or ideally those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed".¹⁷

In fact, OECD analysis has found that job seekers who face substantial barriers to employment require intensive support if they are to find and maintain work, an approach to helping disadvantaged job seekers that has also been found to be effective in Australia's employment services.¹⁸ We have long advocated for person-centred and holistic support for Australia's disadvantaged young unemployed given, the number of, and multidimensional nature of the challenges they face. This includes calling for a much reduced caseload for employment

¹⁴ yourtown (March 2016) Tackling Long-Term Youth Unemployment: Discussion Paper: https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/Long-term%20Youth%20Unemployment%20Discussion%20Paper_0.pdf

¹⁵ Education and Employment References Committee Report 'Jobactive: failing those it is intended to serve' (February 2019)

¹⁶ Australian government (2018). The next generation of employment services: Discussion paper.

¹⁷ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2015). Employment Outlook 2015. OECD Publishing.

¹⁸ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2013). Better Practice Guide 4: Case Management.

consultants (jobactive consultants currently have an average caseload of 148 clients¹⁹) so that they have the time to develop rapport and trust with clients, which is an approach we are currently trialing in your job your way.

- Jobseeker payments

Although Australians widely accept that there should be a safety net in place to support unemployed people, where the balance sits in regards to the level of payments to both enable and incentivise effective jobseeking is disputed. Currently, however, the levels of Newstart and youth allowance are too low and only further compound the desperate circumstances of individuals, families and communities in poverty. Research undertaken by ACOSS and Jobs Australia into jobseekers support this argument: of those currently in receipt on payments relating to unemployment, 44% had received them for more than 2 years, and 15% for more than 5 years.

Understandably, if people are having to fixate on how they will get by each day, there is little likelihood they will have the energy to look for work and instead jobseeking becomes another significant source of stress in their lives. Hence, there is increasing agreement that the safety net should be set at a level that better supports people to meaningfully look for work and to this end, therefore, that Newstart and the Youth Allowance should be increased.²⁰

Recommendation 1: Provide support for children and young people at risk of disengaging or who have disengaged from school and education, as well as consider how educational environments can be reformed to better accommodate the needs of a wider cohort of children and young people – particularly for those who have been affected by significant trauma or for whom the traditional school environment is not a good fit.

Recommendation 2: Provide guidelines for schools on how to work with local employers and increase employer-student engagement within school.

Recommendation 3: The Victorian government should lobby the Federal government to better support the mental health needs of young people accessing jobactive, TTW and other employment services, or alternatively, provide a state-funded parallel service to support these needs.

Recommendation 4: That the Victorian Government seeks to review the current financial support available to young jobseekers through COAG.

Personal barriers

There are a number of cohorts of young jobseekers who are more likely to experience unemployment and for longer periods than their counterparts. The cohorts most at-risk of unemployment that are widely recognised in Australia are:²¹

- Young people with a disability,
- Young First Australians,

¹⁹ Lewis, J., Considine, M., O'Sullivan, S., Nguyen, P. and McGann, M (2016) From entitlement to Experiment: The New Governance of Welfare to Work – Australian Report back o Industry Partners. University of Melbourne.

²⁰ E.g. Anglicare Australia (2018) Jobs Availability Snapshot 2018, and <https://www.yourlifechoices.com.au/news/welfare-payees-punished-says-un>

²¹ Social Ventures Australia (February 2019). Fundamental principles for youth employment.

- Young people with caring responsibilities,
- Young people from low socio-economic families and
- Young people without Year 12 attainment.

For those young people who find themselves unemployed and for longer periods, many of these issues intersect or are interrelated, and often they are compounded by intergenerational disadvantage. For example, when families experience multifaceted disadvantage - such as financial hardship, poor housing/overcrowding or homelessness, family conflict or dysfunction, mental health issues, involvement with the justice system or drug and alcohol misuse - children's school attendance and education is likely to suffer.²² Indeed, disadvantaged students are significantly behind in reading and maths, Year 12 completion rates are nearly 20% lower than for students from high SES backgrounds and university students from high SES backgrounds are three times more likely to attend than students from low SES backgrounds.²³

Research findings also overwhelmingly demonstrate that poor educational outcomes lead to poor employment outcomes, whilst financial hardship induces stress and significantly impacts on people's ability to function well in other areas of life. Conversely, higher educational attainment results in improved employment and therefore economic outcomes for an individual, a family and a community.²⁴ **yourtown** works with many children and families for whom intergenerational disadvantage is a reality. Many of our clients accessing our employment support programs have parents who have never worked or who are unemployed, and have been affected by a range of other issues such as childhood trauma. It is likely, that without appropriate support they may too lead lives mirroring that of their parents.

Often, those young people with the most significant personal barriers to overcome become long-term unemployed. Given the increasing numbers of clients we work with who are experiencing long-term unemployment, we have undertaken significant research with this cohort to better understand both the barriers to employment from their perspectives and the support they require to help find secure employment. In the following section, we outline this research and our new model of support which we are currently trialling and evaluating.

²² The Smith Family: <https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/poverty-in-australia>

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

More than just a job: the support long-term unemployed jobseekers require

Increasing numbers of young people are experiencing long-term unemployment. Long-term youth unemployment is defined as young people aged between 15 and 24 years who have been unsuccessful in securing work for any period longer than two weeks, for at least one year. In 2006/07 over 44,000 young people were in long-term unemployment. This rose to over 51,000 young people in 2016-17.

yourtown works with more than 7% of these young people through our employment support programs. Subsequently, we have an extensive knowledge of the barriers young people face when trying to access sustainable work as well of the enduring detrimental impact that long-term unemployment can have on young lives.

What we know

Long-term unemployed young people deal with a range of highly complex and multifaceted issues, unlike those who are in short-term unemployment, which can increase their risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market. These barriers and their consequences are compounded as time spent in unemployment is prolonged, further impeding their opportunities in acquiring long-term sustainable work. However, current difficulties in accessing suitable longitudinal data for young people means there is a lack of specific research in how to best support these young people and tackle this ongoing issue. Furthermore, rigorous evaluations of current responses to alleviate long-term youth unemployment are scant.

To help address this gap in knowledge, **yourtown** undertook a survey of nearly 300 young people in long-term unemployment across Australia. Through this research, young people told us that the following issues prevented them from finding employment:

- Educational - such as low levels of formal schooling, literacy and numeracy
- Vocational - such as limited work history and low work skills
- Contextual - such as intergenerational unemployment and living in low socio-economic areas
- Practical - such as not having a driver's licence and limited access to support through social/familial networks or services
- Psycho-social - such as mental health concerns, substance use, and homelessness
- Cognitive-motivational - such as low self-esteem and poor decision-making skills; and
- Anti-social - such as offending history and poor anger management

A diverse group with diverse needs

Our survey also showed that young people in long-term unemployment are not a homogenous group and different youth cohorts have varying experiences of long-term unemployment – critical insight when developing effective interventions. For example, young men, who have a higher rate of long-term youth unemployment than their female counterparts, told us that not having a driver's licence, limited transport, low literacy and numeracy, anger management issues, unstable accommodation, and offending history were more important barriers to employment. Young women, on the other hand, told us that they more often experience a lack of available jobs, low self-esteem and mental health issues as employment barriers.

First Australian young people ranked a lack of qualifications as the main barrier to employment, whilst young people with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds rated difficulties in accessing social and institutional support due to their residency or citizenship status as a principal work barrier. The top issue for young people in regional and remote areas was the lack of jobs, whereas young people in metropolitan cities were more likely to view limited work experience, low work skills, and having no car as barriers to employment.

From our research findings, we developed a specific model to help long-term unemployed young people into work – your job, your way - and which in view of their needs, is based on providing relationship-based, holistic and intensive case management support. We are currently piloting and rigorously evaluating this model and set the details of this model below to demonstrate what we believe is needed to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to successfully find and sustain work.

your job, your way – a new model of support for long-term youth unemployment

Given the complex needs of long-term unemployed young people, it became increasingly clear that existing caseload sizes in jobactive do not provide our consultants with the time required to develop the rapport and trust necessary to work with these clients, to comprehensively understand their individual needs, strengths and interests, or to develop a detailed plan of action in collaboration with other service providers, including post-employment strategies targeting ongoing capability development.

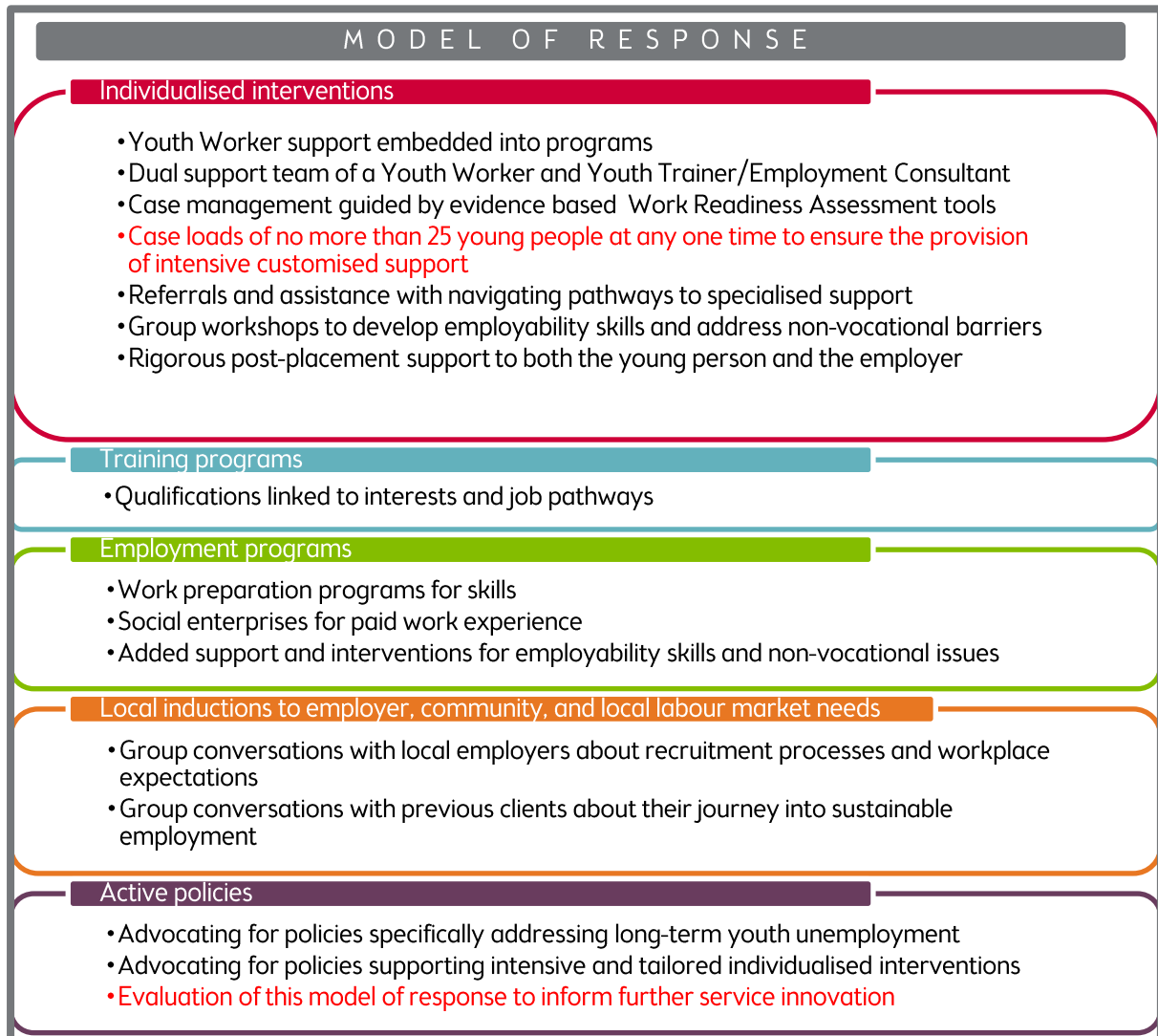
We therefore used our research with young people alongside other existing research into tackling youth unemployment to develop a model for support services to effectively assist long-term unemployed young people to engage in sustainable employment. Named **your job, your way**, it is designed to meet a range of different needs throughout the life of a long-term unemployed young person's journey into work. In addition, it recognises that long-term unemployment is a barrier to finding work itself and compounds existing issues that prevent job obtainment.

your job your way targets young people aged 16-24 who have been unemployed for over 52 weeks, and are at high risk of social exclusion and permanent detachment from the labour market. Central to its approach is the delivery of intensive, concurrent services and support to small active caseloads of around 25 young people. This is achieved through the provision of a dual support team of a qualified case manager (Pathways Coach) and an Employment Mentor – both of whom have been recruited for their knowledge and skills in identifying and working with people with mental health issues - who work with the young person using a collaborative strengths-based, trauma-informed approach, coupled with targeted employer engagement and intensive 'in work' mentoring to 26 weeks.

We are currently funding pilots of the model in Elizabeth in South Australia, Caboolture in Queensland and, with the Australian Department of Social Services, Devenport-Burnie in Tasmania – three areas of high disadvantage and high rates of long-term youth unemployment. The Macquarie Group Foundation is also funding the Centre for Social Impact (University of New South Wales) to provide an independent evaluation of these pilots to ensure

that the effectiveness and impact of these pilots on young people and the community is thoroughly tested and measured. We are confident that we will be able to share some positive results showing how intensive relationship-based approaches can effectively transition Australia's most disadvantaged job seekers into sustainable employment in the near future.

The key elements in our recommended model of response are set out below and a fuller description of this service model and its evidence base is outlined in the **yourtown** Advocacy Paper titled Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment.²⁵



Recommendation 5: That the Victorian Government increases its funding for specialist employment support programs targeting long-term unemployed young people.

²⁵ **yourtown** Advocacy Paper (December 2016) Tackling Long-term Youth Unemployment: <https://www.yourtown.com.au/sites/default/files/document/LTYU%20Advocacy%20Paper%20-%20December%202016.pdf>