

Thursday, 14 April, 2016

Number of long-term unemployed young people at all time high

The national rate of young people in long-term unemployment is at an all-time high. A **yourtown** discussion paper released today into tackling long-term youth unemployment also found these young people are among the most disadvantaged in the labour market.

The study found the long-term unemployment rate is highest for young people aged 15-24 at 28%. This has continued to increase since 2002. The **yourtown** paper is the first part of a new study initiated by **yourtown** aimed at exploring this issue and developing strategies to break the cycle of youth unemployment. The paper is available at yourtown.com.au/research and interested members of the community are invited to comment.

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures (2016) show there were more than 50,000 young people aged 15 to 24 years in long-term unemployment last year, meaning they had been out of work for at least a year. The prevalence of young people in this category has increased since 2007, reaching its highest point in 2015.

yourtown CEO Tracy Adams said the consequences of long-term youth unemployment are a social issue that has ongoing effects to the community.

“From low self-esteem, to poor mental and physical health, the longer young people are unemployed, the harder it can be to break that cycle and find a job,” she said.

According to Ms Adams young people in long-term unemployment had a particularly difficult time in the labour market due to their low social capital, that is, not having established contacts in the workforce as well as a lack of opportunity to develop knowledge about employment and work practices gained from work experience.

“These issues can be exacerbated if employers hold negative views of unemployed young people and they’re competing with job seekers who have higher levels of experience, qualifications, and skills,” Ms Adams said.

“We need to help these young people develop their social capital and work experience so that they are seen as more employable.”

yourtown has recently launched a new employment program in 12 of the most disadvantaged areas of Australia, aimed at getting unemployed young people into work.

“**Transition to Work** is the latest **yourtown** program providing young people with intensive, pre-employment support to improve their work readiness and help them find work, education or training opportunities,” she said.

“Delivered in partnership with the Federal Department of Employment, it’s aimed at adolescents aged 15-21, particularly young school leavers.

“We work with young job seekers to identify their strengths, aspirations, vocational aptitudes, transferable skills and the practical challenges they face to securing work.

“Our goal is to help these young people improve their chances of getting a job and find their place in the community and ensure we do break the cycle of unemployment.”

yourtown has a long history of providing tailored programs that help give young people a great start in life, helping thousands of young Australians into training and work.

Melissa Booth is just one of those young people. She took part in **yourtown** vocational training and counselling programs after facing some tough times as a teenager. She went on to complete a carpentry apprenticeship, work overseas and is now working in the Australian tourism industry.

“I was focused at school and achieved well throughout my academic life and unlike most other youth my age, I always seemed to know which direction my life was going,” Melissa said.

“That direction became dulled through year 11 and 12 when I became depressed and developed an eating disorder.

“If there is one thing that my experiences have taught me, it’s that life can change in a second.

“I originally entered into BoysTown (**yourtown**) with the intent to escape life. Instead, it helped me heal and once again know how to embrace life. For that I am and will be forever grateful.”

All *Transition to Work* sites have opened from April 4 at locations across Australia; including the regions of Wivenhoe, Sydney South West, Mid North SA, Sydney Greater West and Brisbane South East. The program is funded by the Australian Government.

For further information on the **Transition to Work** program and locations, please call **yourtown** on 07 3368 3399 or visit www.employment.gov.au/transition-work

yourtown is a national, community-based organisation with over 54 years’ experience working with young people facing multiple barriers to engaging in learning and work. **yourtown** currently operates across five states, employing over 700 people who are committed to helping young Australians build brighter futures.

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Interview/filming opportunities:

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