2023

JOBS SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS FORUM REPORT

PREPARED BY

JOINT NORTHWEST SYDNEY BUSINESS CHAMBERS WORKING GROUP

11/10/2023

OUR PURPOSE

What are we hoping to achieve ?

There are 3 things we're hoping to see as outcomes from the Jobs Skills and Youth Employment Pathways Forum process.

- Connecting Stakeholders together to work towards practical solutions take improve the process of helping people who are seeking to be employed, connect to those businesses who want employees, of all types, sizes, abilities, and age groups.
- To begin to identify the roadblocks that exist today to achieving the goal of Employment, Jobs and Skills growth.
- To identity the practical solutions that can remove those barriers.

The focus of the program is not to debate Government Policy, but rather to focus on the practical solutions and realities that are impacting people's lives and businesses.

THE GAPS

IDENTIFYING THE GAPS

Session 1 of the 2023 Forum focused on Identifying the Gaps in current education - recruitment - employment processes.

Question 1. What challenges do Job seekers face in moving from education/skills development to employment?

THE GAPS

THE GAPS

The following were responses from the stakeholders at the Forum.

- Career advisors are limited in their effectiveness in helping young people as they are they are not employers and don't have that perspective.
- Employers don't understand current day mental health issues of employee's and job seekers.
- Lack of meaningful incentives makes convincing businesses to take on apprentices and interns a challenge.
- Employee networks are weak.
- Employers are scared that young people will swap jobs quickly, so they are hesitant to invest in them.
- Employers need help to adapt to engage with the next generation of the workforce.
- Young people want to be entrepreneurs and work in creative industries and roles.

THE GAPS

THE GAPS (CONT'D)

- Employees entering the workforce have No Experience, often have issues accessing transport / No License
- There is potential lack of parental encouragement, and support, and parents are lacking knowledge and skills to equip their children.
- COVID has meant a lack of people skills, communication skills, mental health and anxiety in young people.
- Communication skills are underdeveloped in employees and employers
- Technology / phones are a big distraction for workers.
- Lack of understanding of expectations of employers
- Businesses are underestimating the abilities of workers and are failing to upskill/cross train
- Lack of education for real, transferable, people skills to the workforce
- Lack of assistance from educational / institutions to link students to workforce.

THE GAPS

THE GAPS (CONT'D)

- Students, who are not going on to tertiary education, do not have pathways /preparation to trades & non-university work.
- Employers are not getting access to students for work placements.
- Lack of awareness, exposure & experience for students about work & workplaces.
- Not enough pathways to any career early on in the education system – should start in year 7.
- Casual /part-time jobs may not be real pathways to permanent long term work.
- Educate vs Train (Vocational skills are needed), Critical thinking, Communication, Team building, Soft skills
- Need to expand awareness of job options for people looking for work
- Lack of Confidence & Resilience – younger generations don't know how to keep going when its hard work

THE GAPS

THE GAPS (CONT'D)

- Experience is lacking (even at entry level)
- Difficult to translate experience to job ad's and responses
- Students don't see the value of work experience.
- Lack of transportation, especially for migrants or more remote communities.
- Education is providing theoretical knowledge but not practical.
- Businesses struggle in trusting the skills of the employee – Lack of hands on learning
- Youth don't know what they don't know – they are very disconnected from each other, not the same understanding of the importance of building connections, understand the pathways to do that, short attention span, no understanding that things take time (e.g. in a rush to be CEO)
- Attitude – young people have a belief they are special, entitled, they are arrogant and lack focus.

THE GAPS

THE GAPS (CONT'D)

- Employers don't understand or want to understand younger generations, appreciate their flexibility, adaptability, open mindedness. There is a perception young people are lazy. There has been a massive cultural shift in generations, adults want to keep doing things the same way,
- We need a way to work together to acknowledge the cultural shift between generations, appreciate what we all bring to the table.
- Secondary education not geared up to teach people how to work, no focus on inherent job skills, how to take care of themselves in a job, how to navigate the workplace.
- Propagated Myth that if you don't get to Uni, you are not successful, but not everyone goes to Uni. If we don't create pathways to the workforce earlier, they risk dropping off into unemployment creating bigger barriers.

THE GAPS

THE GAPS (CONT'D)

- Lack of understanding of expectations in both the jobseeker and the employer. Coming out of Uni or School, their frame of reference about work and what they would like to do often comes from their parents.
- Education sector is not set up well to be able to give students exposure to different professions, what life is like in the workplace etc. so it is a shock for them on first day.
- There is a poor connection between Disability Services and employers, with government policy preventing Small Businesses offering jobs that pay well to people with a disability (as it impacts their essential health benefits).
- The process for enabling women to return to work after taking time off to have children is problematic - Their expectations of working conditions/flexibility and pay rates are completely outside of reality.
- There is no connection and support for people who have been in the prison system and want to improve their lives through work to obtain jobs.

THE BARRIERS

THE BARRIERS

Question 2. What are the barriers to employing:

- Young people,
- People with disabilities,
- Migrants,
- Older people,
- People returning to work after time away from work?

THE BARRIERS

THE BARRIERS

- Don't know what they don't know.
- Don't understand what's available.
- Don't know how to apply for a job.
- Lack of mental health support
- Inflexible thinking – 'I didn't get flexibility.'
- Businesses don't know how to address individual needs of these groups
- English skills
- Computer skills
- Visa requirements
- Reliable staff
- Completion rate finishing apprenticeship (due to money and lack of interest)
- No license to get to / from work
- Unrealistic expectations of employees (pay rate/Flexibility)
- Lack of Productivity of employees

THE BARRIERS (CONT'D)

- Employer inherent bias – generational bias's and expectations
- Communication issues between employers & education providers about the actual progress of their workers in the courses.
- How do employers source potential workers? Some contact is only through school careers advisors who are too busy to respond to the many emails etc.
- Students are not job ready.
- Very difficult for students/people with disabilities to get work.
- Lack of social/personable skills (young people)
- Agism – not hiring older people despite their experience and abilities (older people)
- Criminal record - not hiring people who have a criminal record even if it's for minor offences and have served their time, despite their experience and abilities.
- Costs of hiring, despite rebates, it's a huge cost.

THE BARRIERS

THE BARRIERS (CONT'D)

- Uncelebrated differences
- Lack of community understanding
- Paperwork (migrants) accessibility for migrants
- Lack of skills mismatch (migrants)
- Competition (migrants) for finding jobs.
- Lack of recognition of OS qualifications

Risk to employ and the costs of employing.
Youth:

- Time investment
- Training costs
- Risk of leaving
- Resilience
- Family commitments
- Driving license
- Apprenticeships

THE BARRIERS

THE BARRIERS (CONT'D)

Risk to employ and the costs of employing.

Disabled:
- Overcoming stereotypes
- Accessibility to work
- Training costs
- Loyalty of employee
- Awareness disconnection
- Access resources until 18 years.

Older People
- Skills (upskilling)
- Matching experience and skills to new jobs
- Flexibility
- Ageism

Return to Work
- Upskilling
- Matching
- Flexibility
- Productivity

THE BARRIERS

THE BARRIERS (CONT'D)

Barriers to employing.

- Perception of the job vs how it actually works
- Drivers License, lack of access to Public Transport
- Cost of Onboarding and training (including lost productivity of the existing team members training the new person)
- Confidence /attitude of employee
- Fast paced – changes in industry difficult to keep up with
- Mental health barrier & Social Skills lack of (covid impacts)
- Skills Shortage
- No Feedback from applications, demoralizing, and no skill building though the application process
- Language barriers
- Recognition of overseas qualifications
- Employers reluctant to employ people with disability - lack of knowledge in how to employ people with disability, lack of resources, need training
- Criminal record

THE BARRIERS (CONT'D)

- Neglecting processes to set up employees for success.
- Clarity of expectations
- Willingness of employee to assimilate into the company culture
- Ageism – under value experience
- Inexperience
- Pregnancy – Prospect of maternity leave/paternity leave
- Discrimination – disability
- Fear of failure and the costs
- Reverse discrimination, Nationality Bias / Cultural differences
- Businesses are concerned about employing 'woke' employees who will demand ridiculous personal rights/ have personal agendas, and create disruption to their business and customers with problems that have nothing to do with the workplace, the business and delivering services.

THE ROOT CAUSES

ROOT CAUSES

Question 3. What are the root causes of these barriers?

- Medium/Method
- Education
- Awareness
- Policy
- Lack of options
- Accessibility

THE ROOT CAUSES

ROOT CAUSES

What are the root causes of these barriers?

- Accessibility and flexibility
- Lack of Knowledge
- Don't know how to adapt.
- Businesses are set in their ways
- Qualifications inaccessible (time/cost)
- Parents expectations/support – HSC is not everything
- Participation 'reward' culture has undermined work ethic and sense of true accomplishment.
- Lack of focus on trades
- Employees want instant progress and advancement to management and higher paying jobs without the experience and runs on the board.
- Lack of information for parents to help students find their work pathway.
- No public transport. (last mile links missing to Metros/Trains.)

THE ROOT CAUSES

ROOT CAUSES (CONT'D)

- Kids going out of their local area to work.
- Access to information about work opportunities
- We're not linking local people with local jobs.
- Careers advisors – networks and skills vary from school to school. Therefore, different results for students.
- Education / communication – not proactive.
- System isn't structured to make education programs closer to workplace needs – eg transferable skills.
- We're not teaching micro-credentials, resilience, personality/character skills, practical skills (work ready)
- Teachers have limitations in giving practical skills.
- Cost of solutions (and narrowness of solutions eg Youth only programs that could do lots more with the same budget/functionality)
- Technology – use of, and reliance on
- Over Education without practical skills
- TAFE – needs a reputation Boost and clear purpose

THE ROOT CAUSES

ROOT CAUSES (CONT'D)

- Awareness of what's available is disjointed, and hard to find
- Expectations across generations
- Culture expectations
- Costs / risks are too high and not addressed
- Lack of education awareness of options (VET, UNI, TAFE, Employment)
- Lack of funding to upskill employees for small businesses
- Policies changing IR laws making employing even harder and more expensive
- Duplication of information - a lot of Noise
- Not enough places in the support options for both businesses and employees/learners
- 3 tiers of government that don't have clear demarcation and connection points
- No talent pool / database available to find employees/interns and work experience students
- Complexity of systems
- Access for disabled lacking
- Parental Expectations

THE SOLUTIONS

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Question 1.   Reflecting on the Root Causes in Session 1 - What is needed to address this root cause?
- Technology
- Advocacy / Policy
- Money
- Education / Awareness
- Access to information, … Other

Question 2.   Is it a temporary/interim solution or permanent solution?

Question 3.   Who should be involved in or responsible for implementing and owning the solution?

THE SOLUTIONS

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Clarify the roles of each stakeholder in the chain of activities that helps a person go from education to employment. With the outcomes of:

- Providing people real world work experiences, micro credentials (eg public speaking, team building, personality, collaboration, communication, professional behaviour and presentation),
- Understanding that schools job is to *educate* and not *train.* Schools role is to make kids ready to be taught, not make them ready to work.
- TAFE, Uni is the next step. Schools provide kids to them that are ready to learn - better collaboration between schools and Tertiary Education.
- Help young people understand transferability of their skills, ie from sports club, social groups, volunteer jobs etc. and how to translate them to benefit using them in a job.
- Identify how RTO's and Workplaces can Train employees/potential employees so they are skilled to work quickly, and get Government to support employers to do this financially.

THE SOLUTIONS

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (CONT'D)

Is it a temporary/interim solution or permanent solution?

- Long Term solution needed:
    - Need to shift fundamental perspectives.
    - Connection for those not connected
- Ongoing need for solutions focusing on continuously shifting needs of new generations of students and workers, and business conditions and processes.
- Mentoring employers to educate them about this difference between education and training.
- Advocacy to Government to truly support businesses in investing in *training people to gain skills* that make them productive employees

THE SOLUTIONS

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS (CONT'D)

Who should be involved in or responsible for implementing and owning the solution?

- Young People
- Industry and community leaders
- Businesses / Employers
- Government as a facilitator
- Council & Business Chambers could form an alliance to address the problem.
- Skills Industry Partnership (they are already going to schools)
- Schools
- Job Seekers

Collaboration between businesses, educators & Government

NEXT STEPS

Attendees of the Forum agreed that the process was a great step forward in working collaboratively to find practical and executable solutions to the challenges and barriers that prohibit successful employment and jobs growth in Northwest Sydney (and beyond).

The Stakeholders will be gathering again (inviting others to join them) in 2024 for a full day conference to progress work on these issues further with the goals of:

1. Defining exactly what we see as the underlying and various nuances of the barriers/root causes across each demographic.
2. Diving deeper in to the potential solutions to create a list of projects that working groups will begin implementing to trial solutions to the identified problems/barriers in Norwest Sydney.
3. Choosing a 'quick win' project such as *work experience guides for Businesses* to enable the program to be revived in 2025 and bridge the gap between schools and work places, so that students have opportunities to taste and see what work is like in the region across all industries.
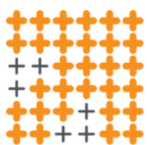
CONTRIBUTORS

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