



May 2013

Young People at Work

Youth Action Policy Paper

YOUTH ACTION

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About Us

Youth Action is the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW. Youth Action works towards a society where all young people are supported, engaged and valued. To achieve this, it is the role of Youth Action to:

1. Respond to social and political agendas relating to young people and the youth services sector
 2. Provide proactive leadership and advocacy and shape the agenda on issues affecting young people and youth services
 3. Collaborate on issues that affect young people and youth workers
 4. Promote a positive profile in the media and the community of young people and youth services
 5. Build capacity for young people to speak out and take action on issues that affect them
 6. Enhance the capacity of the youth services sector to provide high quality services
 7. Ensure Youth Action's organisational development, efficiency, effectiveness and good governance.
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Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Update the NSW Government website 'Young People at Work' to have more specific information for the rights of young people. Information to be included should include the rights of young people employed in the most common industries.

Recommendation 2: Conduct health and safety campaigns targeted at young people. The campaigns should address the key industries young people are most likely to be injured in to ensure time and resources are being used efficiently.

Recommendation 3: Develop policies that closely connect education and employment to improve the skills and training for young people. Bringing these policies together will better prepare young people for the workforce.

Recommendation 4: Raise awareness amongst key stakeholders and young people to prevent unpaid work. This can be achieved by increasing the scope of educational activities and making them available to a wider range of people.

Recommendation 5: Remove junior rates of pay and pay young people the same amount as adults.

Executive Summary

A strong economy requires a sustainable and dynamic working population. Central to this is the recognition of the vital role that young people play in the workforce, and sound policy to tackle the obstacles preventing more young people from developing the valuable skills and self-assurance that come from meaningful employment.

Young people constitute a substantial part of the workforce, with over 73 percent of 20-24 year olds and 47 percent of 15-19 year olds in some form of employment.¹ Many of these young people balance work commitments with schooling and tertiary studies or training. Youth Action's policy paper addresses some common problems experienced by young people at work: limited awareness of rights, overrepresentation in workplace health and safety injuries, exploitation and unpaid work, the limited prospects for skill development and training in casual work, and the discriminatory system of junior rates of pay.

Due to insufficient understanding of their rights and/or the framework in place for remedying infringements, not to mention a lack of confidence to speak out, young people continue to be susceptible to exploitation. To this end, Youth Action commends the NSW Government's "Young People at Work" website, but calls for further development of the site to include information targeting specific industries with higher concentrations of youth employees. In particular, Youth Action also calls for rights awareness campaigns to target particularly vulnerable groups of young people, such as young migrants and Indigenous Australians.

Young people are heavily overrepresented in workplace injury hospitalisations and fatalities. Many factors contribute to this, such as inadequate skills and training and a lack of awareness of employers' obligations and their own

¹ The Foundation for Young Australians, 2012, 'How Young People Are Faring 2012' pp 9-10

rights and responsibilities. Youth Action recommends a targeted campaign, similar to one in the United Kingdom, launched by the British Safety Council, to engage and inform young workers about the relevant risks and provide them with strategies for effective communication.

With many young people eager to develop the skills and connections required for entering the competitive job market, unpaid work – in the form of internships, work experience placements and trial work – has become increasingly normalised despite its very significant consequences. For many young people, unpaid work results in drastic sacrifices by taking precious time away from study, paid employment necessary to get by, and personal time with loved ones. Youth Action considers various proposals and recommends a comprehensive engagement strategy with key stakeholders representing employers and employees, vulnerable workers, and educational institutions, to ensure clear guidelines to better regulate unpaid work.

When young people engage in paid work it is often of a temporary or casual nature. Unlike permanent and contracted workers, casual employees receive fewer opportunities for training and skill development. Skill development is essential for young people to remain competitive in the labour force, and prolonged engagement in temporary work can have a detrimental impact on those trying to transition into permanent employment. Of course, many young people are unable to even obtain temporary employment as their study loads and work placement requirements are all consuming. In order to address the imbalances between skills and training, Youth Action recommends policy development to better connect education and employment to improve skills and training opportunities for all young people.

Finally, Youth Action considers the current system that allows employers to pay junior rates based on the level of experience of workers. However, the fact that the only determinative factor of “experience” is age rather than competency results in disadvantages for many young people (up until the age of 21). For example, the policy paper discusses a case study of two adult

university students working at McDonalds who carry out the same tasks but receive a \$5/hour difference, as one is 18 and one 21. Youth Action's position is that junior rates of pay should be abolished.

The overriding message in this policy paper is that young people's inadequate training, limited unawareness of rights, and lack of confidence to speak up, places them in a position of vulnerability in the workforce. That being said, these issues cannot be remedied by purely focusing on young workers. Rather, Youth Action's various recommendations for multifaceted campaigns that engage and educate not only young people but moreover their employers, educators, and lawmakers, go a long way in ensuring that robust systems are put in place to improve the situation for young people at work. As a community we must prioritise these strategies for engaging young people in meaningful employment that develops their skills and confidence, and enables them to become productive members of the workforce.

Introduction

Young people are generally vulnerable members within the workplace due to limited work experience and limited work skills. Common problems encountered by young people include: lack of awareness of rights, health and safety, junior rates of pay and unpaid work. These problems can have a broad impact on the lives of young people; affecting their lives beyond the workplace and their future prospects. The workplace is an important environment for young people to develop self-confidence and social skills that are vital for employment and moreover are essential life skills. It is crucial to develop holistic policies that aim to benefit a broad range of people, as young people are not a homogenous group.

The wealth and success of Australia is largely influenced by the investment in education and labour force.² For this reason, it is important to effectively resolve the issues faced by young people in the workplace. Many people gain their first job between the ages of 15 – 24 whilst balancing education. The Report 'How Young People are Faring' discovered there is an increase of young people aged 15 – 19 engaging in education and employment. In 2012, 45.7% of young people not in education were engaged in full time employment compared with 45.3% in 2011.³ In regards to part time employment, 25.2% were employed, which is a rise from 23.8% in 2011. These statistics may indicate the lack of availability of employment for young people since the number of people looking for work still remained as high (at 13%) in 2011. Nonetheless, it is clear that young people make up a large amount of the education and employment sector and it is worthwhile to address the issues faced by young people in these sectors.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, *Australian Workers: Education and Workplace Training*, cat.no. 4102.0, ABS, Canberra, viewed 21 November 2012, <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features60Sep+2010>>

³ Foundation for Young Australians, *How Young People Are Faring 2012*, p.10

Defining Precarious Employment

Changes in society and the economy over recent years have drastically changed the nature of employment. The business model that moves the risks connected with employment from the employer to the worker and reduces work costs by reducing the quality of work has spread across both private and public industries.⁴ This expansion of the business model has been a primary reason for the growth of precarious employment, particularly amongst young people. The characteristics of precarious employment generally are:

1. They have short time horizons, are limited of duration or have a high risk of termination;
2. There is a lack of control over working conditions, the pace of work and wages;
3. There is a lack of protection in employment (legislative, collective agreement, custom or practice, social security); and
4. They are characterised by low incomes at or near defined poverty lines.⁵

This broad definition is useful for developing a comprehensive understanding of the work conditions many people, particularly young people face in Australian contemporary society. For people in precarious employment, it is difficult to effectively plan financially for the future and make an adequate amount of money for the cost of living. It is necessary for policy makers to acknowledge the growth of precarious employment in order to develop effective solutions.

⁴ Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia 2012, *Lives on Hold: Unlocking the Potential of Australia's Workforce*, Australian Council of Trade Unions

⁵ Burgess, J & Campbell. 1998, 'The Nature and Dimensions of Precarious Employment in Australia', *Labour and Industry*, vol. 8, no. 3, p.7.

Common Problems Experienced by Youth in the Workforce

Awareness of Rights

Limited knowledge of employment rights can easily result in exploitation. However, it is just not the extent of the awareness of rights that hinder an individual's ability to ensure rights are being upheld, but the chance to participate in remedies to protect their rights. Young people are generally employed in industries that leave them in a vulnerable position in the workplace, such as casual employment in retail and hospitality. These job positions have less union membership and may provide slim opportunities for young people to voice their concerns and be involved with strong group to uphold their rights.⁶ Consequently, young people are prone to have poor working conditions. This is a broad term used to describe factors that may impact on their wellbeing. Such examples include:

- Inappropriate Occupational Health and Safety Standards
- Workplace harassment and bullying
- Inadequate breaks
- Incorrect payment for their labour

The 'Negotiating at Work' survey conducted by Youth Action examined the behaviour of young people experiencing poor working conditions and pay. The results reveal 77.2% would choose to endure poor working conditions rather than leave their job or search for new employment.⁷ The survey also discovered young people are likely to tolerate these poor working conditions until they complete their education, attain more skills or move onto a better

⁶ McDonald, P., Bailey, J., Oliver, D & Pini, B. 2007, 'Compounding Vulnerability? Young Workers' Employment Concerns and the Anticipated Impact of the WorkChoices Act', *Australian Bulletin of Labour*, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 63.

⁷ Youth Action Policy Association 2013, YAPA Industrial Relations Report 2006, Surry Hills, viewed 20 March <<http://www.yapa.org.au/yapa/policy/ir.pdf>>

job. These results were consistent amongst a wide variety of young people therefore indicating the general desire for young people to work.

It is necessary for young people to have a coherent understanding of their rights within the workplace in order to develop a sense of general well being, social skills and work skills. Without knowledge of their rights, it would be difficult for young people to come forward and reveal the injustices they are experiencing. There would be no framework for making claims due to the lack of awareness of the infringements of their rights and no identification of who is responsible; therefore injustices could not be rectified.

Health and Safety

Young people are overrepresented in workplace injuries compared with other age groups. Young people between the ages of 15 – 24 constitute over 13% of all injury deaths and 15% of all hospitalisations for injury.⁸ They are at high risk of injury in the workplace due to:

- Not possessing physical and psychological maturity;
- Not having adequate skills and training;
- Being unaware of their employers duties, their own rights and responsibilities;
- Lacking confidence in speaking out if there is a problem;
- Risk taking behaviour to impress peers; and
- Lacking supervision.

Injuries can range from minor to fatal injuries. Regardless of the type of injury experienced, it can have negative effects on future opportunities for individuals, such as employment, education and leisure. Moreover, injuries entail financial, human and social ramifications and are serious for both the

⁸ Youth Safe: Preventing Serious Injury in Young People, viewed 20 February 2013
<<http://www.youthsafe.org/factsnfigures/facts-a-figures.html>>

employer and worker. In NSW, more than \$65 million is spent on medical and health services for people aged 15-24 and their accidental injury.⁹ Considering the other expenses resulting from accidental injuries – including loss of revenue, damage in standard of living, and long-term treatment – the annual cost rises to over \$718 million.¹⁰ These statistics highlights the need for action to improve the standards of health and safety within the workplace.

Unpaid Work

Young people are easily exploitable targets due to their lack of experience in the workforce. Moreover, many young people are eager to gain work experience, develop employment connections, or earn money to help support their studies in order to develop a career. Unpaid work can occur through:

- Internship;
- Work experience; and
- Trial work.

The duration of unpaid work can occur for a few hours, days, weeks or months across various industries. The discretion of the employer plays an important role in young people participating in unpaid work. The employer may notify the employee immediately that they are not being reimbursed for their labour during trial work or the employer may choose not to divulge this information at all until the work is completed. It is common for young workers to participate in unpaid work for four main reasons:

1. It is assumed they would be reimbursed for their labour;
2. The employer was not explicit asserting trial work is not the same as being offered the job;
3. They are keen to add work experience to their resume; and

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

4. They are eager to attempt anything that will result in paid work.¹¹

There are numerous case studies on students undertaking trial work for the reasons listed above. It is difficult to know precisely how many cases young people undertake unpaid trial work per year due to unreported cases. The report *'Experience or Exploitation? The Nature, Prevalence and Regulation of Unpaid Work Experience, Internships and Trial Periods in Australia'*, written by University of Adelaide Law School Professors Andrew Stewart and Rosemary Owens, discovered many businesses in various industries were increasingly using unpaid work programs as a substitute for paid employees.

Surveys were distributed randomly amongst final law year students in the University of Adelaide, QUT and University of Western Sydney to discover their experience of unpaid work. The most common reasons to participate in unpaid work experience are: to improve employment prospects, expand their knowledge of the workplace and enhance work skills. Comments made in the survey revealed the advantages and disadvantages associated with unpaid work.

Some of the advantages identified included:

*'I believe it demonstrates the student's commitment and drive to securing employment in that organisation. To work unpaid shows a level of interest and determination to obtain paid employment in that area.'*¹²

*'...almost necessary without the right contacts in the legal industry'*¹³

Whereas, other respondents acknowledged the downfalls as:

¹¹ Australian Government: Fair Work Ombudsman, viewed 1 March 2013, <<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/student-placement-and-unpaid-work/pages/unpaid-trials.aspx>>

¹² Stewart, A & Owens, R 2013, *Experience or Exploitation? The Nature, Prevalence and Regulation of Unpaid Work Experience, Internship and Trial Periods in Australia*, Report for the Fair Work Ombudsman, p. 25.

¹³ *ibid.*

*'I don't understand how people can afford to do it. Studying at uni is a big enough expense. I also don't understand ethically how businesses can ask for that.'*¹⁴

*'...I don't get paid work, yet the firm still charges me out at \$150/hour. The firm is gaining a considerable financial advantage from being there. For me, giving up my own time is a big deal as I work 20+ hours at another job and study full time. I will be disappointed if this placement doesn't increase my employability.'*¹⁵

Although this survey is only a small sample of young people, the report noted this study is valuable to accurately shed light for the reality for most young people trying to enter a competitive labour market. This study can be supported by other cases, which are not restricted to young people trying to gain work experience in law. Such examples include:

- Daniel Neilson, an international postgraduate public relations student who was involved in 16 hours per week for 6 weeks internship program with a PR agency in Sydney. Neilson reported he not receive feedback regarding his performance on the job and 'did not learn anything new'.¹⁶
- An 18 year old beauty therapist working in Parramatta was not paid for six days of trial work, until the Office of Industrial Relations helped her to retrieve \$623 for her time¹⁷
- Fairfax Media discovered restaurants are using young and/or international student employees to work for an entire day or week during a 'trial' and are never reimbursed.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Prael, L. 2011, In(re)turn for Money, viewed 20 November 2012, <<http://www.upstart.net.au/2011/01/05/inretern-for-money/>>

¹⁷ 2nd December 2005, NSW Govt warns employers: 'Unpaid Trial Work is Illegal', viewed 20 November 2012, <<http://www.workplaceinfo.com.au/payroll/payments-and-expenses/nsw-govt-warns-employers-unpaid-trial-work-is-illegal>>

These case studies highlight the vulnerability of young people in the workforce. Policies must be implemented to address the issue of unpaid work and produce a clear boundary between experience and exploitation.

Skills and Training

Young people are more likely to be employed on a casual basis compared to other types of employment. Temporary work generally does not provide the opportunity for workers to develop their skills through training and development compared to permanent contracts. The skills developed in the workplace are an important factor in influencing various employment opportunities, such as income, job security and training. Individuals who have fewer skills are susceptible to lower income, unemployment and restricted access to training.¹⁹

Many young people employed in a part time basis are balancing study, usually full time study. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training published '*Adolescent Overload? The Report of the Inquiry into Combining School and Work: Supporting Successful Youth Transitions*' in October 2009. The report divulged over a quarter of million of Australians are balancing education and employment.²⁰ Balancing these commitments resulted in various advantages, such as developing generic work skills. The imbalance of skill development between those with employment and those without reinforces inequality within the workplace. Individuals with a lack of skills may not be able to easily access training opportunities and consequently remain behind and individuals who possess a broad range of skills can obtain more.

¹⁸ White, S & Lucas, C. 2013, 'Restaurants Dirty Secret Revealed', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, viewed 1 March 2013, <<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/restaurants-dirty-secret-revealed-20130125-2dc69.html>>

¹⁹ Connell, J & Burgess, J. 2006, 'The Influence of Precarious Employment on Career Development: The Current Situation in Australia', *Education + Training*, vol. 48, no. 7 p. 496.

²⁰ The House of Representatives, 2009. *Adolescent Overload? The Report of the Inquiry into Combining School and Work: Supporting Successful Youth Transitions*, Canberra, The Parliament of Commonwealth Australia.

Additionally, continuous participation in temporary employment enhances the difficulty of the transition to full time work. Research conducted by Newspoll Market Research discovered the main difficulty for approximately half of 18-24 year old job seekers was the skills and relevant experience they are able to bring to the job. The most common problem reported was lack of pertinent work experience to gain full time employment (54%), whilst 51% indicated relevant job skills hindered their ability to gain full time employment.²¹ Furthermore, many young people indicated they lacked personal skills to promote themselves to prospective employers. The most common issues included lack of self-confidence (43%), poor performance in job interviews (38%) and organising and compiling complicated applications needed for the job. Young people's feelings of inexperience in these areas indicates it is essential for young people to receive adequate training to develop their skills to remain competitive in the labour market. Continuously engaging in temporary work and receiving low wages could be detrimental for the prospects of young people to gain secure jobs and higher paying salaries.

Junior Rates of Pay

The junior rate of pay was based on the idea that employers will hire young people for a lower rate of pay because of their lack of experience. Junior rates of pay allow employers to pay some adult employees less if they are under 21. It is important to note, junior rates of pay was created during a time when young people did not have many choices. It was commonplace for young people to leave school when they turned 15 in the 1950s and 1960s. In that era, age was utilised as an indication of their skill level and accordingly employers would raise the pay rate as employees aged.²² In contemporary society, young people are staying longer in secondary education and pursuing tertiary education. Therefore, it is unfair to use age as an indication of the skill level of the individual since it neglects the idea that young employees can

²¹ Newspoll Market Research 2007, 'What are Young People Thinking', job no. 061026,

²² Healey, J. 2009, *Young People at Work*, p. 32.

make an important input into the workplace.²³ It would be more reasonable for employers to direct their attention to the level of competency of the employee, rather than assume age is an accurate identification of skill level.²⁴

Junior rates of pay can create a sense of inequality within the workplace. At Cremorne McDonald's in Sydney's north shore, for example, two employees have been doing the same tasks for more than two years. Both workers are students at The University of Sydney and work approximately 15 hours per week. Their experience is valuable within the workplace since they are often relied upon to guide new employees around the workplace. On an hourly basis, one young person, aged 22 receives \$17.7 per hour while the other, aged 18, is paid \$12.41. The 18 year old claimed 'it feels unfair because we have the same training, about the same level of experience and yet I'm disadvantaged in terms of income.'²⁵ The 22 year old agreed that his co-worker was being treated unfairly and should be paid the same rate since they do the same job. This case study highlights junior rates of pay do not fairly reward young people for their labour within the workforce.

The income received impacts greatly on the standard of living for the individual. Having a junior rate of pay fails to acknowledge that young people may also play an important role in supporting their families and themselves. For instance, it is common for young people, particularly from low socio economic backgrounds, to leave school and find a job. Young people may also have a sense of obligation to provide money to the family to help pay off debt, help family members migrate or to send money home to give to family and friends.²⁶

There are no guidelines for families regarding how they should share their income with their children, nor is there any monitoring of how the income of

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Aston, H. 2012, 'Downsized on Pay', Sydney Morning Herald, April 29, viewed 21 November 2012, <<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/downsized-on-pay-day-20120428-1xrrr.html>>

²⁶ Youth Action and Policy Association, 2013, Issues for Young Refugees, Surry Hills, viewed 20 March 2013, <<http://www.yapa.org.au/youthwork/facts/refugees.php>>

the parent(s) is shared amongst their children to determine whether it is adequate.²⁷ It is important to note, determining what is an adequate amount of money for parents to share with their children is subjective due to the different needs and values of each family. Therefore, junior rates of pay can be detrimental for the ability of the young person to support himself or herself and contribute to the family income. This difficulty is enhanced when considering the fact that many young people will be engaged in precarious employment. Paying young people the same amount as adults for the same work performed can improve the standard of living for a wide variety of young people and their families.

²⁷ Schneider, J. 2003, *Social Policy Research Centre: Income Sharing Between Parents And Young People Living at Home*, no. 125, The Social Policy Research Centre: The University of New South Wales, Sydney.

Solutions:

Awareness of Rights:

The creation of the website 'Young People at Work' by the New South Wales Government is an effective way for young people to easily access information about their rights in the workplace. However, this website only provides a general overview about the rights of young people in the workplace. It should be acknowledged that the government itself has identified this weakness, and has proposed to have specific information on the most common industries employing young people, to effectively educate youth about their entitlements in the workplace and essentially to be less susceptible to employer exploitation. This proposal is effective for targeting the most common problems experienced by young people.

However, reform of the website should go further. It would be useful for NSW to create a section for the different categories, particularly for young people more susceptible to exploitation, such as Indigenous Australians and migrants. In the United States of America, the Department of Labour established the website '*Youth Rules: Preparing the 21st Century Workforce*' with the aim to educate young people, employers, parents and any other interested stakeholder about the rights of young people in the workforce.²⁸ The website provides comprehensive information in layman terms, thereby making it accessible to a wide range of people. The website also provides a list of apps young people can use to discover their obligations and entitlements. Moreover, the website has categories targeted at different groups of youth, for example, there is a section for young immigrants. The existence of these categories acknowledges young people are not a homogenous group and their experiences in the workforce differ for all

²⁸ Youth Rules: Preparing the 21st century Workforce, U.S Department of Labor, viewed 15 December 2012, <<http://www.youthrules.dol.gov/>>

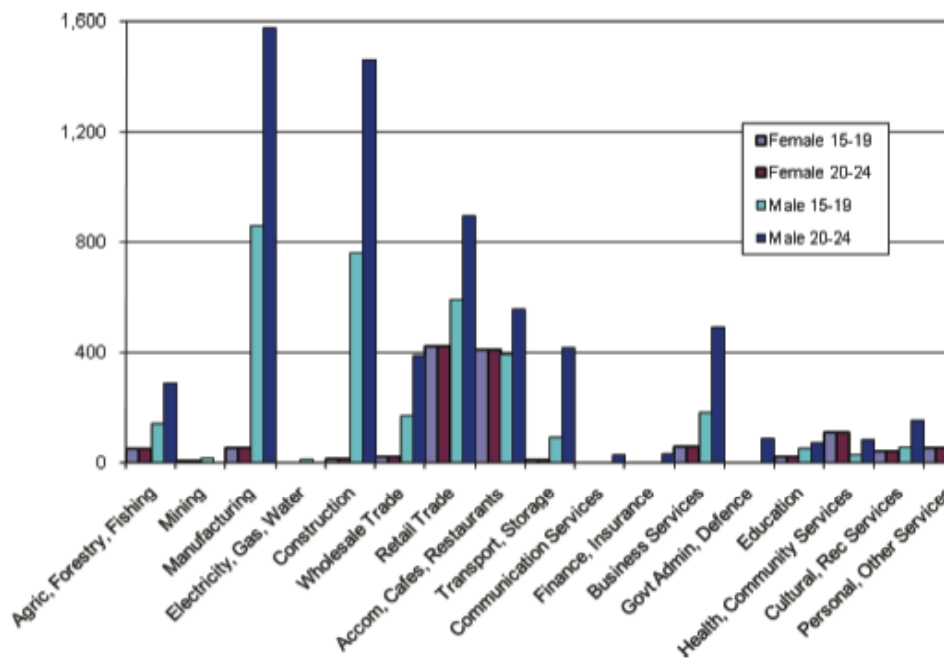
individuals. A similar level of detailed on the Young People at Work website is recommended.

Health and Safety in the Workplace

Workplace health and safety standards are heavily reliant on the practices of the employer and worker; improving safety and wellbeing of the workplace requires employers and workers to be aware of their obligations and rights. It would be beneficial to conduct campaigns for key industries identified as having the most accidents.

Health and safety issues have a greater impact on certain groups of the workforce, and certain employment industries. For example, available evidence highlights a considerable gender difference in work related injuries. These differences may be attributed to the different occupations males and females are generally found in. For instance, males are more likely to be undertaking apprenticeships compared to woman and are exposed to more dangerous working conditions.

Major workplace claims, gender, age group 2005/06-2007/08



In the United Kingdom, The British Safety Council established the campaign ‘*Speak Up, Stay Safe*’ in 2010. The primary focus of the campaign is to inform young people about risk in the workplace and communication to encourage safe behavior.²⁹ The campaign is effective in engaging young people and relevant stakeholders through an interactive website. This website includes videos, games and information about the apps available for smart phones to encourage young people to participate in the campaign. The website has a section for young people and workers, with both sections providing comprehensive information how to encourage a safe work environment.

A similar campaign that engages young people from diverse backgrounds would have the potential to improve communication between employers and workers to minimize the risk of injury in the workplace. The campaign could target the industries with highest amount of injuries to help minimize injuries within the workplace. Targeting key industries will enhance the relevancy of the campaign for young people and would be an effective use of time and resources.

Unpaid Work:

Young people need the chance to spend an appropriate amount of time in the workforce to develop relevant knowledge and skills applicable to the workforce. Achieving this requires an appropriate work environment that does not damage their income and standard of living. Nicholas Wilson suggested six methods to effectively prevent unpaid work:

- Better define unpaid work experiences;
- Expand guidance and education activities;
- Conduct targeted campaigns in key industries identified in the report;
- Instigate legal action before relevant courts where appropriate;

²⁹ British Safety Council, 2012, British Safety Council, United Kingdom, viewed 19th March 2013, <<https://www.britsafe.org/speakupstaysafe>>

- Improve liaison with relevant government agencies, and;
- Initiate comprehensive engagement with key stakeholders representing employers and employees, vulnerable workers (including young people and migrant workers,) and educational institutions.³⁰

The six recommendations proposed by Wilson are valuable to help prevent exploitation of young people through trial work. The last recommendation in particular has a considerable amount of potential to prevent unpaid work. Engagement may occur through holding seminars for the relevant stakeholders involved in the process of young people entering trial work, internships and work experience. The NSW Industrial Relations Commission currently conducts youth presentations with the aim to inform young people about their rights. In 2010, the NSW Industrial Relations Commission presented at 124 TAFE schools to approximately 3000 people.³¹ This youth presentation could be expanded to other educational institutions such as universities and schools to reach a wider range of people.

The Fair Work Ombudsman proposed to create a free and voluntary program aimed at young people in higher education. This involves a re-examination of the effectiveness of the Fair Act 2009, providing an education class for pertinent stakeholders, supplying an audit device for higher education suppliers that can use and distribute to verify the validity of unpaid programs and the explicit information catered to the Higher Education industry to deal with these problems. The planning of the program began in April 2013 and commenced in July 2013 with cooperation of primary stakeholders. It would be useful to distribute short surveys to participants in the program to gain feedback of the seminar. This will allow the FWO to identify its strengths and weaknesses and therefore improve its seminars to relevant stakeholders.

³⁰ Australian Fair Work Ombudsman, 'Media Release: Unpaid Work Schemes', 7 February 2013, viewed 1 March 2013, <<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/2013/02/pages/20130207-unpaid-work-media-release.aspx>>

³¹ Parliament of New South Wales, 'Unpaid Trial Work', 2 June 2010, viewed 1 March 2013, <<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LA20100602018>>

It is essential to raise awareness of this voluntary program across a wide range of people to listen to their insights and develop a holistic policy. The insights gained from a wide range of stakeholders may help to develop policies that do not infringe on the learning experience of young people. Additionally, it is unrealistic to expect all interested stakeholders will be able to attend the program. It would be beneficial to publish the key teachings of the seminars online for interested stakeholders to access. However, these findings should be published after voluntary programs have been completed for the year with the aim to encourage people to attend the seminars rather than access it online.

Skills and Training

Investing time and resources into the skills and training of young people for the workforce will provide tremendous benefits for the employer and worker. Young workers are valuable in the workplace as they bring unique talent, innovative ideas and an eagerness to learn simply because of their age. With constant changes in the labour force, it is difficult to predict what skills are needed to cater to economic needs. For instance, the advent of technology has changed the nature of work dramatically. It is necessary to undertake new approaches to effectively prepare young with the knowledge, skills and training needed for the workforce.

The G20 Employment and Labour Ministers Meeting in Washington DC 2010 recommended five strategies to improve skills and training for young people. The recommendations included:³²

1. Ensuring quality education was accessible to a wide range of people as education is the basis for future training.
2. Create and sustain a connection between the spheres of employment and training. The most effective method to achieve this is by involving

³² International Labour Office, A Skilled Workforce for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth: A G20 Training Strategy, Geneva, 2011.

employers, workers, government and training providers to keep training programs pertinent.

3. On-going training in the workforce combined with perpetual learning allows employees and businesses to be flexible in fast changing labour market.
4. Identifying the skills needed for future needs at an early stage is needed to effectively prepare young people for the workforce. This can be achieved maintaining communication between bosses and trainers, efficient management between government institutions, employment information, work services and evaluation of performance.
5. Guarantee access to training for broader members of society, particularly for individuals who are from disadvantaged background, such as people with disabilities, rural areas, migrants and so on.

These five recommendations are beneficial for young people within Australian contemporary society. To consider these recommendations when creating policies addressing young people in the workforce will lead to a holistic approach when attempting to resolve the problems associated with the skills and training for young people.

Junior Rate of Pay

Young people are more likely to stay at their job until they have improved their chances of gaining a new job through more education or training.

Furthermore, if a young person understands the operation of the welfare system, they will be aware that quitting their job will incur financial penalties from Centrelink.³³ Developing new skills through education or training can be a lengthy process and can therefore prolong the inability of young people to secure a better job position. Experiencing poor rates of pay and working

³³ Youth Action Policy Association. *op.cit.* p.4.

conditions can result in long term negative effects on their confidence, wellbeing, education and essentially their standard of living.

Low wages and lack of job security may result in young people prolonging their financial dependence on their parents, and the start of their own family, due to the instability associated with temporary work. Moreover, junior wages place an enormous amount of financial pressure, particularly for young people living away from home, studying and those without access to parents for financial stability to support themselves. Abolishing junior wages allows young people to have a better source of income to keep them away from the poverty line and increase their opportunities to become financially independent sooner, increase their access to education and help contribute to the family income.

Some supporters of junior rates of pay argue abolishing this pay system would lessen employment opportunities for young people because it acts as an incentive for employers to hire young workers for the lack of work experience. However, this argument fails to recognise the growth of a tight labour market in contemporary society and many industries that are reliant on young employees generally have high staff turnover since young people move on to gain jobs that require more skills and include higher pay.

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