

URBIS

# REVIEW OF THE STICKING TOGETHER PROJECT (STP)

**Final Report**

Prepared for the NSW Department of Education  
May 2021

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**We acknowledge, in each of our offices, the Traditional Owners on whose land we stand.**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# STP SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE TO OVERCOME COMPLEX BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT, BUT DID NOT MEET THE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES ORIGINALLY AGREED

## PROJECT CONTEXT

The Sticking Together Project (STP) was commissioned by the NSW Government in 2018 to provide additional support for young people to prepare for, secure, and maintain employment. From April 2019, SYC have delivered the program throughout Sydney (City and Inner South), the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands (Sh/SH) regions. STP was originally funded as a Social Impact Bond. After a year of operation, it was transitioned to a 12-month outcomes-based contract with the NSW Department of Education.

The program is intended to provide additional support to the Commonwealth jobactive service, by providing holistic support to young people with complex and multiple barriers to employment to find and sustain employment. The NSW Government's investment in STP reflects the substantial long-term social and economic costs of a young person who is unemployed, including to their health, mental health, and increased risk of contact with the justice system.

STP is a personalised, voluntary coaching program for young people in the Commonwealth jobactive program (Stream B or C). Each participant works with a coach for 60 weeks to address barriers to employment, develop work-readiness skills, search for and find employment, and navigate the transition to work.

This review provides a point-in-time assessment of STP across four evaluation domains and 15 evaluation questions (see Appendix A). A combination of qualitative research and quantitative analysis of program data was used to assess the program. Specifically, the objectives of the review were to assess:

- the implementation of STP to date
- the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of the program
- the benefits and impacts for young people accessing the program.

In addition, a policy and program scan was undertaken to:

- identify how the NSW and Commonwealth employment policy landscapes relate
- identify how existing Commonwealth and State initiatives interface with STP.

The review was conducted from January to April 2021 as part of a broader assessment of the continued operation and funding of the program.

## KEY FINDINGS

STP was established to provide support additional to jobactive, through more personalised and holistic support. Accordingly, STP's effectiveness is measured relative to jobactive.

The review identified seven key findings which summarise the performance of the program. These include:

- The program has engaged 444 young people from April 2019 to February 2021. Performance of the program was measured by cumulative incremental work and work-like hours relative to jobactive. The employment outcomes achieved to date demonstrates the program may not deliver substantial employment outcomes above jobactive.
- 36 young people sustained employment for at least 26 non-consecutive weeks within the 60 week program. They worked an average of 22 hours per week, with two thirds increasing their average hours of work per week during their engagement with STP.
- Most young people engaged by STP have experienced multiple and complex barriers to employment.
- Feedback from interviews with 18 young people suggest that STP empowered them to engage with employment, supporting them to find work which aligned to their interests, overcome barriers which can prevent access and maintenance of employment, and improved their self-confidence and resilience.
- STP provides personalised, holistic support for young people to overcome barriers preventing them from securing and maintaining employment, which is STP's main point of difference to Commonwealth-funded programs, which offer less tailored support (see Appendix B for more details).
- Developing and maintaining relationships with jobactive providers, young people, and employers underpins STPs support model and is critical for success. Greater focus on strengthening relationships with employers and retaining coaches may improve outcome achievement.
- STP have experienced challenges in evidence collection, and despite SYC and the NSW Government working collaboratively to mitigate these challenges, evidence collection has continued to be an issue. This may suggest employment outcomes are understated.

# THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS AND HIGH STAFF TURNOVER INFLUENCED PROGRAM SUCCESS



## **Jobactive staff turnover and capacity affected the strength of SYC's relationship with jobactive providers**

SYC relationships with jobactive providers were critical to ensuring adequate program referrals. These relationships worked best where there was a mutual understanding of the benefits of the program for young people. However, factors such as staff turnover at jobactive and jobactive representatives being too busy due to high caseloads, affected the strength of these relationships.



## **Strong relationships between coaches and employers were critical for sustaining a young person's job**

It is crucial that coaches build strong relationships with potential employers to support young people into, and to sustain, employment. These relationships allow coaches to identify job opportunities with suitable employers and support a young person's integration within the workplace. These relationships require coaches to invest sufficient time into building relationships with employers, as program success is largely contingent on job opportunities and supporting a young person to maintain a job.



## **Consistency and frequency of engagement are key to the relationship between coaches and young people**

The level of engagement between coaches and young people may have affected outcome achievement. Some evidence indicates that young people engaging with their coach on a weekly or fortnightly basis, were more likely to participate in employment, training or education. However, high turnover in coaches may have affected some young people's relationship with their coaches, affecting the extent to which outcomes can be achieved within 60 weeks.



## **Challenges in obtaining evidence may have affected how outcome achievement is represented**

SYC experienced challenges in obtaining evidence of young people's work and work-like activities, mainly due to there being limited value for young people, employers and jobactive providers, to provide this evidence. However, this may also speak to challenges experienced by coaches in developing relationships with employers and young people. The NSW Department of Education proposed workarounds such as offering incentives to young people and emailing a template to employers to confirm hours worked, which SYC began trialling earlier this year. If SYC focusses on continuation of these strategies and strengthening employer relationships, this may improve evidence collection and subsequently, better indicate participants' outcome achievement.



## **Achieving employment outcomes was affected by regional factors such as job availability and transport barriers**

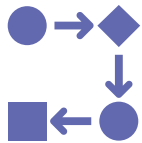
Regional areas tend to have fewer job opportunities, which may have affected the ability of young people in Illawarra and Sh/SH to achieve employment outcomes. This was further affected by the 2019 bushfires and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Lack of public transport availability in regional areas may have also acted as a barrier to young people being able to pursue certain job opportunities.

# REVIEWING THE DESIGN OF STP MAY STRENGTHEN ITS IMPACT AND REFINING OPERATIONAL PROCESSES WILL HELP IMPROVE DEMONSTRATION OF OUTCOMES



## Assess if the outcomes STP delivers provides value for money for continued NSW Government investment

STP underdelivered target employment outcomes originally agreed by NSW Government and SYC in the first two years of operation. However, the program may deliver broader benefits to young people, such as building self-confidence, resilience and motivation, which could improve longer-term employment prospects. Accordingly, NSW Government will need to consider whether STP provides value for the State against other available employment support.



## Refine the service model to better meet the agreed employment outcome targets

If it is determined the current STP model does not deliver substantial additional employment outcomes above Commonwealth-funded programs, STP and NSW Government could explore refining the program to achieve improved sustained employment outcomes. This might include testing the program by focussing on specific cohorts of young people, or on specific regions which have a greater need. It may also include measuring milestones that are a leading indicator of long-term sustained employment outcomes.



## Ensure sufficient focus on building and maintaining key relationships with jobactive providers and employers

At its core, the STP model relies heavily on staff building relationships. While the relationship between a participant and coach is critical to achieving outcomes, developing and maintaining strong relationships with jobactive providers and employers is equally important. These relationships are essential to engage young people in the program, and ensure appropriate employment opportunities are available for them. Allocating sufficient resourcing to focus on building and maintaining these relationships, without compromising time available for coaching participants, will help ensure the program is well-placed to support young people to achieve employment outcomes. Similarly, greater focus on improving coach retention will help develop stronger relationships between coaches and young people, and may improve outcome achievement.



## Improve evidence collection processes and strengthen employer relationships to better capture outcomes

The current requirements and processes for collecting evidence of participants' employment may understate the outcomes which the program achieves. A review of the type of evidence required, the benchmark of providing 100% evidence, and the process by which evidence is collected and recorded will ensure the evidence requirements are fit-for-purpose. Central to this is the continuation of the personal incentive for young people and provision of a template to employers to confirm hours worked. A greater focus on strengthening employer relationships may also help to address these evidence collection challenges.



## Refine program data collection requirements to better demonstrate achievement of outcomes

While STP currently collects a considerable amount of participant data, it is not always fit-for-purpose for detailed and complex analysis of participant outcomes. This can make comparison with other employment programs challenging, and can restrict the extent to which STP can demonstrate the value it provides. Improving and restructuring the data collection tool and the way program data is collected and recorded can help ensure the program has sufficient evidence to demonstrate the outcomes which it achieves.

# 1. INTRODUCTION



# STP WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISENGAGED FROM EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING

## PROJECT CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The unemployment rate of young people in Australia is almost double the national average (AIHW, 2019). In 2018, youth unemployment was over 12% (ABS, 2021), with 9% of young people aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEET) (AIHW, 2019). NEET young people are at risk of long-term unemployment, and often require additional support to enter the job market (AIHW, 2019).

The Commonwealth Government's jobactive program is Australia's main employment support service that connects jobseekers with employers (see Appendix B for more details). Since 2015, jobactive utilises private employment provider services to support jobseekers into employment. Employers are also offered incentives for hiring youth, as well as vulnerable or at-risk individuals.

As jobactive is a general employment support service, the Sticking Together Project (STP) offers additional support to young people in NSW. The program helps disadvantaged young people develop work-ready skills with the aim of securing long-term employment. The program is delivered by SYC, an organisation that assists disadvantaged people in various areas of their life including education, employment, home, justice, health, and disability.

STP first grew out of the 'My First Job White Paper' (the Paper). The Paper was developed by the My First Job Working Group, comprised of representatives from SYC, the Smith Family, Group Training Australia, Jobs Australia, the Commonwealth Department of Employment, as well as employers from Coles, McDonalds, and Westpac. The Paper outlines critical program design elements for youth employment programs, including research from New Zealand, which indicated that a young person is more likely to 'stick' in employment following intensive support for 14 months.

In 2016, findings from the Paper helped inform the development of the STP model. The model was developed in collaboration with Queensland University of Technology and The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, and included input from young people. This also involved the development of coaching tools focussing on wellbeing and soft employability skills to support young people to gain employment (discussed in further detail on page 19).

From 2017, STP was piloted in Melbourne and Adelaide to test the model and gather data in order to assess the model's effectiveness. These pilots provided evidence of the model's success, with 64% of participants moving into long-term employment. In 2018, the NSW Government commissioned SYC to deliver the program in NSW, and it was funded through a \$9.6 million Social Impact Bond (SIB) managed by Social Ventures Australia. During contract negotiations, SYC agreed on the targets to be measured and paid on - the cumulative productive hours young people spend in work and work-like activities (capped at 25% of the hours worked) during the 60 week program period. Operation commenced in April 2019 across three regions: Sydney (City and Inner South), the Illawarra, and Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands (Sh/SH) regions.

STP was originally funded as a Social Impact Bond. Following a year of operation, it was transitioned to a 12-month outcomes-based contract with the NSW Department of Education.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

STP is a voluntary, intensive coaching program that aims to get disadvantaged young people to 'stick' in employment. Over 60 weeks, coaches work directly with a young person to help them:

- set goals and develop resilience
- identify employment skills and areas for improvement
- overcome home, health, and relationship challenges
- progress through the jobseeking and application process
- navigate their first few days and weeks of work, and
- assist the young person to return to work if they leave the workforce while in the program.

Coaches also support employers manage relationships with the young person, improving a young person's likelihood of remaining in employment.

## ABOUT THE REVIEW

The NSW Department of Education commissioned Urbis to complete a point-in-time review of STP in NSW. The objectives of the review were to assess:

- the implementation of STP to date
- the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of the program
- the benefits and impacts for young people accessing the program.

To contextualise STP within the broader policy and program landscape, the NSW Department of Education also commissioned Urbis to complete a policy and program scan to:

- Identify how the NSW and Commonwealth employment policy landscapes relate
- identify how existing Commonwealth and State initiatives interface with STP.

# THIS REPORT CONSIDERS QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA TO ASSESS STP AGAINST FOUR REVIEW DOMAINS

## METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The review of STP was guided by 15 evaluation questions (see Appendix A), designed to assess the program across four review domains:

- **Implementation and efficiency:** the extent to which STP was delivered and administered as intended
- **Appropriateness:** the extent to which STP provided support that appropriately addressed youth unemployment
- **Reach:** the extent to which STP reached the intended participants
- **Experience and impact:** the nature of participants' experience of the program, and the extent to which STP improved participants' employment readiness and employment.

To assess these domains, qualitative research, quantitative analysis, and a policy and program scan were undertaken. Qualitative research included stakeholder interviews conducted between February and March 2021, including interviews with young people (n=18) (see Table 1 for their characteristics), SYC managers (n=3), SYC coaches (n=6), Government stakeholders (n=3), employers (n=3) and jobactive providers (n=3). Of the jobactive providers interviewed, one provider had referred n=20, one had referred n=18 and one had referred n=10 young people to STP. Quantitative analysis consisted of comprehensive analysis to produce descriptive statistics of participants and achievement of outcomes. Cross-tabulation analysis was also undertaken to assess the relationship between participant demographics, employment barriers, and outcomes.

To situate STP within the broader policy landscape, a desktop review of publicly available information regarding Commonwealth and State youth employment policy and programs was undertaken (see Appendix B). Key informant interviews were also completed with n=2 government stakeholders to fill knowledge gaps and identify relevant publications to further inform the scan.

Table 1 – Characteristics of young people interviewed

<b>Status</b>	n=10 active, n=6 completed, n=2 disengaged
<b>Gender</b>	n=9 female, n=9 male
<b>Centre</b>	n=8 Sydney (City and Inner South), n=7 Sh/SH, n=3 Illawarra
<b>Stream</b>	n=13 Stream B, n=5 Stream C
<b>Aboriginal status</b>	n=9 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, n=9 non-Indigenous
<b>Paid employment &amp; work-like activities</b>	n=7 recorded both paid employment and work-like activities, n=4 recorded paid employment only, n=1 recorded work-like activities only, n=6 did not record either

## LIMITATIONS

The following research limitations should be considered when reading this report:

- Only a limited number of consultations were undertaken with young people (n=18). This was due to the following challenges in recruitment: a large proportion of young people who had previously declined to participate in external evaluations, young people being hesitant to engage with organisations affiliated with the government and young people being too busy with employment or education. Therefore, due to this small sample size, the young peoples' perspectives included in this report do not necessarily represent the views of all STP participants.
- While young people were assured of the confidentiality of their feedback, some may have been reluctant to share all their perspectives due to fear of losing access to STP or other government initiatives. Therefore, the report may not have captured all relevant participant experiences with STP.
- The program data supplied for analysis did not include the date at which participants disengaged or exited the program. This meant it was not possible to assess trends related to participant disengagement (i.e. whether participants disengaged after securing employment).
- Participants classified as 'completed' in the program data, may have momentarily disengaged from the program throughout the 60 weeks of the program. Accordingly, the proportion of participants who completed 60 weeks of the program may be overstated in reporting.
- The program data included different reporting periods (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) for employment and work-like activities. As analysis was to be conducted on a weekly basis, fortnightly hours were divided into two and monthly hours were divided into four to calculate the average weekly hours. Accordingly, some weekly hours may only be indicative of hours worked.
- The program data analysis of consecutive weekly hours does not account for reasonable breaks in working periods (e.g. holidays), meaning some outcome achievement may be underrepresented.
- The program data did not contain the number or type of employers per participant. Therefore the analysis is unable to account for situations where a participant had several jobs over the course of the program, affecting the ability to assess the extent to which a participant maintained a job.

# 2. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

# STP COACHES PROVIDE HIGH-TOUCH ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING SEVERAL DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT

SYC staff and Government stakeholders provided feedback on the STP support model and its key features. This Chapter of the report discusses the support model and the key features that underpin the model.

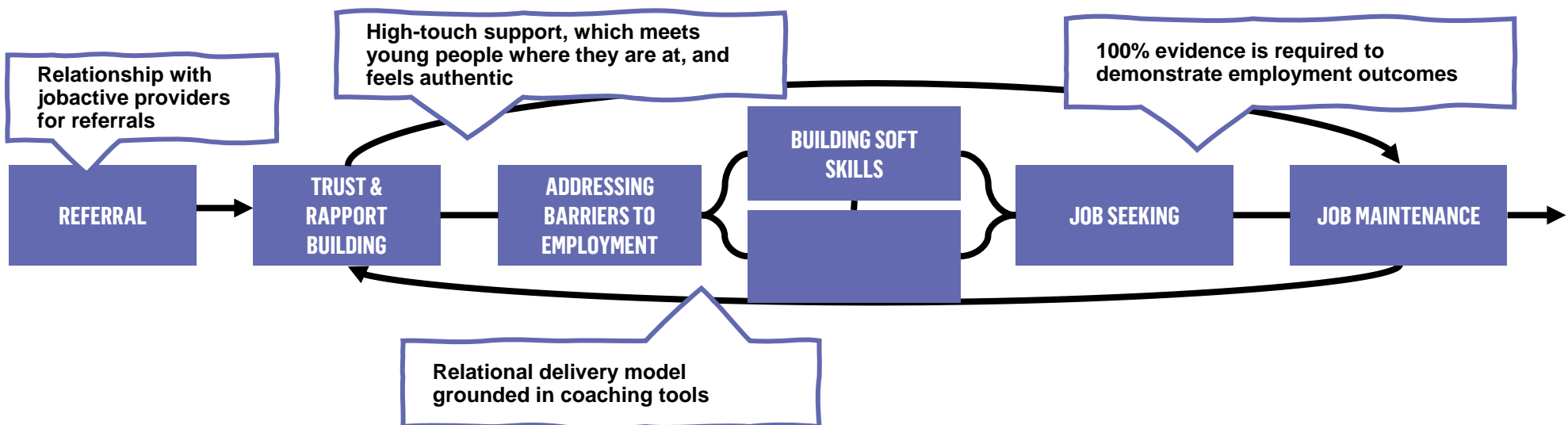
## The STP support model involves a referral process and six different types of support

The STP support model begins with the referral process, involving young people being referred by a jobactive provider to one of the three STP sites, Sydney (City and Inner South), Illawarra, or Sh/SH. Young people are then matched with a coach who provides them with support over a 60 week period. STP provides several tools for coaches, helping them assess a young person’s work-readiness, guide self-assessment of health and wellbeing, and help with goalsetting (see page 19). Support typically begins with a coach building trust and rapport with the young person, and depending on their needs the coach will address the young person’s barriers to employment (i.e. mental health, housing), build their work-readiness skills, or soft skills. Coaches also support a young person to seek, apply for, secure, and maintain employment. STP coaches and participants indicated young people did not always progress through these types of support in a linear way, and tended to move back and forth depending on the needs of the individual.

The model also requires coaches to provide evidence of employment to demonstrate program performance. Typically, this is achieved by coaches either gathering payslips from young people or asking employers to verify hours a young person engages in paid employment. Evidence of number of hours worked must be provided for every participant for every week they work (i.e. a 100% evidence requirement). An employment outcome is recorded when this evidence is approved by the NSW Department of Education.

A young person completes the program after 60 weeks of support. They may be deemed as disengaging without completing the program if they have been out of contact for approximately 8 weeks. Young people may be exited from the program before they have completed if they no longer meet the eligibility criteria or are unable to participate, such as if they become a Disability Welfare recipient, they start participating in Work for the Dole or a NSW Government Smart Skilled and Hired program, they move outside the agreed catchment area, they commence an illegal activity, or they become incarcerated.

Figure 4 – STP support model



# STP SUPPORT IS HOLISTIC AND PERSONALISED TO MEET EACH YOUNG PERSON'S INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

## The referral process appears simple and effective

Young people are referred to STP by their jobactive provider, through a process which is broadly consistent across the program. The referral process has four key steps:

1. jobactive provider identifies young person who may benefit from the program and refers them to SYC
2. SYC assesses the referral for program eligibility and their capacity to support the young person
3. SYC contacts young person to arrange an initial discussion about the program and the type of support they can receive
4. young person completes an intake form to formally consent to participate in the program.

All young people interviewed noted the referral process was easy and straightforward, explaining that both meeting with SYC and completing the intake form were simple processes. Young people particularly appreciated the client-centred approach, with the initial meeting being held in a location of their choice such as at a café, park, or their jobactive provider's office as this helped them feel more comfortable with the program.

## STP offers young people a range of support, customised to their needs

The STP support model matches each young person with a coach who provides personalised support over a 60 week period. Young people with multiple barriers to employment often require different types of support at different points on their pathway into employment. While support is personalised, there are six key categories of support, which were generally consistent across participants and sites. These support categories are:

1. **Trust & rapport building:** developing relationships to increase trust and rapport with young people, as well as goal-setting to motivate young people.
2. **Addressing barriers to employment:** assessing the young person's barriers to employment (e.g. mental health or housing) and working with them to address these issues by connecting them to appropriate support services.
3. **Building soft skills:** supporting young people to build soft skills such as communication, time management, self-motivation, responsibility and conflict resolution.
4. **Work-readiness skills:** assisting young people to be ready for the workplace through developing their CV writing, interview skills, and connecting them to work-like activities including: accredited and non-accredited traineeships, work experience, volunteering, unpaid work, and internships and pre-employment programs.
5. **Job seeking:** helping young people to identify job opportunities, as well as building relationships with employers to identify possible job opportunities.
6. **Job maintenance:** supporting young people to overcome challenges they face in initial stages of work, as well as liaising with employers to overcome any workplace issues which may arise.

As mentioned previously, participants do not always progress through STP in a linear path. Coaches explained that they adapted the nature of support they provided to meet the young person's current needs. For example, if a young person faced a housing issue while searching for a job, a coach might focus support on helping them overcome that barrier before resuming a job search.

# THE TYPE AND LEVEL OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO YOUNG PEOPLE VARIES DEPENDING ON THEIR NEEDS

## Coaching tools provide a framework to guide the support coaches provide to young people

As noted in Chapter 1, SYC worked with Queensland University of Technology, the Australian Centre for Social Impact and young people, to develop a range of coaching tools to support young people through the program. These tools focus on both wellbeing and soft employability skills and include:

- **Where you at?:** an assessment of a young person's work-readiness and their attitudes towards work using a 5-point scale, underpinned by the Transtheoretical Model of Change (a model for behaviour change)
- **Home, Health and Relationships:** a tool to help coaches gain a better understanding of the young person's current home situation, the key relationships in their life and health issues. This also helps coaches to build rapport with the young person. This tool has been developed utilising an Appreciative Enquiry approach (a strengths-based, self-determined approach)
- **Doing Okay:** a tool which enables the young person to articulate and comprehend their feelings to build emotional awareness. This tool is underpinned by the theory of the 'Window of Tolerance' (an emotional regulation theory).
- **Roots and Fruits:** a tool to support the young person to establish SMART goals to improve various areas of their life, with the aim of enhancing their employment outcomes
- **Wellbeing Web:** an assessment of the young person's wellbeing and resilience using a 9-point scale, underpinned by the PERMA+ model (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meanings and Accomplishment + – a wellbeing framework)
- **Skills Tachometer:** an assessment of the young person's understanding of key employability or soft skills using a 9-point scale underpinned by feedback provided by employers involved in the My First Job working group.
- **Nitty Gritty:** a tool to assist coaches to discuss with employers how best to fine-tune the young person's skills for employment. This tool has been developed utilising an Appreciative Enquiry approach.

These tools provide a framework for coaches to provide personalised support to young people and ensure support is meaningful and focused. One SYC coach indicated the tools are useful for initiating conversations with young people, describing the tools as helping with rapport-building and opening lines of communication. SYC staff noted that coaches use these tools flexibly, as a young person's needs change as they move through the program. For example, a young person may progress to the Skills Tachometer tool but if mental health issues amplify, a coach may re-introduce the Doing Okay tool.

## Coaches provide high-touch support to young people, particularly for those with limited support in their lives

Coaches had a high frequency of engagement with the young people they supported, often multiple times a week through a combination of face-to-face and phone support. For example, over half the young people interviewed reported they saw their coach face-to-face, every one to two weeks, and the remainder said they engaged with their coach every three to four weeks or on an as-needs basis. In addition to face-to-face support, most young people noted they were in frequent contact with their coach via phone. Some also said during the COVID-19 lockdown, face-to-face engagements were replaced with videocalls or phone calls.

It appears that more intensive support was provided to young people with fewer other supports in their lives. SYC staff explained that young people without support at home or for those no longer residing with their family tended to need greater support from their coach. For example, one SYC staff member noted that young people with a limited support network tended to meet with their coach face-to-face weekly or fortnightly and were in frequent contact with them via phone. These experiences were corroborated by the program data, which indicated that the young people who interacted with their coach more frequently had previously stayed at a refuge or in supported accommodation, or were in unstable accommodation at the time of STP, consistent with the observation by SYC staff they had limited other support networks. This suggests STP provides some stability in young people's lives when they have limited family and social support.

It also appears that support abates as young people secure employment or participate in traineeships. For example, some young people who were working at the time of the interview, noted they mainly contacted their coach via phone weekly and met only every few weeks or as issues arose. Another young person explained that while they normally saw their coach weekly, once they enrolled in a education course, they shifted to fortnightly meetings as they needed less frequent support.

# THE STP SUPPORT MODEL RELIES ON FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS FOR REFERRALS, SERVICE DELIVERY, AND MANAGEMENT

The STP support model is underpinned by four key relationships: delivery partner and referral partners, coaches and participants, coaches and employers, and the NSW Department of Education and delivery partner (see Figure 5). Each relationship necessitates STP staff invest time in building them as they are critical to the delivery of the STP program. The nature of these relationships are described below, and the extent to which they influenced program outcomes is discussed in Chapter 4.

## Delivery partner and referral partners

The relationship between SYC and jobactive facilitates the referral process. SYC staff noted they build relationships with jobactive providers to ensure they receive referrals to the program. For example, they regularly liaise and meet with providers to introduce STP and explain how young people may benefit from the program. In some cases, SYC staff must also rely on jobactive providers to obtain payslips from employers to evidence young people's work hours.

## Coaches and participants

Coaches explained that building trust and rapport with young people was critical for their engagement with the program. Coaches reported investing time to build rapport with young people so they felt safe and comfortable to engage. This was achieved in a variety of ways including meeting in a place of a young person's choosing, being readily available on the phone, and using the coaching tools as a conversation starter (as discussed on page 14). All young people interviewed agreed their coaches built a strong relationship with them, which helped them feel comfortable to engage with the program. For example, one young person described their coach to be like a friend and another said their coach was like an aunt or motherly figure, demonstrating the strength and nature of these relationships. However, STP experienced relatively high turnover in coaches which may have affected some relationships with young people. The affect of staff turnover is discussed further on page 31.

## Coaches and employers

Building relationships with employers is critical to job seeking and job maintenance stages of the support model. Originally SYC engaged two relationship managers to support engagement with employers. However, due to challenges in retaining and recruiting these positions, SYC chose to replace one of these positions to a psychologist and the other relationship manager resigned in late 2020. Accordingly, coach's must build relationships with employers. Coaches indicated they must invest time into relationships with employers to identify potential job opportunities for young people, and to support young people to maintain their job once employed. Connecting with employers is an integral part of the STP program and is critical to supporting young people to maintain employment.

## The NSW Department of Education and delivery partner

A strong relationship between the program funder (the NSW Department of Education) and the delivery partner (SYC) is essential to ensure appropriate support and guidance are provided to meet program objectives. Throughout delivery, the NSW Department of Education provided robust contract management and program oversight, including supporting SYC to address program implementation or delivery issues as they arose. Oversight involved regularly checking-in on progress and auditing relevant documentation from SYC such as evidence of young people's hours of employment and work-like activities. The NSW Department of Education also acted as a collaborative partner in supporting SYC to identify solutions to implementation and delivery issues (discussed in further detail on page 32). Overall, SYC agreed they had a positive working relationship with the NSW Department of Education contact through the delivery phase of the program. Feedback indicated the NSW Department of Education were collaborative in their approach to addressing challenges and were invested in the success of the model.

Figure 5 – Relationships underpinning the STP support model



# 3. PROGRAM REACH



# STP SUPPORTED 444 YOUNG PEOPLE, WITH 81% EITHER STILL ENGAGED OR HAVING COMPLETED THE PROGRAM

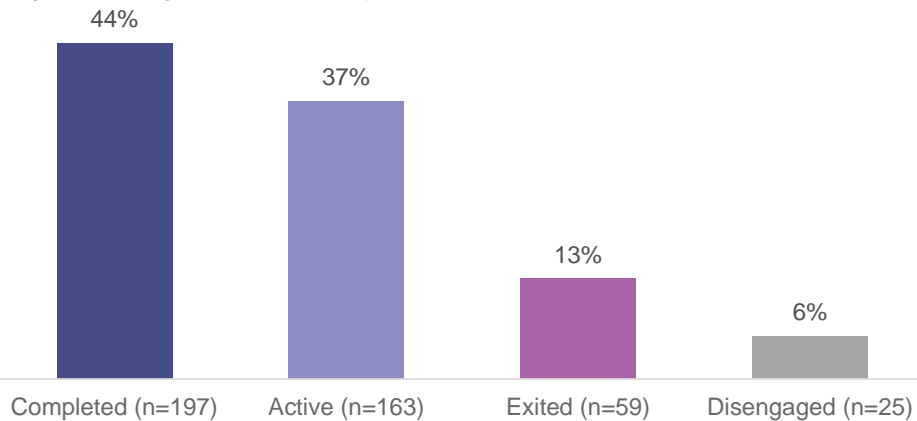
Individual participant data from July 2019 to February 2021 was analysed to identify trends in participant demographics, barriers to employment, employment outcomes, and work-readiness outcomes. This Chapter reports on the profile of participants and their barriers to employment.

## TOTAL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

In total, 444 young people participated in STP from 1 April 2019 to 1 February 2021. Approximately 37% of the total cohort (n=163) were active in the program at 1 February 2021. At this time, 197 young people (44%) had completed the program and 59 young people (13%) had exited the program. Feedback from consultations suggest that a young person usually exits the program before completion if they move out of the service region and are no longer eligible for support. Overall, only 25 young people (6%) disengaged from the program.

An analysis of trends of why young people disengage with the program was not possible due to the small sample size. While the data indicates there was low disengagement, participants classified as completed in the data may have also disengaged throughout the 60 weeks of the program. Accordingly, it is difficult to determine the extent of disengagement from the program and the proportion of participants who 'completed' may overstate how many young people engaged in all 60 weeks of the program.

Figure 6 – Program participants by status



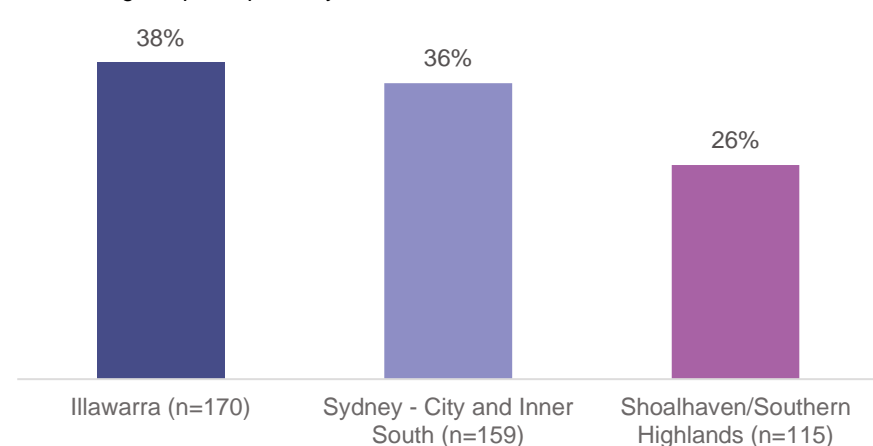
NB: Disengaged participants are still in the program but have not engaged for approximately 8 weeks or more. Completed participants may have momentarily disengaged throughout their 60 weeks in the program.

## PARTICIPATION BY SITE

Participation across the three sites was relatively even. In this period, 170 young people (38%) from the Illawarra region were supported, followed by 159 young people (36%) from Sydney (City and Inner South), and 115 young people (26%) from Sh/SH.

Slight differences in participation across the three sites may be due to a range of factors. Firstly, the strength of relationships with jobactive providers may have influenced the number of referrals in each location. While feedback did not clearly indicate whether one site had stronger referral pathways than another, it was evident that referrals largely depended on building relationships with individual jobactive representatives. Additionally, Sydney coaches noted challenges in receiving numerous referrals for young people residing in areas outside of eligible postcodes. Secondly, Sydney is a much more densely populated area, which may explain some of the difference in participation rates within Sh/SH. Turnover in coaches at all sites may also have affected program capacity and therefore the number of participants at each site.

Figure 7 – Program participants by site

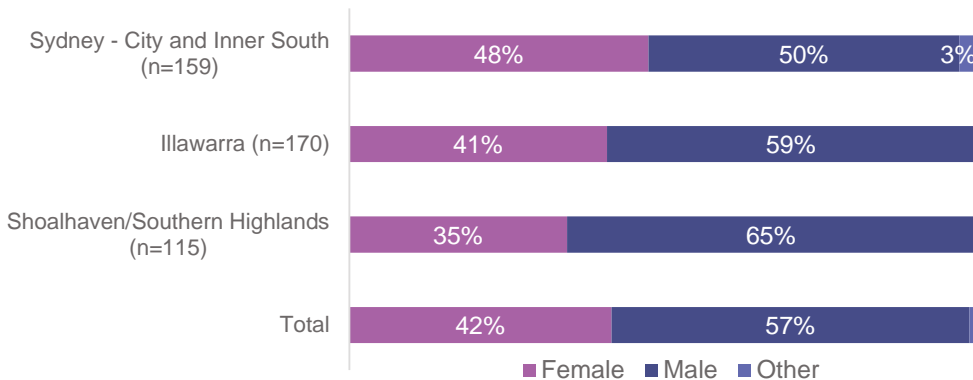


# OVER HALF THE YOUNG PEOPLE WERE AGED BETWEEN 21 AND 23, AND ALMOST ONE IN THREE IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

## GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

In total, 57% of STP participants were male, and 42% were female (see Figure 8 below). While levels of gender diversity differed somewhat across sites, all supported a higher proportion of males than females. Individually, Sydney (City and Inner South) had the most even gender mix, with 50% of participants identifying as male and 48% female. In Sh/SH 65% of participants were male and 35% female. Across all sites only four participants did not identify as either female or male, all being supported from Sydney (City and Inner South).

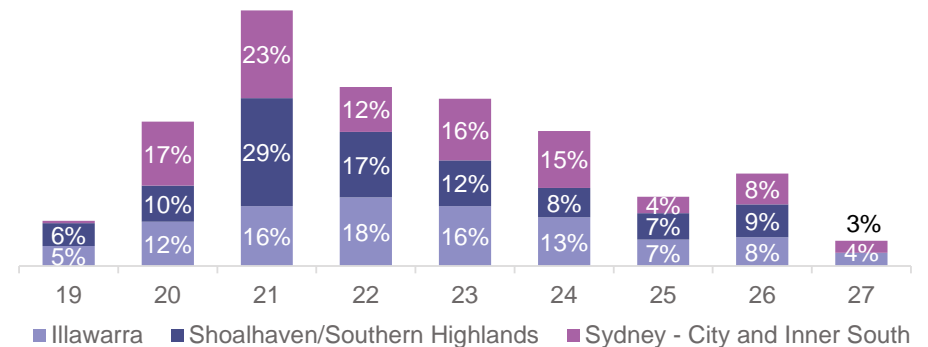
Figure 8 – Gender of participants per site



## AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

Across the program, over half of all participants are between the ages of 21 and 23 (see Figure 9), and this is relatively consistent across sites. The most common age within each site is either 22 (Illawarra) or 21 (Sydney (City and Inner South) & Sh/SH). The program does not substantially support young people below the ages of 20 or above the age of 24. The program therefore primarily supports a cohort of young people several years removed from secondary schooling, potentially with some prior exposure to elements of work or training.

Figure 9 – Age of participants per site



## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STATUS

In total, 30% of participants identify as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage – well above the general population rate for this age group of 4.4% at the time of the 2016 Census.

Participation of Aboriginal young people was relatively consistent across each centre with 35% of Sydney's participants identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, followed by Sh/SH (30%) and Illawarra (24%).



**30%**  
identified as being of  
Aboriginal and/or Torres  
Strait islander heritage

Note: Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Almost all participants supported by the STP were born in Australia (94%), with 98% speaking English as their main language at home. This indicates that overall, STP does not support a particularly culturally diverse cohort of young people.

Only 26 young people reported being born in a country other than Australia. Due to this small sample, there was little opportunity to identify trends across centres or demographics in terms of country of birth or ethnicity.



**94%**  
of participants were born  
in Australia

# STP SUPPORTS PARTICIPANTS WITH COMPLEX EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS INCLUDING UNSTABLE HOUSING, MENTAL ILL-HEALTH AND CONTACT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

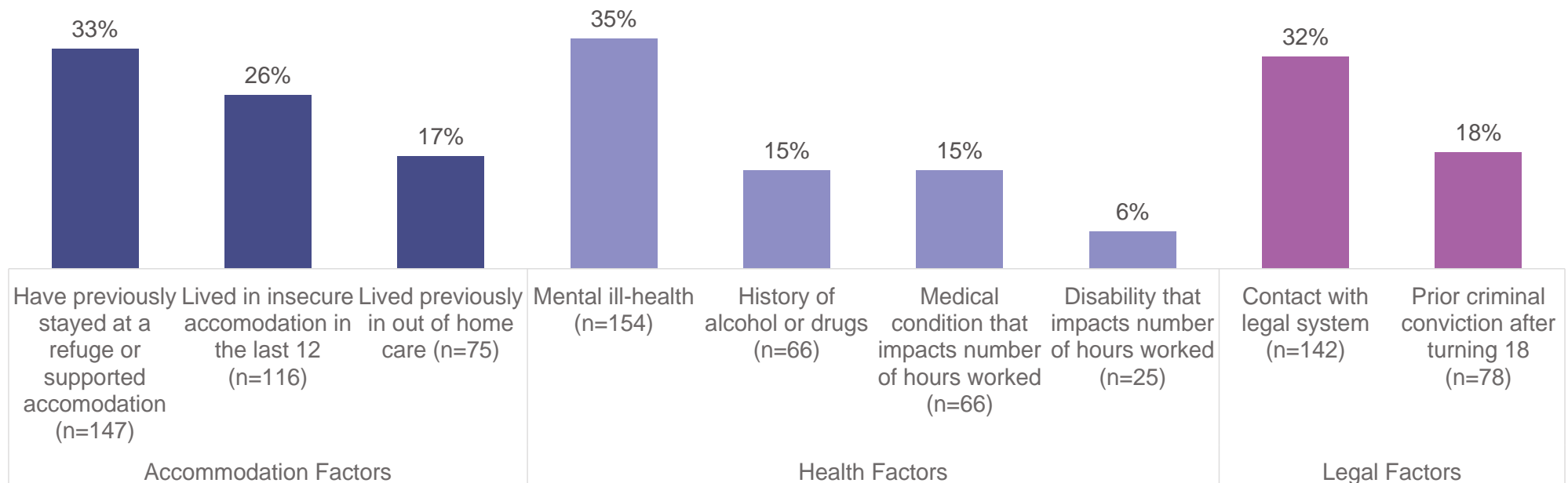
## PARTICIPANT COMPLEXITY

The STP program tracked nine employment barriers which were assessed during a participant’s referral and intake process. These employment barriers can be categorised as either accommodation barriers, health barriers or legal barriers (see Figure 10). **Almost three-quarters of participants (73%) reported experiencing at least one barrier to employment, with more than half of participants (52%) reporting more than one barrier.**

Many participants (45%) reported at least one barrier relating to accommodation factors. One-third of all participants (33%) reported previously living in a refuge or supported accommodation (33%), with a quarter (26%) experiencing insecure accommodation in 12 months before joining STP and nearly one in five (17%) previously living in out-of-home care. Two in five participants (42%) reported at least one health-related barrier to employment, with one-third of participants (35%) experiencing some form of mental ill-health, and one in seven (15%) having a history of alcohol or drug misuse, or a medical condition impacting their ability to work. Additionally, one-third of participants (32%) reported some contact with the legal system, with one in five (18%) having a criminal conviction since turning 18 years old.

Overall, this suggests that STP supports young people experiencing multiple and complex barriers to employment. This is expected, given that only young people allocated to Centrelink Stream B and C who hold barriers to employment are eligible to participate. This is also supported by feedback from SYC staff and coaches, which indicates the majority of participants face multiple and complex barriers to employment. These levels of complexity highlight the importance of providing holistic and tailored support that extended beyond connecting young people into employment, and focusing on assisting young people increase their readiness and capacity for work.

Figure 10 – Participant complexity



# 4. PROGRAM EXPERIENCE & OUTCOMES

# 4.1 PROGRAM EXPERIENCE & OUTCOMES

# YOUNG PEOPLE HAD A POSITIVE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE BECAUSE OF THE PERSONALISED SUPPORT AND HIGH LEVEL OF CARE COACHES PROVIDED

In consultation, n=18 young people reflected on their experience of STP. This page reports on their program experience and what they valued about the program.

## Young people appreciated that support was tailored to their needs

Most young people indicated their appreciation for support being personalised to suit their individual needs. This was described as being the case from initial engagement with the program (as mentioned above) through to program completion.

Program support was typically guided by the coaching tools, but allowed flexibility in the type of support provided to young people. For example, the 'Home, health, relationships' tool, was highlighted as supporting coaches to identify a young person's current family, housing, health and wellbeing situation. Coaches could then customise support depending on the issues that presented. One young person suggested this exercise allowed their coach to identify they required mental health support, and therefore were connected to SYC's in-house psychologist.

As discussed on page 14, support appeared to be more intensive and frequent for young people without other support networks in their lives. In some cases, coaches noted that for young people without family support, they would see them face-to-face weekly or fortnightly and be in contact with them via phone every few days. This is consistent with feedback provided by some young people who reported seeing their coach weekly or fortnightly, and being in frequent contact with their coach via phone. The modality of support was also tailored to the individual's needs. For example, one young person explained their place of residence was constantly changing because they were being moved around supported accommodation. They said this made it difficult to meet up with their coach face-to-face and so their coach offered them phone support whenever they required it.

“ *She gave me support for my mental health...she called me every two to three days...and I saw her one or twice every two to three weeks. Meeting up wasn't easy at times because I was moving around but she was available via phone whenever I needed her.*  
- STP participant

## Young people valued their coach's kind and caring approach

STP supported a highly vulnerable and complex cohort (see Chapter 3). The warm and friendly nature of coaches was welcomed by young people who were in a challenging period of their life. In some cases, young people noted this friendliness allowed them to feel comfortable opening up to their coach about challenges in their life, such as their mental health or family issues. One young person experiencing anxiety said this was the first time they felt safe to open up to a stranger about their fears. In other cases, young people appreciated that their coach genuinely cared about them. For example, one young person explained they had no family support, but their coach 'filled this void' and provided them with the care that was missing in their life. It was also commonly highlighted that STP provided more individualised support and care than young people's experience with jobactive. This demonstrates the highly personalised, intensive, and holistic support provided by STP coaches was highly valued by young people.

“ *[My coach] is very nice, she's like an aunty figure...she's a pleasant person and actually cares about what you want to say and feel.*  
- STP participant

## CASE STUDY: Alfred received person-centred support for his mental health issues

Alfred\* is an 18 year-old man experiencing severe depression and anxiety, who had difficulties finding employment due to feeling overwhelmingly anxious in applying for and attending job interviews. When he met his coach, he increasingly felt comfortable speaking to her about his mental health struggles because her warm demeanour made her seem like a 'motherly figure.' His coach also taught him coping strategies and organised an appointment with a therapist to support him through his mental health issues. To ensure Alfred had sufficient support around him, he was seeing his coach weekly or fortnightly and was also regularly contacting her on the phone. With these supports and strategies in place, Alfred felt more comfortable in calling potential employers and attending job interviews.

\*To protect the confidentiality of participants we've combined several experiences, and changed names and some non-critical demographic details.

# OVERALL, STP HAS SUPPORTED 144 YOUNG PEOPLE TO FIND EMPLOYMENT (32% OF ALL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS) BUT DID NOT MEET THE AGREED TARGET WORK HOURS

Consultations with SYC staff, coaches, participants, employers, and jobactive providers were undertaken in February and March 2021, and feedback from these consultations was compared with an analysis of program data. The next four pages reports key findings related to the outcomes young people achieved.

## One-third of STP participants found and engaged with employment, but hours worked per participant was below the agreed targets

To date, 144 young people (32%) found employment while with STP. Employment is recorded in cases where a young person engaged in at least one approved hour of paid work. On average, it took young people 15 weeks to find work from STP commencement and each worker undertook, on average, 22 paid hours per week (see Figure 11).

There were few identifying characteristics of young people successful in finding employment. There was little difference identified in the proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people who found work (30%) comparative to young people who did not identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (33%). Similarly, demographic variables of gender and age did not yield significantly different outcomes. However, it was found that participants who did not finish Year 12 were half as likely to find work (27%) than those who did (54%), suggesting that those with some educational attainment found it easier engaging with work. Additionally, each site had varying degrees of success facilitating employment opportunities with young people. Participants supported out of Sydney (City and Inner South) (43%) were more likely to find employment than those across Illawarra (32%) and Sh/SH (19%). This may be due to limited job opportunities in regional areas and transport barriers making it difficult to access employment (discussed on page 33).

Performance of the program was measured by cumulative incremental work and work-like hours relative to jobactive. Approximately one-third of participants engaged in more than 400 hours of approved paid work (see Table 5), with male participants (36%) more likely to record more than 400 hours of work than female participants (25%). Between sites, a higher proportion of participants in Sydney (City and Inner South) (35%) recorded over 400 hours, more than Illawarra (31%), and almost double than Sh/SH (18%). Additionally, more participants who finished Year 12 completed 400+ hours of paid work, 11% higher than the proportion of young people who didn't (28%).

When only considering participants who have completed the program, the average participant recorded 475 approved hours of work, over 19 weeks (see Figure 12). Table 5 also shows outcomes for these cohorts showing that approximately 42% of young people recorded more than 400 approved employment hours, 11% higher than among all participants.

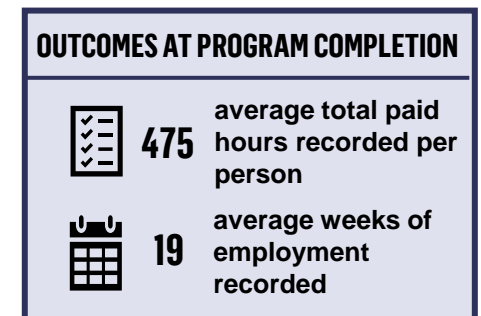
Table 5 – Employment engagement by total approved hours

Total approved paid hours	1 to 200 hours	201 to 400 hours	401+ hours
<b>Number of participants (all participants)</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>45</b>
% of employed	49%	20%	31%
% of all participants	16%	7%	10%
<b>Number of participants (completed)</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>33</b>
% of employed	42%	15%	42%
% of all participants	17%	6%	17%

Figure 11 – Employment outcomes (all participants)



Figure 12 – Employment outcomes (completed participants)



# OF THE 144 PARTICIPANTS WHO FOUND EMPLOYMENT, MANY DID NOT MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT OVER MULTIPLE WEEKS

As part of this Review, to measure the effectiveness of STP against jobactive and other employment support programs, participant data was analysed to determine the extent to which STP participants sustained employment. Sustained employment was measured by calculating consecutive weeks worked at 4 weeks (1 month), 13 weeks (3 months) and 26 weeks (6 months) to align with other employment programs. Two benchmarks were used, one requiring a minimum of 3 hours per week, and another requiring a minimum of 14 hours per week.

While one third of participants were able to engage with employment, there is evidence of a significant drop off in sustained employment outcomes. About two-thirds of participants (63%, 90 young people) who found employment recorded four consecutive weeks of work (of at least 3 hours per week), which dropped to 25% at 13 weeks and 6% at 26 weeks. Proportionate outcomes for the 14 hour benchmark fell to 54% at 4 weeks, 19% at 13 weeks and 5% at 26 weeks. This suggests that most participants who found employment through STP worked for at least 14 hours each week.

Sustained employment outcomes may be understated as program data does not allow for a reasonable break in consecutive weeks of employment, such as missing one week of work due to sickness or leave. The 100% evidence requirement may also mean that periods of continuous employment are not recognised in the analysis if evidence for one week of employment is not available. The impact of this limitation in the data may be amplified for 13 and 26 week figures as it may be more likely that a young person would take leave, miss work due to illness, or have insufficient evidence for employment the longer they are engaged in work.

Measuring non-consecutive weeks worked mitigates these issues, and suggests some participants maintained employment over time. For example, while only 25% (36) of young people who found work recorded 13 consecutive weeks of employment, 50% (72) recorded 13 non-consecutive weeks. While this suggests an improvement, it indicates that 50% of young people did not work for at least 13 weeks after starting work and only 16% of all participants achieved 13 weeks of employment. Additionally, only 25% (36) participants recorded 26 non-consecutive weeks, suggesting 75% did not work for at least 26 weeks after starting work.

In a comparison of all weeks (non-consecutive) across program and cohort characteristics, our analysis revealed that young people who found work through their own means were more likely to report more than 13 weeks of approved hours (53%) comparative to those who found employment via a jobactive representative (32%). Similarly, those who had finished Year 12 were also more likely to record at least 13 weeks (55%) compared to participants who did not (43%). There is some evidence that those without access to secure accommodation in the last 12 months were less likely to record 13 weeks of employment (39% vs 50%). However, other major barriers to employment were not found to be significantly associated with varied engagement outcomes (e.g. whether a young person previously stayed in a refuge or out-of-home care (OOHC)).

Using other metrics, there is some evidence that participation in employment increased over time. Across the board, the longer a participant engaged with STP, the more likely they were to record more employment hours per week. Among all participants who found employment, 65% recorded a positive increase in average weekly paid work hours over time.\* This indicates that most young people were able to increase their working loads, and that engagement with the employers improved as they continued to work with the program.

Table 6 – Consecutive engagement in employment over time

	Consecutive weeks of paid employment* (minimum of 3 Hours)			Consecutive weeks of paid employment* (minimum of 14 Hours)			Non consecutive weeks of paid employment (all hours)		
	4 Weeks	13 Weeks	26 Weeks	4 Weeks	13 Weeks	26 Weeks	4 weeks	13 weeks	26 weeks
Count	90	36	9	78	28	7	120	72	36
Percentage of Employed	63%	25%	6%	54%	19%	5%	83%	50%	25%
Percentage of All Participants	20%	8%	2%	18%	6%	2%	27%	16%	8%

\* Data accounts for all young people who recorded at paid employment at least 2 times over a 14 week period.



# STP APPEARS TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX NEEDS TO PARTICIPATE IN EMPLOYMENT, YET THE LEVEL OF IMPACT MAY BE LOWER THAN WAS ANTICIPATED

Urbis cross-tabulated key employment outcomes by a range of markers of disadvantage including those outlined on page 26 (see Table 7). Our analysis identified the comparative success of the program to achieve outcomes for different cohorts of young people.

Some cohorts of young people were able to find employment faster, including those who had previously been in OOHC, those in insecure living arrangements, those with prior contact with the justice system and/or allocated to Centrelink Stream C. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants and young people with a history of alcohol and drugs generally took longer to find employment. While there were differences in the total employment hours for each of these cohorts, they recorded similar weekly average hours of work (between 20 and 24 hours). While these findings are not statistically significant (due to limited sample sizes), they suggest that STP can provide effective support for highly complex cohorts of young people.

This may be attributed to the work coaches undertake to assist young people to overcome barriers to employment. For example, some young people reported that once their coach helped them find stable housing, they had greater stability in their life to be able to find and maintain a job.

Young people with mental ill-health and those who previously lived in refuge accommodation recorded both fewer total hours and a longer time period to find work. This was supported by young people interviewed, who suggested their mental health issue was an ongoing challenge in their life that, at times, made attending job interviews and maintaining employment difficult. This evidence may be reflective of the fact that progress with issues such as mental health tend not to be linear and their progress may oscillate, affecting their ability to sustain consistent employment.

Table 7 – Summary of employment outcomes among participants reporting barriers to employment

	Employment Breakdown		Total Sum of Hours Worked Breakdown		Time to Find Employment Breakdown		Average weekly hours	
	% of all participants who found employment	% of completed participants who found employment	Sum of paid employment hours by project completion	Comparison to program average (completed participants)	Weeks	Comparison to program average	Weekly average	Comparison to program average
Aboriginal participants	30%	36%	500	+25	17	+2	24	+2
OOHC participants	31%	35%	537	+62	14	-1	23	+1
Prior experience living in refuge or supported accommodation	36%	49%	461	-14	16	+1	22	0
Insecure living arrangement in previous 12 months	32%	28%	528	+53	13	-2	21	-1
Mental ill-health	30%	34%	328	-147	19	+4	19	-3
History of alcohol or drugs	26%	24%	488	+13	19	+4	20	-2
Prior contact with justice system	30%	30%	614	+139	14	-1	24	+2
Centrelink Stream C	35%	41%	614	+139	14	-1	23	-1

Note: There may be double counting where participants indicated they had more than one barrier to employment.

# STP SUPPORTED ONE IN FIVE YOUNG PEOPLE TO ENGAGE IN SOME FORM OF NON-PAID WORK-READINESS ACTIVITY

As part of jobactive, young people have a mutual obligation requirement to participate in work-like activities to assist them in finding a job. Accordingly, STP supports young people to connect and engage with these work-like activities.

Approximately one-fifth (21% or 95 young people) were engaged in work-readiness activities. Most participants (87%) who engaged in work-readiness activity commenced some form of accredited training (see Figure 13). Fewer young people were linked to other workplace-based activities, including work experience (10 participants), volunteering (10), unpaid internships (5) and unpaid work (7). Eighteen of the 95 (19%) young people engaged in more than one type of non-paid activity. Of these, seven (7%) engaged in three types of non-paid activities and one (1%) in four activities. Approximately 60% of participants completed up to 200 hours of non-paid work while 40% completed more than 200 hours (see Table 8).

An analysis of program data shows some variation in non-paid participation across sites, with 26% of all participants in Sydney (City and Inner South) partaking at least one approved hour of non-paid work, above Illawarra (21%) and Sh/SH (17%). Female participants were also more likely than male participants to undertake unpaid work (27% compared to 17%). Additionally, 15% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people participated in non-paid work, fewer than non-Indigenous participants (24%). Findings show that participants who finished year 12 were more likely to participate in non-paid activities than those who didn't (30% vs 20%). Higher secondary school attainment was also associated with higher employment involvement, and therefore indicating greater engagement with the program overall.

Most of the identified employment barriers listed on page 25 were not associated with significantly less engagement in non-paid work. However, it was found that young people who had lived in OOHC were also much less likely to participate in non-paid work (19% to 6%).

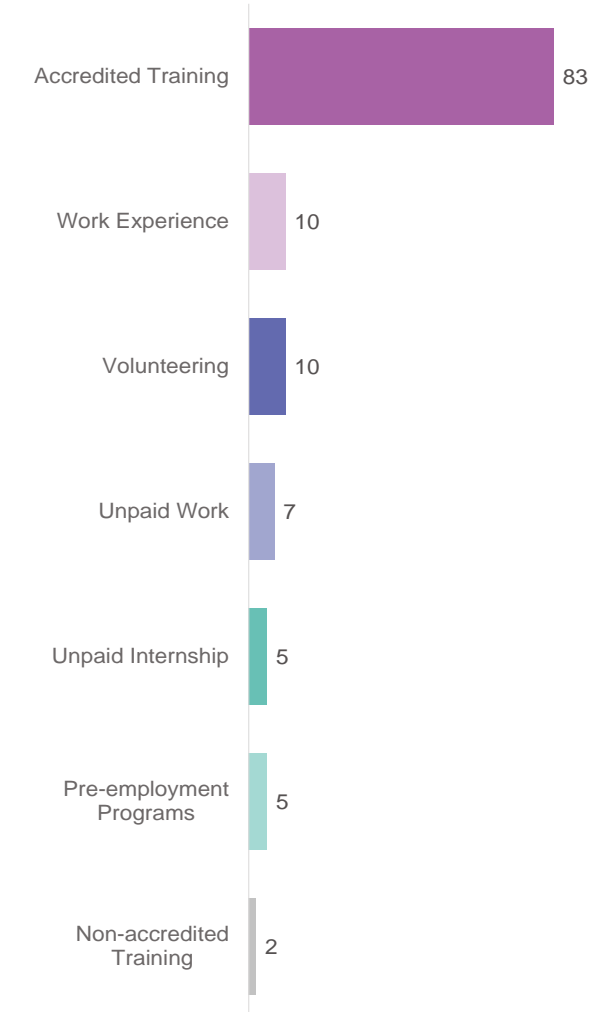
Accounting for only completed participants, 22% of participants who engaged in non-paid work recorded more than 400 hours and approximately half (56%) recorded fewer than 200 hours.

While the program data indicates STP supported young people to participate in education and training, STP performed below the agreed target cumulative productive hours for all participants.

Table 8 – Non-paid readiness training and engagement by total sum hours

Approved non paid hours	1 to 200 hours	201 to 400 hours	401+ hours
<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>
% of participants recorded at least one non-paid hour	63%	20%	17%
<b>Number of completed participants</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
% of participants recorded at least one non-paid hour	56%	22%	22%

Figure 13 – Number of participants connected to non-paid activities\*



\*The sum of participants connected to each individual activity will be greater than the total number of participants who engaged in work-readiness activities as some participants engaged in more than one type of work-readiness activity.

# STP HELPED YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL MORE PREPARED TO ENTER THE WORKFORCE

In consultation, n=18 young people reflected on how STP has supported them and the changes the program made to their lives. The next two pages reports on the impact the program had for these young people.

Most young people reported their experience with STP enabled them to feel more confident and prepared to look for work or start a job. Feedback highlighted three types of support that helped them feel more prepared. These included:

- Aligning interests and skills to employment options.** Several young people indicated the main difference between jobactive and STP was that STP assisted them in pursuing a job aligned to their interests and skillset. This was often achieved through coaches suggesting career paths which matched their passions and building relationships with employers in industries of interest. Coaches also connected young people with work-readiness activities that provided opportunities to develop their skillset in their area of interest (discussed further below). These activities helped young people to feel motivated to secure a job in line with their passions.
- Overcoming barriers to employment.** Many young people reported that STP assisted them to address barriers in their lives which may have prevented them from applying for, securing, and maintaining a job. This included support to manage their mental health, or being supported into stable housing. Participants explained this additional support enabled them to feel better prepared and empowered to participate in the workforce.
- Learning relevant, practical skills.** Participants shared that through participation in STP, they developed skills directly relevant to potential job opportunities. This included participating in courses (i.e. in construction, project management, hospitality and retail), undertaking internships and apprenticeships to develop industry specific skills (i.e. in teaching, car detailing and cooking), and skills relevant across industries (i.e. customer service, teamwork, time management and conflict resolution). Participants indicated that learning these new skills helped them to feel better equipped for employment.

“ *There’s no point pushing someone into a job if they don’t have stable accommodation. Other places have gotten me into jobs that haven’t worked out because I haven’t had stable housing.*  
– STP participant

“ *STP gave you what you wanted...they were good at getting you the job you wanted, or they would try find something similar if they couldn’t.*  
– STP participant

“ *I did an internship with a car detailing place...it opened my eyes to a few things I never really noticed in my last position like teamworking, coordinating...it was a good opportunity to learn.*  
– STP participant

## CASE STUDY: Jane was supported to pursue her interest in teaching

Jane\* is a 20 year-old woman from Sydney who suffers from anxiety and has struggled to maintain employment. Her jobactive provider helped her find a job in telemarketing, but had also referred her to STP. Jane shared with her coach that she did not enjoy her work in telemarketing and it was making it difficult to manage her anxiety. Her coach referred her to the in-house psychologist who helped address her struggles with anxiety. Jane also told her coach that she wanted to work with children. Her coach connected her with a childcare traineeship, which she spoke of enjoying as it taught her communication skills, time management and how to care for children. However, she expressed to her coach that she did not think childcare was a career path she wanted to pursue. She spoke to her coach about trialling school teaching and she now works casually as a teacher’s aide. Jane expressed that she enjoys this and hopes to secure a part-time or full-time role in the future.

## CASE STUDY: Trevor was supported into stable housing which helped him to secure a job

Trevor\* is a 22 year-old man from Kiama who has drug and alcohol issues and was residing in a refuge at the time of engaging with STP. His coach organised for him to attend a drug and alcohol support service, and also found Trevor safe and secure housing. Once these needs were addressed, Trevor felt he could more easily focus on working towards getting a job. Eventually, he secured a job in the construction industry. He said he really wanted to work in a ‘hands-on’ industry so this was a job he was passionate about.

\*To protect the confidentiality of participants several participants’ experiences have been combined, names changed and some non-critical demographic details altered..

# STP SUPPORTED YOUNG PEOPLE TO INCREASE THEIR SELF-CONFIDENCE, EMPOWERING THEM TO ENTER THE WORKFORCE

Young people commonly reported that STP delivered considerable value for them, outside of specific employment and employment readiness outcomes. These included:

- **Increased feelings of self-confidence.** Many young people interviewed described their experience with STP as contributing to their increased confidence. They reported that coaches worked with them to build their confidence and gently 'nudge' them outside their comfort zone. For example, one young person explained that before participating in STP, she did not feel confident to speak to strangers, let alone attend a job interview. Her coach assisted her to feel more confident to pursue job opportunities, which she attributed to her coach encouraging her to call several employers and attend job interviews. A small number of young people compared this experience to jobactive, which they believed did not provide sufficient support to address their confidence issues, preventing them from applying for jobs.

“ Without STP I would've taken more time to get a job...I lack confidence, I'm a lazy person and need to be given a push. – STP participant

- **Increased capacity for resilience.** Some young people suggested their coaches supported them to bounce back from adversity. Several young people had mental health issues and complex family situations, but STP was described as supporting young people to overcome issues as they arose by listening and offering strategies. For example, one young person experienced the death of a family member and noted her coach was there to listen and provide comforting words through this difficult time. A small number of young people also said they lost their job (due to reasons such as COVID-19) but their coach provided them with encouraging words to overcome this and so they began applying for jobs again.
- **Increased feelings of empowerment and motivation.** An increased sense of empowerment and motivation were commonly reported by young people. They attributed their coach as assisting them to 'believe in themselves' by setting and achieving goals. For example, one young person described setting a goal with their coach to complete a healthcare-related TAFE course, which they were on track to complete in June 2021. They described feeling a sense of empowerment from working towards a goal they never thought would be possible to achieve. Coaches reiterated the process of goal-setting appeared to motivate young people. One coach highlighted that setting and achieving goals afforded young people a sense of achievement, which further motivated them to work towards other goals.
- **Reduced social anxiety.** Many young people interviewed indicated they had mental health issues, particularly anxiety. They suggested that before STP, this significantly affected their ability to secure and/or maintain a job due to issues such as a lack of confidence and concentration. They attributed STP as helping reduce their feelings of social anxiety by supporting them to increase their self-confidence (as discussed above), teaching them coping strategies and connecting them with a therapist. One young person explained that before STP, they were anxious to talk to new people but their coach worked with them to overcome these fears and were provided with the additional support of a therapist. They now work in a hospitality role where they are often engaging with new people.

“ I couldn't talk to anyone before...the anxiety was that bad...she helped me with talking to people. – STP participant

Overall, these benefits demonstrate the impact that supporting employment readiness and employment can have more broadly for a young person.

## Case study: Ellie received support to address her anxiety and now works at McDonalds

Ellie\* a 21 year-old woman from Gerringong, experiences social anxiety and is significantly lacking in confidence. She tended to isolate at home because of her anxiety and found talking to new people was very frightening for her. She spoke of often avoiding going to job interviews because speaking to a stranger was terrifying. Her STP coach listened to these worries and suggested different stress and anxiety management strategies. Her coach also encouraged her to take small steps to overcome these fears such as by calling three potential employers a week. Ellie said these gentle nudges gave her a sense of achievement, empowering her to continue to work to address these anxieties.

To help calm her, her coach accompanied her to job interviews. Ellie eventually found a job at a fast food restaurant, which she said was a significant step for her as she was now regularly speaking to strangers. She also proudly noted she was awarded team member of the month, which was a big achievement for her.

Ellie's coach checks-in with her weekly to see how she's going in her new role, whether she's having any issues and what areas for improvement she has. This helped her to feel supported as she felt increasingly comfortable in the workplace.

# 4.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING OUTCOME ACHIEVEMENT

# THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS AND HIGH STAFF TURNOVER AFFECTED PROGRAM SUCCESS

Interviews with young people, SYC staff, employers, jobactive providers, and Government stakeholders indicated several factors which influenced the achievement of employment outcomes. These factors included the quality of relationships, frequency of staff turnover, the evidence standard, the availability of regional job opportunities, and regional transport barriers. This Chapter reports on these factors that influenced outcome achievement.

## **Jobactive staff turnover and capacity affected the strength of SYC’s relationship with jobactive providers**

SYC staff reported building relationships with jobactive were key to ensuring sufficient referrals to the program, but the strength of these relationships depended on several factors. In some cases, a strong working relationship with jobactive was founded on **mutual understanding of the benefits of the program** for young people. For example, one provider voiced their overwhelming support for the program because they understood that, unlike jobactive, STP had capacity to provide more intensive support to address young people’s employment barriers. Staff turnover was also highlighted as common within jobactive providers, making it difficult to maintain consistent relationships with providers. For example, SYC staff explained they received more referrals from providers with less staff turnover as it was easier to maintain a strong relationship with them.

In other cases, jobactive representatives may have been too busy to make referrals as SYC staff noted that some have many young people (up to 180) on their caseload. A small number of SYC staff also indicated they noticed some correlation between jobactive providers with a 5 star rating and more referrals received. Where there are many variables impacting relationships with jobactive representatives, SYC staff reflected on the benefits of operating STP in South Australia and Victoria, where SYC is a jobactive provider and management of referrals is an easier process.

## **Strong relationships between coaches and employers were critical for sustaining a young person’s job**

Coaches reported they must develop relationships with potential employers to support young people into, and to sustain, employment. Engaging with employers enables coaches to identify job opportunities with suitable employers. For example, one coach said they invested substantial time into building relationships with employers to identify suitable job opportunities for their young people. This was supported by employers who explained how coaches are in ongoing communication with them to identify potential job opportunities. Maintaining relationships with employers also allows coaches to continue to engage with employers once a young person starts work, enabling them to support the young person’s integration within the workplace. For instance, one coach explained that once a young person is in employment, they will check-in with employers and mediate with them if an issue arises with a young person (i.e. turning up late to work). Coaches reflected that due to the time required to invest in these relationships, they believed having a relationship manager added value to the program. However, as noted on page 15, SYC previously experienced challenges in recruiting and retaining the relationship manager positions so this would need to be a consideration if SYC chose to recruit again for this role.

## **Consistency and frequency of engagement are key to the relationship between coaches and young people**

There is some evidence to suggest outcome achievement may have been more likely for young people who were highly and consistently engaged with their coach. For example, of the young people who said they were mostly engaging with their coach on a weekly or fortnightly basis, they were more likely to report having participated in employment (i.e. in food services industry and stonemasonry), completed a course (i.e. in music technology) or traineeship/apprenticeship (i.e. in childcare).

Staff turnover may have disrupted the consistency of young people’s engagement. SYC staff explained there is ongoing high turnover in coaches and this may continue to affect young people’s relationship with their coaches, and in some cases contribute to their disengagement from the program. Whilst young people did not articulate any direct influence of staff turnover on their experience, feedback suggests turnover somewhat interrupted their engagement. One young person noted they had just reached a level of comfort with their coach before their coach changed. Whilst they noted they liked both these coaches, they indicated it took additional time to feel at ease with the new coach. This may suggest progress may be hampered when there is staff turnover, influencing the extent to which outcomes can be achieved within the 60 week period.

# CHALLENGES IN OBTAINING EVIDENCE MAY HAVE AFFECTED HOW OUTCOME ACHIEVEMENT IS REPRESENTED

STP experienced challenges in obtaining evidence for work and work-like activities. SYC staff commonly reported challenges in meeting the agreed requirement to provide 100% evidence of young people's work-like and work hours. SYC staff explained this was mainly because there is limited value for young people, employers and jobactive providers, to provide this evidence. SYC staff further noted the following challenges in collecting evidence:

- once in employment, young people tend to reduce engagement with STP and no longer see the need for providing evidence
- employers can be too busy, and providing evidence or verifying work or work-like hours is not a high priority
- jobactive providers only collect evidence up to 26 weeks and often will not continue to collect evidence beyond this point.

The extent to which coaches could collect evidence may also have been influenced by their relationships with employers. As discussed on page 31, it is critical that coaches invest time in building employer relationships. Accordingly, in cases where coaches were not frequently communicating with an employer, greater difficulty in obtaining evidence may have been experienced.

These challenges with evidence collection are further indicated by the program data, which shows 44% of all records of employment and 35% of all records of work-like hours were awaiting evidence.

The program data also suggests certain cohorts may have had greater difficulty in providing evidence of their work-like activities and employment. For example, there were 34% of participants who had 80% or more of their evidence approved. Of these participants, the majority were from STP's regional locations: 55% in Sh/SH and 36% in Illawarra, compared to 21% in Sydney (City and Inner South). Qualitative feedback did not reveal strong themes as to why this may be but some factors that may have influenced could include: relationships with employers, staff turnover, the nature of employment, or size of the employer.

SYC staff commented that the time required to collect evidence reduced the time available to engage with young people and to build relationships with jobactive representatives to generate referrals. For instance, one SYC staff member believed approximately 20% of a coach's time is spent on administrative tasks like chasing-up payslips, reducing the time available to support young people. Another SYC staff member noted that because evidence collection is very time-consuming, they have less availability to build referrer relationships with jobactive providers.

To make the process of collecting evidence easier for young people and employers, different strategies were proposed by the NSW Department of Education but with limited initial uptake by SYC. For example, in the earlier phases of program implementation, the NSW Department of Education proposed offering incentives to young people to provide their payslips. SYC only began trialling the incentive scheme in January 2021, and coaches indicated it is having a positive influence on evidence collection. The NSW Department of Education also suggested sending an email template to employers to confirm hours worked. SYC coaches in Sydney (City and Inner South) noted they have started trialling this strategy, and are also emailing young people a template to document their study evidence. As suggestions made by the NSW Department of Education have only recently been implemented, evidence collection continued to be problematic for some time prior. Accordingly, STP may have greater success in evidence collection if they continue this strategy and maintain a greater focus on building stronger relationships with employers.

The NSW Department of Education also described challenges in SYC being able to accurately record evidence in the database they developed. For some time, the database used to collect program data was found to be cumbersome and unfit for accurately documenting evidence. For example, the NSW Department of Education explained the SYC database does not capture unique identifiers for hours worked and if evidence was rejected, and some of these issues are still unresolved.

“ [the NSW Department of Education] have been awesome...deeply understands jobactive space and the cohort of young people we're dealing with...they have a great willingness to work with us. – SYC staff

“ Evidence is a key challenge...some young people are busy, some are working full-time so getting a hold of payslips can be difficult...some are less likely to provide evidence, particularly when they've gotten all out of the program they needed – SYC staff

“ Having to collect 100% evidence is really difficult because you're relying on so many factors like young people forwarding documentation...even if you have great rapport it can be difficult...employers also get annoyed at you for getting evidence...it's very time-consuming, we're constantly chasing young people for documentation. – SYC staff

# ACHIEVING EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES WAS AFFECTED BY REGIONAL FACTORS SUCH AS JOB AVAILABILITY AND TRANSPORT BARRIERS

Interviews with SYC staff identified regional factors which may have influenced the achievement of employment outcomes. This page reports on these factors that may have influenced outcome achievement.

## Outcome achievement may have been affected by the availability of employment opportunities in regional areas

A key assumption underpinning STP is that appropriate jobs are available in the locations where each program operates. As such, the ability of STP to support young people to achieve employment outcomes is influenced by macroeconomic trends and the context of local employment markets. For example, SYC staff indicated the importance of job availability for program success. Therefore, while it is intended that STP support young people into jobs, to do so, supply needs to be matched by employment demand.

Regional areas tend to have fewer job opportunities than metropolitan areas. For instance, as at 2018 Greater Sydney had approximately 67% of the distribution of employment compared to under 4% in Illawarra and just over 1% in the Sh/SH (Hinton, 2021). Coaches from regional locations also highlighted that less jobs are available in these areas.

SYC coaches indicated that job availability was further affected by the 2019 bushfires and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. For example, SYC staff noted these events significantly impacted the labour market in Illawarra and Sh/SH regions. The COVID-19 pandemic also appears to have affected the ability of young people to maintain a job. For instance, the program data indicates that seven young people from the Illawarra or Sh/SH areas lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was reiterated by a small number of young people in consultation. Accordingly, while fewer jobs may be expected for regional areas, the bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic further impacted the job market in the Illawarra and Sh/SH regions.

“ There are less job opportunities, and there was a huge drop in employment and job opportunities after COVID and the bushfires. – SYC staff

“ Productive hours was decimated through COVID because of the impact on the labour market...Shoalhaven has also suffered bushfires and floods which they haven't recovered from yet. – SYC staff

## Transport barriers in regional areas reduced access to employment opportunities

SYC staff and young people described the lack of public transport availability in regional areas such as the Illawarra and Sh/SH regions, which in some cases was a barrier to employment. SYC staff explained the expansive area the Illawarra and Sh/SH regions cover with poor public transport networks. They, as well as some young people, also noted the challenges in obtaining a driver's licence without a parent/carer to teach them how to drive or without funding for a sufficient number of driving lessons. Accordingly, SYC staff indicated the challenges in young people being able to pursue certain jobs because of the difficulties in being able to access transportation. This suggests that transport barriers reduce access to employment opportunities for young people participating in STP in Illawarra and Sh/SH in particular.

“ Most young people don't have a car or licence and there aren't many services that can help get them a car or licence...no one can take them for lessons. Having a licence is key for getting to work and traineeships...public transport isn't great, particularly for the times young people have their shifts...this can prevent young people from being able to go for those jobs – SYC staff

“ The large geographic area is another challenges...transport is a big barrier...It would be great to look at being able to drive young people to interviews to overcome transport issues. – SYC staff



# 5. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

# STP SUPPORTS YOUNG PEOPLE TO OVERCOME COMPLEX BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT, BUT HAS NOT MET SUSTAINED EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES AS ORIGINALLY AGREED

STP is a voluntary coaching program designed to provide holistic support to help young people overcome barriers to employment. The NSW Department of Education commissioned SYC to deliver STP in Sydney (City and Inner South), Illawarra and Sh/SH to test if this approach to providing additional support improves employment outcomes for young people when compared with support provided by the Commonwealth jobactive program. In assessing STP, seven key findings became apparent as summarised below.



**During the first two years of operation, STP has not delivered substantial employment outcomes above jobactive.** The program has engaged 444 young people since April 2019, supported 144 to commence employment. Performance of the program was measured by cumulative incremental work and work-like hours relative to jobactive. The employment outcomes achieved to date demonstrates the program does not deliver substantial employment outcomes above jobactive.



**36 young people sustained employment for at least 26 non-consecutive weeks within the 60 week program.** They worked an average of 22 hours per week, with two thirds increasing their average hours of work per week during their engagement with STP.



**Most participants had experienced multiple and complex barriers to employment,** including multiple housing, health, or legal barriers which affected their workforce participation.



**Based on qualitative interviews with 18 young people, STP empowered participants to engage with employment.** STP helped young people to improve their self-confidence and resilience, overcome barriers which can prevent access and maintenance of employment, and find work which aligned to their interests. This suggests STP may offer benefits for young people which could positively impact their engagement in the workforce over the longer-term.



**STP provides personalised, holistic support for young people to overcome complex barriers preventing them from securing and maintaining employment.** The program offers more tailored and holistic support, addressing broader health and wellbeing factors than other youth-focused Commonwealth programs.



**Developing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders is critical to the program's success.** STP is underpinned by key relationships with jobactive providers for referrals, participants for program delivery, and employers to support employment retention. Focussing on building strong relationships with employers and improving coach retention may enable improvements in achievement of employment outcomes.



**Challenges with evidence collection may mean program outcomes are understated.** In order to record employment outcomes, STP requires evidence for every week of work a young person completes. As there is limited incentive for young people to provide this evidence, almost half of all records of employment were awaiting evidence. If greater evidence was collected, STP might be able to demonstrate greater levels of outcome achievement.

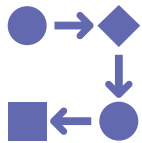
While STP has supported some young people to overcome complex barriers to employment and enter the workforce, the quantitative employment evidence mostly indicates the program does not deliver substantial sustained employment outcomes above jobactive and has not met the targets agreed by SYC and the NSW Department of Education. Qualitative evidence suggests that support from STP may provide other benefits, such as increased resilience, which may increase young people's longer term employment prospects. As such, while **STP may benefit young people, the employment outcomes achieved may not align with the original intention for STP to provide additional support to jobactive to gain and sustain employment.**

# REVIEWING THE DESIGN OF STP MAY STRENGTHEN ITS IMPACT AND REFINING OPERATIONAL PROCESSES WILL HELP IMPROVE DEMONSTRATION OF OUTCOMES



## Assess if the outcomes STP delivers provides value for money for continued NSW Government investment

STP underdelivered target employment outcomes originally agreed by NSW Government and SYC in the first two years of operation. However, the program may deliver broader benefits to young people, such as building self-confidence, resilience and motivation, which could improve longer-term employment prospects. Accordingly, NSW Government will need to consider whether STP provides value for the State against other available employment support.



## Refine the service model to better meet the agreed employment outcome targets

If it is determined that the current STP model does not deliver substantial additional employment outcomes above Commonwealth-funded programs, STP and NSW Government could explore refining the program to achieve improved sustained employment outcomes. This might include testing the program by focussing on specific cohorts of young people, or on specific regions which have a greater need. It may also include measuring milestones that are a leading indicator of long-term sustained employment outcomes.



## Ensure sufficient focus on building and maintaining key relationships with jobactive providers and employers

At its core, the STP model relies heavily on staff building relationships. While the relationship between a participant and coach is critical to achieving outcomes, developing and maintaining strong relationships with jobactive providers and employers is equally important. These relationships are essential to engage young people in the program, and ensure appropriate employment opportunities are available for them. Allocating sufficient resourcing to focus on building and maintaining these relationships, without compromising time available for coaching participants, will help ensure the program is well-placed to support young people to achieve employment outcomes. Similarly, greater focus on improving coach retention will help develop stronger relationships between coaches and young people, and may improve outcome achievement.



## Improve evidence collection processes and strengthen employer relationships to better capture outcomes

The current requirements and processes for collecting evidence of participants' employment may understate the outcomes which the program achieves. A review of the type of evidence required, the benchmark of providing 100% evidence, and the process by which evidence is collected and recorded will ensure the evidence requirements are fit-for-purpose. Central to this is the continuation of the personal incentive for young people and provision of a template to employers to confirm hours worked. A greater focus on strengthening employer relationships may also help to address these evidence collection challenges.



## Refine program data collection requirements to better demonstrate achievement of outcomes

While STP currently collects a considerable amount of participant data, it is not always fit-for-purpose for detailed and complex analysis of participant outcomes. This can make comparison with other employment programs challenging, and can restrict the extent to which STP can demonstrate the value it provides. Improving and restructuring the data collection tool and the way program data is collected and recorded can help ensure the program has sufficient evidence to demonstrate the outcomes which it achieves.

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A – EVALUATION QUESTIONS

# EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Evaluation Domain	Evaluation Questions
<b>Implementation and Efficiency</b> <i>(is it operating as planned and is it well administered?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has the program (referral, service delivery, exit, partnerships) been implemented as intended?</li> <li>▪ To what extent has the STP Coaching Model (principles, service delivery phases, tools) been implemented as intended?</li> <li>▪ To what extent has program management and administration enabled implementation and outcome achievement?</li> <li>▪ What were the key enablers and barriers to program implementation?</li> </ul>
<b>Appropriateness</b> <i>(is it meeting client needs?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent does STP appropriately address participant's employment barriers?</li> <li>▪ How does STP compare to alternative options for supporting young people to overcome employment barriers?</li> <li>▪ What were the key enablers and barriers to addressing participant needs?</li> </ul>
<b>Reach and Equity</b> <i>(who is benefiting and are benefits distributed fairly?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has STP reached it's target cohort?</li> <li>▪ To what extent does the profile of STP participants reflect the intended cohort?</li> <li>▪ What have been the key enablers and barriers to program participation?</li> </ul>
<b>Experience and Impact</b> <i>(how is it experienced and what is it achieving?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was the nature of participant's experience with the program?</li> <li>▪ To what extent have participants actively engaged in coaching?</li> <li>▪ To what extent have participants increased their hours of productive activity (volunteering, work experience, training, paid employment) during the program?</li> <li>▪ What is the relationship between participant's engagement in work-like activities (volunteering, work experience, training) and paid employment?</li> <li>▪ What have been the key enablers and barriers to achieving program outcomes?</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX B – POLICY AND PROGRAM SCAN

# THE COMMONWEALTH AND NSW GOVERNMENT BOTH HAVE WORKED TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Australian governments invest in supporting youth employment because of the significant negative long-term economic and social impact of young people who are unemployed. At an economic level, youth unemployment costs the Australian economy up to \$15.9 billion in lost GDP each year (FYA, 2018). Its social impacts can include young people experiencing long-term mental health issues as well as reduced earning capacity and poor employment outcomes (AIHW, 2019; Productivity Commission, 2020). NEET young Australians are more likely to experience social isolation and low self-esteem than others their age (AIHW, 2019). As highlighted in the OECD’s Action Plan for Youth: “successful engagement of young people in the labour market is crucial not only for their personal economic prospects and wellbeing, but also for overall economic growth and social cohesion” (OECD, 2020).

**The Commonwealth Government is principally responsible for Australia’s labour market policy**, adopting active labour market policies (ALMPs), which seek to improve unemployed or underemployed individuals’ access to the labour market. The Commonwealth provides general employment services for people who receive income support payments, including jobactive (Australia’s mainstream employment service), Disability Employment Services (DES) (an employment support service for people with disability) and ParentsNext (a service that supports parents with children under 6 years) (see Figure 2). Most job seekers have mutual obligation requirements under these programs, designed to ensure that they are actively looking for work and are participating in activities that will help them into employment. In addition, the Commonwealth provides youth-specific employment services, including Transition to Work and Youth Jobs PaTH.

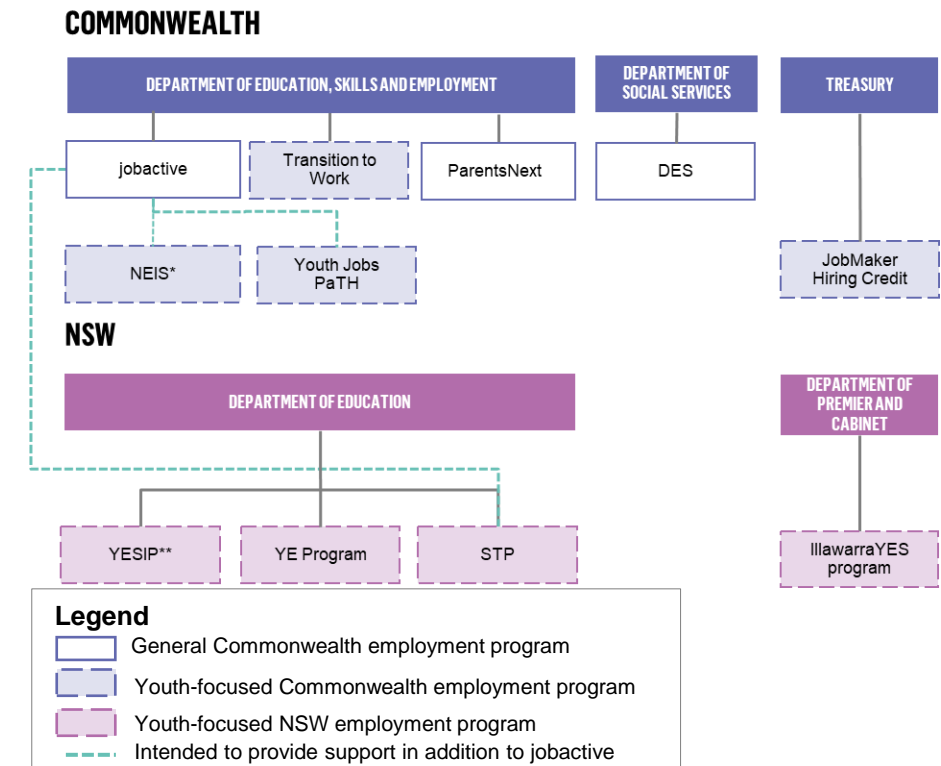
**The NSW Government also has an interest in supporting young people access and retain employment**, as much of the social and economic costs of youth unemployment are borne by State services, such as health and justice. To do so, NSW’s youth employment programs are intended to complement rather than replicate Commonwealth support. Accordingly, most NSW programs stipulate that participants not be receiving Commonwealth employment support (i.e. through Transition to Work or Youth Jobs PaTH). NSW program participants are therefore likely to be:

- young people who are NEET or underemployed who have not yet accessed or are ineligible for Commonwealth programs,
- young people with multiple and complex barriers to employment.

The NSW government is well positioned to provide tailored, targeted support to these groups, given the many points of interaction it has with disadvantaged and marginalised young people, such as those with a history of out-of-home care, juvenile justice or social housing (NSW Department of Industry, 2018).

Since 2016, the NSW Government has invested over \$80 million to address youth unemployment. This contributed to the Youth Employment Social Impact Program (YESIP), STP, the Youth Employment Program and the Youth Employment Innovation Challenge (under the 2017 Smart, Skilled and Hired initiative designed to lift young people’s long-term employment prospects).

Figure 2 – Commonwealth and NSW youth employment program landscape



\* Although not strictly a youth employment program, NEIS provides support to many young people to become self-employed

\*\* Program has not yet started

NB: Program eligibility criteria varies significantly across the youth employment program landscape. This diagram depicts funding relationships and programs intended to provide support in addition to jobactive. Other prerequisite or exclusionary eligibility relations are not represented.



# THE COMMONWEALTH FUNDS A RANGE OF YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO FIND WORK

## COMMONWEALTH PROGRAMS

Jobactive, DES and ParentsNext support many Australians, including young Australians, into employment, and the Commonwealth Government also funds specific employment programs for youth. Transition to Work and Youth Jobs PaTH were initially funded in the 2015-16 and 2016-17 Budgets under the Youth Employment Strategy and the Youth Employment Package. These programs seek to enhance young people's access to employment. Participation in Transition to Work and Youth Jobs PaTH is voluntary, however young job seekers who have mutual obligation requirements can meet their requirements through these programs instead of jobactive.

In response to the impact of COVID-19 on young Australians in 2020, the Commonwealth Government announced several additional measures in the 2020-21 Budget to create jobs for young people. These measures include the JobMaker Hiring Credit, the Boosting Apprenticeships Commencements wage subsidy program and the JobTrainer Fund. Table 2 below outlines the key Commonwealth-funded programs that seek to address youth unemployment.

Table 2 – Commonwealth youth employment programs

Program	Description	Target cohort
Youth Jobs PaTH	A voluntary employment service that helps young people gain skills and work experience they need to find and retain employment. It also supports businesses to trial young people in the workplace and offers a financial incentive when they hire them. Youth Jobs PaTH has three elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare - Employability Skills Training supports young people to become job ready.</li> <li>Trial - PaTH internships enable young people to gain valuable work experience and businesses to trial young people before they hire.</li> <li>Hire - Youth Bonus Wage Subsidies of up to \$10,000 may be available to businesses that hire eligible young people in ongoing work.</li> </ul>	Young job seekers who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aged 15-24 years</li> <li>registered with a jobactive provider</li> <li>have mutual obligation requirements</li> <li>receiving an income support payment.</li> </ul>
Transition to Work	A voluntary program that supports young people to develop readiness to enter employment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing practical skills</li> <li>connecting with education or training</li> <li>finding work experience placements and local job opportunities</li> <li>connecting with relevant services.</li> </ul> Providers also deliver services to employers to ensure young people are supported to settle into employment.	Young job seekers who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aged 15-24 years</li> <li>early school leavers or those who have had difficulty entering employment after school.</li> </ul>
JobMaker Hiring Credit	Gives businesses incentives to take on additional young job seekers. It is available to employers for each new job they create for which they hire an eligible young person, aged 16 to 35 years old. For each eligible employee, employers will receive for a period up to 12 months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$200 a week if they hire an eligible young person aged 16 to 29 years; or</li> <li>\$100 a week if they hire an eligible young person aged 30 to 35 years.</li> </ul>	Young job seekers who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aged 16-35 years</li> <li>receiving an income support payment for at least one of the previous three months at the time of hiring.</li> </ul>
New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS)*	A voluntary program designed to assist individuals to start and develop small businesses by providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accredited small business training</li> <li>Help to develop a business plan</li> <li>Personalised mentoring from a NEIS provider</li> <li>NEIS Allowance for up to 39 weeks and NEIS Rental Assistance for up to 26 weeks (if eligible).</li> </ul>	Job seekers who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aged at least 18 years</li> <li>eligible for DES, jobactive, or ParentsNext</li> <li>receiving an income support payment.</li> </ul>

\* Although NEIS is not primarily designed as a youth employment program, it provides support to many young people to become self-employed

# THE NSW GOVERNMENT HAS FUNDED PROGRAMS THAT ESTABLISH PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN NSW

## NSW PROGRAMS

The Youth Employment program (YE program) (now finished) is NSW's core youth employment program and supports young people residing in youth unemployment hotspots. The YE program is one of three programs originally introduced under the NSW Government's 2017 Smart, Skilled and Hired pilot initiative. The other sub-programs are the Youth Employment Innovation Challenge (now lapsed) and the Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program (ISLP), which seeks to boost the number of skilled construction workers across the state. While the ISLP is not strictly a youth employment program, it seeks to create pathways to employment for people in NSW, including through traineeships and apprenticeships for young people.

The NSW Government's commitment to addressing high rates of regional youth unemployment is demonstrated through the Illawarra Youth Employment Strategy (IllawarraYES), which it jointly commissioned with the Illawarra Pilot Joint Organisation. Released in 2016, IllawarraYES identifies nine actions that focus on developing young people's skills and knowledge that match employment opportunities within industries in the region. To implement the IllawarraYES, the NSW Government funded the Illawarra Business Chamber to deliver the program. An overview of the NSW Government-funded programs that seek to address youth unemployment are outlined in Table 3 below.

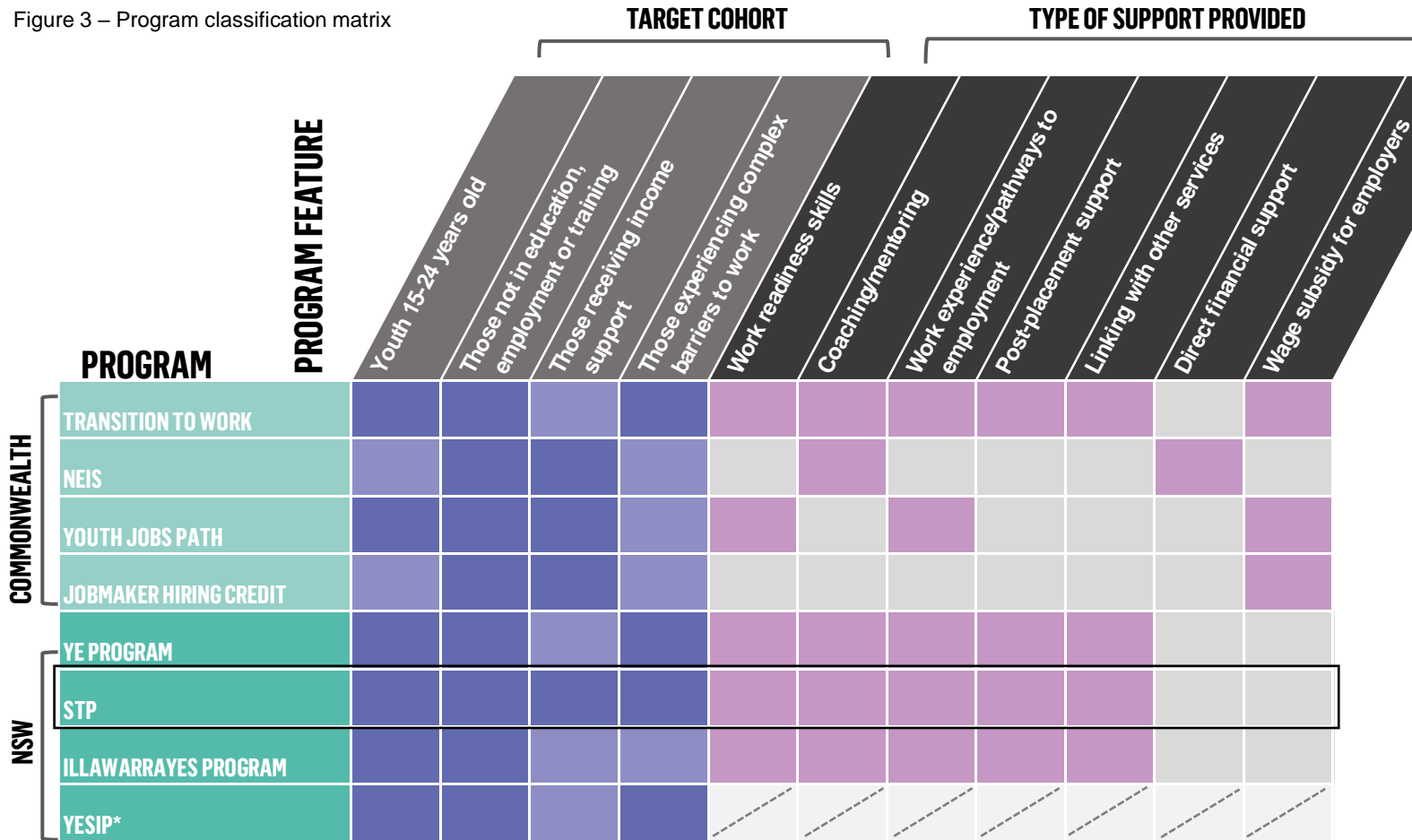
Table 3 – NSW youth employment programs

Program	Description	Target cohort
Youth Employment program (YE program)	A \$65 million place-based program that involves local service providers working closely with local employers, organisations and NGOs to connect eligible young people with training, support, and jobs. Participation in the program is voluntary and participants work one-on-one with a coach to identify work goals and create a plan for achieving them. The flexible nature of the program allows providers to design tailored support plans for program participants across areas including accommodation and transport, training, and health and wellbeing, while also considering factors like the local labour market.	Young job seekers who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aged 15-24 years</li> <li>not receiving support through Commonwealth programs</li> <li>live in youth unemployment hotspots in NSW</li> <li>NEET or underemployed including early school leavers and at-risk groups.</li> </ul>
Youth Employment Social Impact Program (YESIP)	An upcoming grants program that will fund two to four social enterprises and social impact organisations from a total funding pool of \$1.5 million. Organisations that will be funded are those delivering an existing initiative, supporting young people experiencing disadvantage to find and retain employment.	Young job seekers who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aged 16-24 years</li> <li>experiencing multiple and complex barriers to employment.</li> </ul>
IllawarraYES program	A voluntary program that focuses on building entry level employment pathways for young people, comprised of vocational training, employability skills and work experience, as well as on-the-job mentoring and support. It also assists business to meet identified skill shortages and seeks to prepare, skill, and trial young job seekers prior to employment, by coordinating government funded training and job readiness programs including work experience, tailored to business and industry requirements.	Young job seekers who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aged 15-24 years</li> <li>living in the Illawarra Shoalhaven region</li> <li>seeking entry level employment pathways.</li> </ul>

# COMMONWEALTH AND NSW EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS OFFER VARYING LEVELS OF SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING COMPLEX BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT

The Policy and Program Scan revealed four features of target cohorts and seven types of support that can assist young people to find and retain employment. Figure 3 outlines the features of target cohorts supported by each program and the types of support provided.

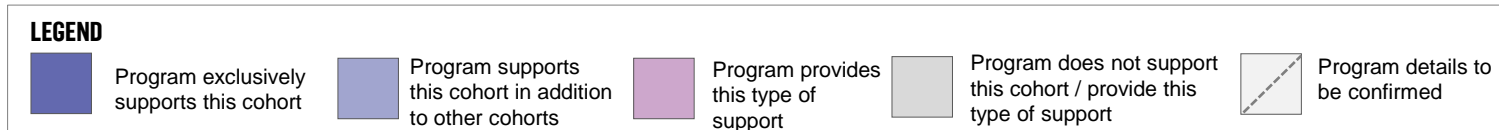
Figure 3 – Program classification matrix



### KEY INSIGHTS

- All programs support NEET youth aged 15-24 years-old.
- Two programs also support people outside the ages of 15 to 24 (NEIS and JobMaker Hiring Credit).
- Three programs require eligible participants to be receiving income support (NEIS, Youth Jobs PaTH and STP) and one program does not support those receiving income support (YE program).
- JobMaker Hiring Credit is distinct, in that eligible employees are those who have received an income support payment for at least one of the previous three months at the time of hiring.
- All programs support young people with multiple and complex barriers to work. However, half the programs typically support young people with less complex barriers to work (i.e. lack of experience, insufficient education or training) or limited job search skills (NEIS, Youth Jobs PaTH, JobMaker Hiring Credit and IllawarraYES program).

\*As program is still in development, some details related to YESIP are to be determined.



# STP OFFERS A HOLISTIC AND PERSONALISED APPROACH TO SUPPORTING YOUTH INTO EMPLOYMENT WHEN COMPARED WITH OTHER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

## HOW STP FITS INTO THE POLICY LANDSCAPE

STP is an intensive coaching model which provides holistic support to young people to address their multiple and complex barriers to employment. STP mainly differs from Commonwealth youth employment programs in that it provides more holistic and intensive support to address young people's employment barriers. This support involves working through complex challenges with young people which prevent them from engaging in the labour market such as relationship breakdowns, housing instability and mental health and drug and alcohol issues. STP also meets young people where they are at in life, addressing their individual needs and customising support to suit these needs. Commonwealth programs such as Transition to Work and Youth Jobs PaTH have a greater focus on developing work-ready and employability skills, and provide a wage subsidy to employers.

Other NSW employment programs also worked with young people with complex barriers to employment in specific regions. For example, the YE program provided specific support to Western Sydney, Central Coast, Hunter New England/North West and North Coast. Some NSW programs, whilst operating in similar locations to STP, support less vulnerable cohorts. For example, programs such as IllawarraYes seem better suited to young people who are less vulnerable and more work-ready at the time of program engagement, compared to STP which supports more complex young people who are less work-ready.

Table 4 below outlines in further detail the key similarities and differences between STP and its most similar programs.

Table 4 – Similarities and differences to other employment programs

Program	Similarities	Differences
Youth Jobs PaTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports participants to develop work-readiness skills ('Prepare' component)</li> <li>Supports participants to access work experience and pathways to employment ('Trial' component)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides more formalised employability skills training via training providers (compared to STP which focuses on skills development via a coach)</li> <li>Offers an incentive to businesses to host an intern and a wage subsidy to businesses who hire an eligible participant ('Hire' component)</li> </ul>
Transition to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports youth through an intensive coaching model</li> <li>Participant service period is for 18 months (14 months for STP)</li> <li>Typically supports young people with multiple and/or complex barriers to employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses on labour market activation, with some focus on developing soft skills (i.e. interpersonal skills, motivation and reliability), compared to STP which supported participants to address home, health and relationship challenges</li> <li>Provides wage subsidy to employers who hire an eligible participants</li> </ul>
YE program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible program that can support participants across areas such as training, health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operated in regions not currently serviced by STP</li> <li>Focussed on addressing gaps in the local employment landscape, with a strong focus on current labour shortages</li> </ul>
IllawarraYES program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses on building employment pathways for young people, including by building employability skills and work experience as well as on-the-job mentoring and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focuses on less vulnerable cohorts (i.e. those who are more work-ready)</li> <li>Provides less intensive support, shorter service time period</li> <li>Coordinates government funded training and job readiness programs including work experience, tailored to business and industry requirements</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX C – REFERENCES

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