



ELECTION POSITION PAPER JUNE 2011

BACKGROUND

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs began in 2000 after 7 Mayors decided to collaborate and work community by community to achieve the 1994 Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Employment goal that: *“By 2000, no young person under 25 years will be out of work or training in our communities.”* Memorandums of Understanding have been signed with all Governments since 2002.

The Taskforce has grown and developed and now 64 Mayors (96% of all Mayors) belong to the Taskforce. The Taskforce takes a planned approach to seek strategic social solutions to achieve the amended 1994 goal: *“that all young people under 25 be engaged in education, training, work or other activities that will lead to their economic well-being,”* and the subset of that goal: *“that every school leaver has the support to connect to opportunities within their own community”*.

It is the focus on school leavers which has led the Taskforce to undertake research into the area (Youth Transitions, Modern Apprenticeships) and develop the Youth Connections process.

YOUTH CONNECTIONS

The Taskforce believes that one of the best ways to achieve the “zero waste of young people” and ensure all our young people are valued, nurtured and supported by our communities is to clearly identify and work with those at risk of not reaching their full potential and therefore not contributing in a positive way to our communities. We propose a National Call Centre to track all school leavers and believe that Local Authorities and their communities can determine the best way to provide for these young people. Our Youth Connections Proposal is attached.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Alongside the Youth Connections process, the Taskforce also believes there is a need to revise the apprenticeship system and in particular the Modern Apprenticeship Programme. Our research supports the notion of pastoral support for young apprentices within the workplace and the community where they live, not solely based on industry. Report attached.

CAREER INFORMATION

In both our reports (Youth Transitions and Modern Apprenticeships) the call for better career advice delivered in a variety of forms was continually mentioned. In fact in all the fora (15) we have run in Local Authorities, young people have told us of the lack of available and usable information. The Taskforce is therefore advocating for a new approach to the delivery of career advice and guidance provided to our young people. We are calling for a review of career education policy and strategies with a view to improving the quality of career education in schools. In addition, schools need to develop pathways to employment other than academic routes and be supported with work based training opportunities and training courses for these pathways.

JOB CREATION

Integral to support for young people is the creation of jobs which will enable young people to gain experience, understand the value of paid work in our society and further enhance their skills and qualifications. The Taskforce believes this needs to happen regardless of the economic situation or economic cycles. For example in 2008 there were only 4,755 young people registered as unemployed and employers were citing skill shortages as severely restricting their ability to grow and increase productivity. Today we have 18,408 young people unemployed and communities and employers' site low qualifications and disengagement of young people as the reason for population decline and the march of our talent to Australia.

Youth unemployment is at crisis levels. The youth unemployment rate was 18.8% in March 2011.

The Taskforce therefore advocates for continued focus on young people with increased education and training investment and community job creation in times of economic downturn.

NATION-WIDE YOUTH STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Taskforce along with others such as the Human Rights Commission believes there is a need for a planned, long-term approach to youth employment and supports calls for the development of a national Youth-To-Work strategy and action plan which would see the reduction in the NEET (not in education, employment or training) figure, raise the skills and qualifications of young people, reduce the numbers of Maori and Pacifica young people who are unemployed and disengaged (28.8% and 28.1% respectively – HLFS March 2011) and provide work and training opportunities in smaller communities.

ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs believes that solutions developed nearest to the problem have the greatest chance of success. Communities are capable of devising their own solutions given the appropriate support and resources. Mayors are well placed to facilitate this process along with their Councils. Mayors are elected at large, have the mandate to work for the whole of their community, understand and are passionate about their communities. Mayors who are members of the Taskforce have also worked together to share their experiences, develop best practice and advocate for their young people. The Mayors Taskforce believes Local/Central Government collaboration at the local level is essential if we are to achieve better outcomes for our young people.

DISCUSSION

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs seeks your views on the key points outlined in this paper:

- Mayors Taskforce Goals
- Youth Connections
- Modern Apprenticeship Programme
- Career Advice and Guidance
- Job Creation
- Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan
- Engagement with Local Authorities

We would also like to hear your experiences and policies on youth employment.

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