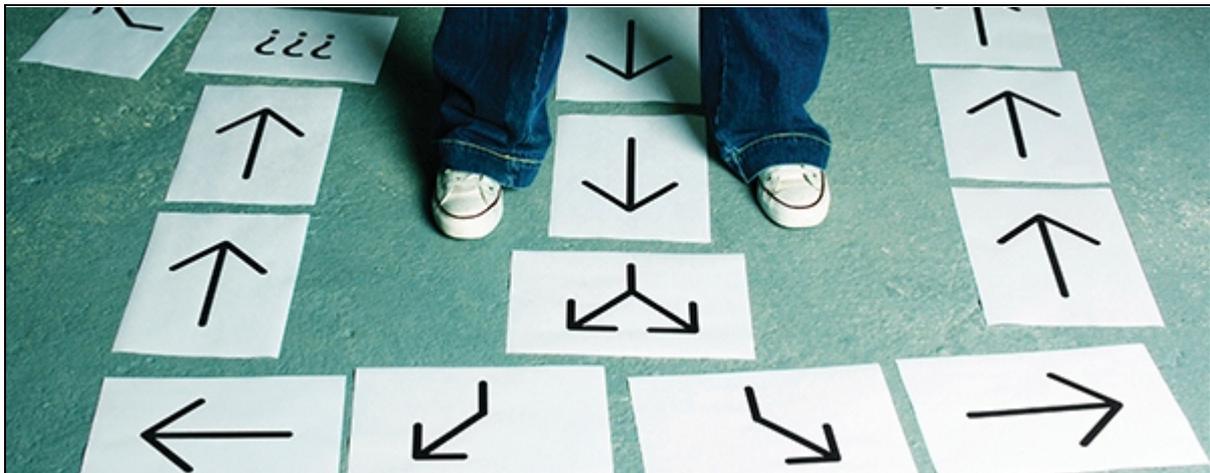




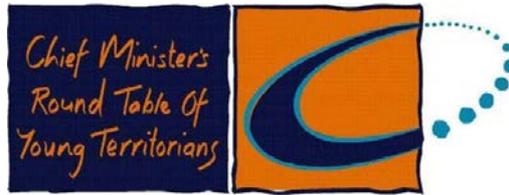
Targeted Work Experience Programs for Year 11 and 12 Students

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YOUTH ISSUE BRIEFING

TO: CHIEF MINISTER

FROM: THOMAS BALLAS, CHIEF MINISTER'S ROUND TABLE OF YOUNG TERRITORIANS – 2013 MEMBER

TOPIC: TARGETED WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS FOR YEAR 11 AND 12 STUDENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Northern Territory Government:

1. Department of Education (DoE) pilots a program aimed at career choices and mandatory work experience for Year 11 and 12 Students; and
2. Department of Business (DoB) continues working with DoE to address skill shortages and build relationships with relevant industries to develop targeted work experience placements.

BACKGROUND

Somewhere in between exam preparation for the last year of secondary school, friends, relationships and video games, students must consider their options. This may include further studies, undertaking a trade or apprenticeship or even a gap year. This briefing will focus on how well students are preparing for the transition from high school to tertiary studies or career pathways.

Thousands of Year 12 students from all schools across the NT have now finished their secondary studies. The last year of high school focused on learning what was needed to successfully complete our final examination and receive our NT Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) and Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR). However a burden that weighed down more than one was the question of 'what's next?'

Many students plan to continue further studies at university, but how can they know if it will be right for them? The Careers Counsellor at Darwin High School (the school I attended) gave great advice and research material. But in the end that's all it was, advice. So how does one get from this advice to becoming employed? This briefing outlines an analysis of the systems in place to secure employment for young Territorians and calls for mandatory work experience from a fresh new perspective,

one that has the potential to bind the education and business sectors much more closely.

It is a common perception that if a young person completes a university degree that their chances of being employed are drastically improved. Simon Marginson, from the University of Melbourne's Centre for the Study of Higher Education indicates that not having a degree can affect life opportunities, self-esteem and earning power.¹ Increasing the number of young people to complete further study, including university degrees is important to society because of Australia's ageing workforce. To ensure that Australian's are able to fill these gaps in the future workforce, it is important that young people today are completing higher education. By taking a local and targeted approach towards workforce development there may be less need to outsource skilled worker positions.

WHAT THE PROGRAM AIMS TO ACHIEVE

The aim is to introduce a proactive program that gets students thinking and acting on their future endeavors, as opposed to a reactive system. More to the point, by establishing connections between schools and stakeholders a one term work experience could be undertaken in most popular fields in higher education study such as the sciences, law, politics, arts etc. Trade is not specifically included in this briefing as there is currently a large focus on that in schools already.

The proposed program would run for 10 weeks, as one subject, which is equivalent to a school term. After the work experience is completed students would be expected to write a report on their findings. These reports could be used as an evaluation tool by the NT Government to determine what percentage of students that complete this program then follow through with the same course at university. For example, if a Year 11 student was interested in becoming a chemical engineer, they could potentially choose to work with a company that can provide insight into their proposed career pathway.

By providing young people with an opportunity to 'see into the future' during the 10 week work experience program, they are given a path from which they can set goals to reach their desired outcome. Goal setting will be most beneficial for young people's self-esteem and confidence by encouraging them to formulate a plan on their future. This experience also enables the participants to understand why they want to work in specific fields and gives them the flexibility to continue on their path or deviate and try something different.

An increase in entrances and completions at the university level is the ultimate goal. This will enable the NT to become competitive in the Australian market, by tapping into one of its largest resource, skilled youth.

Therefore, it is suggested that a Program Coordinator position is established within the DoB and/or the DoE who would help to develop relationships with the various sectors and businesses willing to participate. During their interactions it should be discussed how best to connect the material learnt in school to the stakeholder's core

¹Lucinda Schmidt. (May 30, 2013). *A matter of degrees*. Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/a-matter-of-degrees-20130530-2neo9.html>.

business in the NT. This is potentially the hardest and most important measure taken so that the work experience exercise runs at its maximum.

DISCUSSION

In the past two years Australia has witnessed a steady increase in the national average of unemployment rising from 5.4% in October 2012 to 5.8% in October 2013 (ABS).² An article written in April 2013 by the ABC News reported that the “NT continues to record the lowest unemployment rate in the nation at 4.5%.” Though still more than a full point below the national average by considering the differences in the labour work force in the NT compared to other states, the discrepancies are large. The most alarming fact is that youth unemployment is four times the national average, that’s an unemployment rate of 18% of young people.³ What can be seen is that youth unemployment is much greater than the unemployment of the total labour work force.

Reducing the numbers of unemployed youth will see increased contribution to the economy and to the broader community. As they could not have had the ability to develop a sense of their competence, be in control of their own life, given the responsibility to contribute to society and feel as if they are a valuable member to that society. More importantly, they develop the confidence to exercise these abilities.

The difficulty in finding employment as a means for securing a livelihood experienced by young people is an ongoing issue, along with the sense of frustration arising from failing to meet their work expectations. For this reason as a community the NT must not feel isolated about this cause. An estimated 75.8 million young people world-wide were struggling to find work in 2012.⁴ Unemployment of young people is a world and national level problem and is also not subject to ‘where you live’, it occurs in large and small cities. Its affects are more noticeable by small cities as they rely heavily on the distribution of work load by all demographics of people.

There is a misconception by students that there are better opportunities for employment and more advanced/relevant systems in place by universities outside of the NT. Understandably Charles Darwin University (CDU) cannot provide every possible course to study, but it does not need too. For instance, after a student completes their work experience placement, businesses could provide opportunities for employment as an incentive to finish the degree they need regardless of which university attended whether it’s in NT or else-where. In this way students will be lured back contributing to the growth of the NT, whilst decreasing unemployment rate among youth.

Equal attention should be paid to the transition from education to work, which seems to provide a complexity of issues affected by variables. Such factors include the duration and quality of schooling received the conditions of the labour market and

² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 07/11/2013). *Labour force, Australia*. Available: <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0?opendocument#from-banner=LN>.

³ The Australian, Paul Edington. (October 05, 2013). *High rate of youth unemployment will hurt future productivity*. Available: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/high-rate-of-youth-unemployment-will-hurt-future-productivity/story-fn71714s-1226733071548>.

⁴ Manpower Group. (2013). *YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE AND SOLUTIONS*. Available: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/Manpower_YouthEmploymentChallengeSolutions_2012.pdf.

demographic factors. This surely has to be the first step in confronting youth unemployment rates.

In the next five years the Territory is on track to generate 20 000 new jobs where several economic drivers will under pin local development.⁵ The economic drivers behind this will include the AustralAsia Trade Route, investment in gas and related industries, mining and minerals processing, agribusiness, tourism, Defence support and Darwin's growth as a regional supply, service and distribution hub. Skilled youth have the potential to be among and benefit from the economic growth providing a safeguard in securing opportunities for Australian workers.

FINDINGS

The Vocational Educational and Training (VET) courses provided by schools all over the Territory give great preparation for students wanting to become employed by industries that do not need university level qualifications. A lot is to be learnt and commended for this program. However it is not necessarily used to its full potential; the DoB shows 135 school based students did a VET course program in 2011, without much fluctuation in numbers from the previous year.⁶

A survey was done at my school using simple random sampling. Thirty five Darwin High School students were asked whether or not they want to attend university. In total, 27 out of the 35 wished go to university, leaving eight that did not. By using this sample proportion to represent the population, than through inferential statistics procedures we can calculate that the confidence interval for the proportion of all NT students that want to go to university lies within:

$$63.2\% \leq p \leq 91.1\%$$

The interval above shows with 95% confidence that the proportion of NT students wanting to attend university lies within 63.2% and 91.1%. If a larger sample size was used than the width of the confidence interval would not be as great giving a greater approximation. However a sample size of 35 is large enough to determine an accurate approximation of the whole student population. From which we can see that the majority of students do indeed want to go to university, from this sample.

Q: How many from the majority would prefer to attend Charles Darwin University?

Out of the 27 students that wanted to go to university they were then asked whether they planned to move interstate or stay in the NT. Compared to 11 out of the 27 respondents who wanted to attend CDU. With the main reasons for not attending coming down to availability of courses and belief that interstate is better. Using the same system as above a confidence interval was obtained:

$$22.2\% \leq p \leq 59.3\%$$

⁵ Department of Business. (2012). *Business and Skilled Migration in Australia*. Available: www.propertyoz.com.au/library/Jobs%20precincts%20FINAL.pdf

⁶ NTG Department of Business. (September 2012). *Fact sheet - September 2012* . Available: <http://www.dob.nt.gov.au/training/vet/Pages/fact-sheet-sept-2012.aspx>. Last

The interval above shows with 95% confidence that the proportion of students wanting to attend CDU University lies within 22.2% and 59.3%. For this sample.

Q: Would you plan on returning/staying in the NT if there was a job opportunity lined up?

Now 11 more students claimed they would return making the ratio 22 out of 27. Giving confidence interval of:

$$66.8\% \leq p \leq 96.1\%$$

The interval above shows with 95% confidence that the proportion of students wanting work in the NT lies within 66.8% and 96.1%. For this sample. Those students who changed their minds said they did because in the NT they could be supported by family and friends. As confidence intervals do not overlap the proportion mean of students that would remain in the NT would be greater if done the program than not have. The increase suggests that students are thinking about employment after university, and would prefer to work in the NT.

Consultations with Darwin High Schools' Careers Counsellor revealed that for the most part students were formulating coherent plans for their future. However of those moving off into university there were many questions by the students of what attributes are needed to complete the course and then work in the workforce. The most the Careers Counsellor could do was provide some research material. However throughout the year there were representatives from universities all around Australia that came to speak on the courses available. As before students did not take full advantage of these consultations as they were not compulsory.

FRAMING THE FUTURE

In August 2013, the draft *Framing the Future blueprint* was released. The blueprint outlines four target areas such as creating a Prosperous Economy, Strong Society, Balanced Environment and Confident Culture. The program suggested along with its findings falls under the Prosperous Economy goal and specifically relates to objectives two and four.⁷

Objective 2: An economy that unlocks the potential of our regions and encourages new investments and the growth of existing businesses in the pastoral, resources, energy, fisheries, agriculture, parks, tourism and construction sectors.

Objective 4: An economy that is built on strong local businesses.

Both of these objectives require for the use of skilled youth, so that these objectives are not a temporary illusion. Adults of today should not feel any delusions of grandeur, as their time in the workforce eventually comes to an end no matter how

⁷ Department of the Chief Minister. (2013). *Framing the Future*. Available: http://www.dcm.nt.gov.au/framing_the_future.

competent they are. It was surprising to see that the draft *Framing the Future blueprint* did not focus strongly if at all on education, but mostly on business.

EVALUATION

Although developing targeted and mandatory work experience programs for Year 11 and 12 students possesses a number of challenges, the outcome will be a prosperous economy. The DoE and DoB has a major role in discussing the possibility of expanding this program. Connections between schools and stakeholders must be established in a manner that presents benefits to both parties. The hope is with these in place we can see an increase in the proportion of youth attending university and then finding employment in the NT.

Throughout this investigation it was pleasing to see that my thoughts and opinions were supported by evidence. I learnt that a program such as this will take time to compare results, however we have time and willing youth that are always being opened up to the world of education and employment. It was surprising to find out how much young people are investing in their future, whether that may be studying or researching...a lot.

The brief highlights the issues of employment of young people by providing evidence and recommendations. However to say if it has achieved the results I was hoping for, seems to elude me. Results will only be seen if the recommendations are accepted, even if just for a trial period.

The timing of this briefing presented a number of challenges, finishing Year 12 I had a lot of exam preparation and exams to work on in conjunction with writing up this brief. I also believe I could have spent more time with the DoE and DoB to further develop this program. Next time I am to do something like this I would consider the context I find myself in and then make the decision to participate based on my commitments.

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