

Ben Harvey
Project Manager
Engagement and Innovation Division
Department of Communities Tasmania
ben.harvey1@communities.tas.gov.au
(03) 6166 3670

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Draft Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

Beacon Foundation is a national, for purpose organisation with thirty years' experience delivering work readiness programs for young Australians. Our vision and mission is to reach, connect and inspire a future Australian workforce. We believe that all young people – regardless of background – deserve access to a job, hope and future of meaningful opportunities.

We welcome the opportunity to give feedback on the Draft Child and Youth Wellbeing Outcomes Framework. Beacon Foundation recognises that one of the fundamental rights of our young Tasmanian's is the opportunity to participate fully in the community – through education or employment. Measuring how we move towards this goal is therefore critical.

As part of the consultation process, Beacon Foundation has attached a number of comments that highlight our experience in measuring youth employment outcomes. Measuring and interpreting data in this field is challenging – especially when we know that there are a wide range of external labour force and external economic circumstances that impact on young people. However, there are a number of additional outcomes measures that should be considered if to give greater insight into how we measure employment participation.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss these comments in more detail. I can be contacted at scott@beaconfoundation.net or on (03) 6234 4155.

Scott Harris
Chief Executive
Beacon Foundation

The logo for Beacon Foundation, featuring the word "BEACON" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is stylized with a circular pattern of lines.

Child and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

The overarching measure of wellbeing in the Child and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework that Beacon Foundation focuses on is the right of children and young people to be learning and participation. For our organisation the focus is that young people are accessing education, training or employment. The key measurement proposed for measuring this experience is the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) Labour Force Survey.

Value of the Labour Force Survey

There is value to measuring participation through a rate of unemployment in the Labour Force Survey. It does give a good consistent indicator of employment status of young people - one that allows for analysis of both gender and State-Territory. It is also a good longitudinal measure of youth employment.

Challenges in measuring youth employment

Beacon Foundation offers the caveat that youth employment measures should be treated cautiously. There are a number of challenges in measuring this outcome. Young people will be more likely to have multiple jobs and multiple career paths over the course of their lives. This can be linked to greater changes in the Australian economy – both in technological change, globalization and emerging new growth industries.ⁱ All of this impacts on the wider workforce. As a result young people tend to experience:

- Increasingly flexible jobs, with a rise in part-time work
- Casualization of the workforce
- A decline in entry-level and manual jobs
- Rise in white collar service and knowledge jobs

Many young people are not faring well– with particularly high rates of unemployment in some regions.ⁱⁱ Underemployment is also high and has remained unchanged for some time. Additionally, there are particular cohorts of young people that will experience even further challenges finding and keeping employment, including:

- Young people with a disability
- First Australians
- Those with caring responsibilities
- Young people from low socio-economic communities
- Those without Year 12

In short, the experience of young people moving into the workforce is not linear.ⁱⁱⁱ Young people have a more precarious relationship with employment^{iv} Therefore, the way we measure their participation needs to give consideration to these trends. We should also be looking to capture issues like:

- The experience of moving between unemployment, training, education
- The experience of casual or insecure employment
- The challenges for regional, rural and remote communities and the young people that live in them

If the purpose of measuring outcomes is to set goals and understand our progress, a consistent benchmark like the Labour Force Survey only tells us a fraction of the experience of young people in the labour market.

Data sources and outcomes to consider

Measuring the unemployment rate through the ABS Labour Force gives only one measure of the employment status of young Tasmanians. However, there data measures that would complement this. We recommend consideration of:

1. Underemployment and underutilisation

While understanding the youth employment rate measured in the Labour Force Survey is important, there are also other critical measures we can capture, including a growing trend of underemployment.^v This should be an equally important outcome to measure, and can be found in:

- Underutilised persons by State, Territory and Sex - Trend, seasonally adjusted and Original

This is important given that Tasmania has a higher proportion of people who are working fewer hours than they would like. While overall rates of unemployment have declined, the proportion of young people underemployed has not shifted rapidly since the Global Financial Crisis.^{vi} The supplementary labour survey (*Participation, Job Search and Mobility* cat. no. 6226.0) by the ABS also gives additional insight into critical indicators like:

- Workers looking for more hours
- The steps taken to find more work
- Age
- Educational attainment

2. Young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

To consider young people's participation, we also need to look at the measures of those not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). These are people not working or looking for work. This indicator analyses those young people who are disengaged. Compared to a measurement of unemployment, this indicator can reveal how school to work transitions are being managed. Transition in and out of employment is often not linear for young people, therefore this is particularly important. NEET potentially reveals how an economy manages the school – work transitions.^{vii} Building more opportunities for young Tasmanians to engage in education and training is critical to understanding any improvements in their overall participation.

3. Regional disparity

From the draft consultation paper, Beacon Foundation is unclear whether an overall State measurement of unemployment will be a focus – or if regional differences will also be tracked and measured. Location often shapes the opportunity that a young person receives – therefore their experience of participation can greatly vary. The Brotherhood of St Laurence, for example, gives an overview of this impact through their Youth Unemployment Monitor. This is based on data from the ABS, measuring labour force status by region, sex and age (Cat ASGS SA4).^{viii} These regional variations are important to measure and set outcomes for.

References

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- ^{viii} Brotherhood of St Lawrence (2016) 'Australia's Youth Unemployment Hotspots'