

# The Newcastle Response

## Youth Employment

City of Newcastle acknowledges that we operate on the grounds of the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi people. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land and waters, and that they are the proud survivors of more than two hundred years of dispossession. Council commits to address disadvantage and attain justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this community.



Newcastle is an emerging global city well positioned to respond to the local community and economic challenges of COVID-19. We are resilient and dynamic; we welcome the piloting of new programs and approaches.

We are small enough to care and big enough to deliver. Newcastle is also a gateway to both global and regional connections servicing Northern and North Western NSW regional communities; we can play an important role in restarting and providing new job opportunities for the future.

Most importantly, the leaders of Greater Newcastle are united with a common voice providing collaborative governance for our city. In response to COVID-19, a City Taskforce made up of 17 key city leaders from across, manufacturing, small business, financial services,

**Total persons unemployed = 21,500**  
**Unemployment rate in June = 11.1%**  
**Youth unemployment rate = More than 1 in 4**  
**Youth underutilisation rate = 2 in 5**

All data represents Newcastle / Lake Macquarie SA4.  
Source ABS Labour Force Data

tourism, transport and logistics, arts and culture, workers, education, business and community sectors have been charting a path for our community and economic recovery.

The City Taskforce will be sharing our local stories and experiences to equip you to make decisions on COVID-19 policy responses. Called 'The Newcastle Response', these memos will outline the local community and business impacts, the effectiveness of current government measures, details on how we are mobilising our own resources and identify opportunities to partner with State and Federal Government bodies to accelerate and increase impact.

Each issue of the 'The Newcastle Response' will include a focus topic. The third edition examines the complex problem of youth employment, and how opportunities can be provided to this population group as the COVID-19 economic recovery begins.

**Nuatali Nelmes**  
**Lord Mayor of Newcastle**  
**Chair of Newcastle Taskforce**



# Youth Employment

## Policy Ask:

The impact of COVID-19 has had a significant and disproportionate impact on youth (18–24 year olds) employment, particularly young women. More than 1 in 4 people under the age of 25 are unemployed in Newcastle. The City Taskforce recognises and celebrates the important role that young people play in our local economy. We thank the Federal Government for their recent JobTrainer initiative, which will be a benefit for young people, but request that further actions be taken to avoid exacerbating existing intergenerational inequalities.

We are calling on all levels of government to directly involve young people in building societal resilience and apply a youth and intergenerational lens to all recovery measures:

1. All levels of government to ensure that young people are represented in the decision-making processes that directly / indirectly impact their employment opportunities. We ask that government commit to working positively with young people at this time.
2. Both State and Federal Government commit to expanding their trainee/apprenticeship/graduate positions within the public service in 2021. Members of the Newcastle City Taskforce have made the pledge, we call on the State and Federal Government to make the same commitment.
3. The Federal Government to provide broad financial support with a 'One Front Door' approach to facilitate work placement opportunities for young people. Specifically:
  - a. Request that the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees scheme be expanded to include subsidies for employers putting on new apprentices and trainees.
  - b. Request that the PaTH internship program is expanded beyond registered jobseekers to those who at school looking to get work, or are under 22 and cannot register as a jobseeker as they are not eligible for youth allowance payments.
  - c. Request that an additional round of the National Careers Institute Partnership Grants program be provided in 2020 to fill an important gap in the current market.
4. The NSW State Government to provide broad financial support to enable employment opportunities for young people including:
  - a. Group Training Organisations. Introduce a graduated subsidy (increasing as JobKeeper payments reduce) for Group Training Organisations. This would reduce the cost of apprentice commencements and ensure positive early career opportunities.
  - b. Provide additional support to TAFE NSW in Newcastle to respond to local skill shortages and enable greater industry involvement in co-designing programs.
5. The Department of Regional NSW to co-fund a pilot youth wrap-around service in Newcastle, which maximises the opportunity of young people in our city to find early career opportunities. The program should be youth-led and bring together a collection of existing local services.



*Because of COVID-19 I have no longer been able to participate or given opportunities that kept me active, happy and employed last year. No internships, work experience, advisory opportunities have been made available to me since COVID*

## Newcastle Youth Survey Response

# Local insights

The impact on youth employment across the Greater Newcastle region has been devastating, with youth being one of the most impacted population groups from COVID-19. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) advises that the disruption in access to education and employment opportunities is likely to put young people on a much more volatile trajectory in finding and maintaining quality jobs and income. "The economic effects of the pandemic risk aggravating the existing vulnerability of young people in labour markets and have long-lasting 'scarring effects' on career paths and future earnings."<sup>1</sup>



*Workplaces more flexible in allowing study and other life happenings which may impact more on young people than older employees*

### Newcastle Youth Survey Response

There are a range of data sources that highlight the challenges being faced locally.

### JobSeeker Caseload Data:

As at 30 June 2020, there were 7,800 people under the age of 25 on the JobActive caseload across the Hunter, including 1,300 being supported by Newcastle LGA based Job Agency providers. These numbers do not represent the totality of people who are currently unemployed or underemployed but do represent the largest caseloads that local providers have ever managed. Data sourced from the Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment.



*Luckily I have a very supportive family, access to a government pension and the occasional government supplement.*

### Newcastle Youth Survey response

### Business NSW Apprenticeship / Traineeship Data:

Business NSW recently released the report Skilling Australia, which analysed the COVID-19 impact to current apprenticeship cohorts. The data has been informed by primary data collection through the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network. Business NSW is estimating that across Australia there will be 54,000 fewer apprenticeship commencements by 30 September 2020 compared to 2019 (97,000 compared to 151,000). Using Training Service NSW data, these estimates can be disaggregated to a local level. Across the Central Coast and Hunter region there were approximately 7,000 apprenticeship commencements in 2019, while there have been only 3,500 commencements so far in 2020, with the number only expected to reach 4,400 by years end. This represents a fall of 36%, and a significant reduction in early career opportunities for youth in the local area.



*Where to find work, how to get some experience to get paid work, what can be done in the mean time to have the best chances to get a job*

### Newcastle Youth Survey Response

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2020), 'Protecting people and societies'. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/>

# Local insights

## City of Newcastle Youth Feedback

The City Taskforce has actively engaged youth at the decision-making table. Representative organisations, such as the Hunter Young Professionals, Community Disability Alliance Hunter, City of Newcastle's apprenticeship program and Youth Council, as well as youth from City Taskforce organisations have been contributing to the co-design of work streams. Youth participants raised their experiences, ideas and concerns about employment opportunities in Newcastle. The ideas were validated in a Youth Survey conducted for City of Newcastle. The highlights are:

- There is a diversity of experience from loss of employment through to increased productivity, generally if immediately responding to COVID-19.
- There is varying confidence and skill in navigating training and labour markets. Additional support would be welcomed.
- Young people overwhelmingly agree that opportunities, either formal employment or exposure to workplaces, is critical at this complex time.
- Of the possible opportunities that could be made available, additional training, internships and peer-to-peer support were considered favourably.

Whilst this is just the beginning of the dialogue with young people, the evidence demonstrates the real perceptions of young people at this time.



*Reducing barriers to employment (whether that be financial/lack of access to skills training). Providing mentoring support will help guide young people through a very disrupted work environment.*

### Newcastle Youth Survey Response

# Local Responses

We are part of the solution. The City Taskforce has taken collective action to respond to the Youth Employment challenge. Two key projects:

## Community Program

The City Taskforce has scoped a community-based youth employment wrap-around service to maximise the opportunity of young people in our city to find early career opportunities. The program is youth-led and seeks to provide a central place, virtual or bricks and mortar, to support Newcastle youth in accessing training, counselling services and wellbeing services and also be a potential site for peer mentoring and youth action in training and employment. A proposal for co-funding is currently being considered by Regional NSW.



*A way to access information to show them what jobs are available for their skillset as jobsearch websites are not the easiest of things to find jobs which cater to your skills.*

### Newcastle Youth Survey Response

## Greater Newcastle Youth Employment Charter

See next page

# Greater Newcastle Youth Employment Charter



*We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.*

## Franklin D. Roosevelt

Youth (18-25 year old) unemployment is one of the most significant issues arising from COVID-19. Research indicates that the disadvantages felt by young people now will be carried through a lifetime. The impact of youth unemployment has been particularly severe in the Greater Newcastle region; collectively, we need to act.

All organisations (Government / Businesses / Not-for-Profits) are encouraged to sign the Greater Newcastle Youth Employment Charter as an affirmation of their commitment to maintain and expand opportunities for young people in the region.



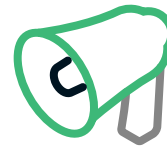
### Youth Employment\*

Our organisation will prioritise the maintenance and expansion of trainee / apprenticeship / graduate positions to ensure quality early career opportunities for young people in the Greater Newcastle area.



### Youth training

Our organisation will prioritise professional development opportunities for young people to ensure they have appropriate skills to create new and expanded opportunities for the region into the future.



### Youth voice

Our organisation will actively engage with and listen to young people to better understand their perspectives, barriers and challenges in the COVID-19 era and beyond. Our organisation will ensure that young people are represented in the decision-making processes that directly / indirectly impact their employment opportunities.



### Youth support

Our organisation will establish a structured mentoring program to ensure young people are provided with effective mentoring and/or peer support within the workplace.



### Youth celebration

Our organisation will celebrate the important role that young people play in our local economy.

\*For those organisations currently affected by COVID-19, this would entail a commitment to prioritising youth employment opportunities during the recovery phase.

*The leaders of Greater Newcastle are a united voice providing collaborative governance for our city. In response to COVID-19, a City Taskforce made up of 17 key city leaders from across, manufacturing, small business, financial services, tourism, transport and logistics, arts and culture, workers, education, business and community sectors have been charting a path for our community and economic recovery. **The Greater Newcastle Youth Employment Charter is an initiative of the City Taskforce.***

Further information on the City Taskforce is available at the following [link](#).



The pandemic has had a deep and significant financial and psychological impact on youth across the city. Below are two stories of young people's experiences of COVID-19 and the impact it has had on both their own and their friend's employment opportunities.



### Claire Bertholli



My name is Claire and I hold a keen interest in the facilitation of disability advocacy projects and youth engagement projects in the Newcastle region. This time last year, prior to COVID-19 I was involved in both paid and unpaid work in these fields. I completed in a paid internship with the university in their Arts faculty to gain further research experience related to my social science degree. I was also involved in paid advisory positions for the peak bodies for people with disabilities and young people in NSW. On local level, I am a new member of the Community Disability Alliance Hunter. I also continually hold a voluntary position for YWCA Australia in their Youth Frontiers mentoring program. These opportunities have allowed me to learn from, support and mentor people at risk of disengagement in their local communities.

Since COVID-19 has hit, I too have felt disengaged from both employment and the wider community, because the previous opportunities I was able to be involved in are on an extended pause or are no longer running. As a person with a compromised immune system, my chances of participating in these community-based activities have decreased. Engaging in employment activities whether paid or voluntary provides me with a sense of purpose and has instilled in me my passion to make Newcastle a more empathetic and engaging place.

Around 4.3 million Australians – or one in five – have a disability. And yet, only one in two Australians with disabilities are employed, compared with eight out of 10 of the general population. The onset of COVID-19 has definitely increased the barriers to meaningful employment for people with a disability. This is because of the increased reluctant attitudes associated with operating during or after the virus. As more young people are becoming unemployed, this can exacerbate the challenges faced by young people with disabilities. Some preconceived attitudes exist surrounding the work ethic of young people could be interrelated with the willingness of employers to hire people with disability.

I wholeheartedly support organisations like Newcastle City Council and their efforts in recognising the input of young people with disabilities. I have always championed the ability of youth to adapt and change in different contexts. People with disabilities have to adapt to their surroundings every day.

This pandemic and its after-effects are not all negative. Hopefully the post-COVID-19 society will open up opportunities for people with lived experience of youth or disability to participate in the workforce in a collaborative manner. For instance, the uptake of flexible working from home environments, is an option that people with disabilities have been pushing to have access to for years. Including young people with disabilities in your workforces can help organisations to become more inclusive and adaptable. We can work from the inside out within your organisation to attempt to remedy structural barriers like office layouts, inaccessible information formats and also ingrained preconceptions about a population. Young people, especially those with complex experiences can contribute to the inclusiveness of a space just through being employed there. Oh, and we will do the jobs requested of us too.

Ideally, I would like to see more a more inclusive and understanding workforce. If an organisation were to employ me, or any young person, there needs to be a willingness from that organisation to take on board our input and value the inventiveness of our ideas. I would appreciate if businesses understood that young people want to be respected and trusted alongside longstanding employees. We can do the work. We just need access to the opportunities to prove ourselves.



### Jack Melville



My name is Jack and I am an Apprentice Carpenter at the City of Newcastle. This is my first six months of the apprenticeship and I spend my time at work and TAFE. I am lucky. I really value my job and unlike some, we got busier when COVID hit as there is plenty of maintenance work to be done. We were also required to install some of the new safety features such as hand sanitiser stations and sneeze guards.

Since COVID happened, my sister has had to take time off from employment given social distancing requirements and the impacts on her industry. Some of my mates have lost their part time work in retail and construction and are now reliant on JobKeeper. I also know of some school-based apprentices that have been laid off and are now back at school. I have noticed it's not just having an impact on young people, its impacting on people of all ages.

I think it's important for my mates that are currently receiving JobKeeper to make sure that they keep motivated and looking for the next opportunity. Support like JobKeeper is essential, but other opportunities such as traineeships, work experience days and other certificates are an excellent way to think about the types of jobs you can do and keeps you on the ball for employment. People need to think about what happens at the end of school.

I know my friends and school mates are stressed, thinking "we must pass year 12" as there may be no apprenticeships available. HSC is a stressful time. Mental health is a concern and things like sport and other recreation are not necessarily available right now. It is tough and there is little we can do.

I believe in this time a great thing for young people is training. Short courses such as white card or first aid encourage people to think about work. Even school visits from Police or other industries help keep the mind active. The majority of young people don't know about different pathways and employment opportunities unless they are exposed to them.

My father is a carpenter, so I have been exposed to the industry from a young age. Woodwork and Construction at school were my favourite subjects, if you enjoy them and you have an interest in them, why not do them? I was doing the HSC and considering a career in sports science, but the job came up at Newcastle Council, it matched my skills, so I applied.

I attended work placement for a small company and I am now working in a large company and I like them both. I like being at Council and seeing what happens in other departments, it opens my eyes to other things. The benefit of working somewhere small is that its more personal and the type of work is different. At the end of the day, exposure to any workplace is important for young people, especially at this time. You must know how workplaces operate and experience all the processes.

# The opportunity to partner with us

The City Taskforce calls on all Federal and State decision-makers to prioritise youth employment opportunities. Mr Tony Cade, CEO of Hunternet, is one of the many representatives on the City Taskforce seeking to create new employment opportunities for young people in the region. Mr Cade can provide more local insights and is available to co-design policy solutions. Newcastle is always open to piloting new initiatives. Mr Cade can be contacted on [Tony.Cade@hunternet.com.au](mailto:Tony.Cade@hunternet.com.au).

## Further Updates

Since the last Newcastle Response, the successful City Taskforce Industry Response Program applicants have been announced. This grant process was co-designed by City Taskforce members and targeted the most-affected local industries and population groups. The City Taskforce is continuing to lean in and provide local leadership. The successful projects are:

### **The Business Centre - Small Business Recovery Centre**

The COVID-19 Small Business Recovery Project will provide much needed support and advice to local businesses, curated and coordinated by the Business Centre based at 265 King Street. The Centre will bring together government and non-government agencies, banks and financial services providers, mental health and well-being providers, to offer support and provide information, and services, that lead to sustainability and job creation, to small businesses during and after COVID-19.

### **University of Newcastle - Hometown Holiday**

The Hometown Holiday project will incentivise Newcastle residents to have a 'hometown holiday' inclusive of overnight accommodation and curated experience itineraries. Locals will be encouraged to visit Newcastle as tourists and engage with the City as a tourism destination, providing economic benefits to local tourism businesses.

### **Field Frequency - Smart City LIVE Music TV Show**

Field Frequency will produce a live-stream music series, using live-stream broadcast collaborations to maximise the recovery of the local arts and entertainment industry. The show will showcase a diverse range of established musicians and new talent growing the City's identity as a collaborative and inclusive community.

### **Hunter Writers Centre Inc - Multi-arts activation**

Hunter Writers Centre will lead a multi-arts activation benefiting local arts, cultural, and tourism businesses. The project will include exhibition studio spaces for Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, musicians, visual and digital artists, to develop work for exhibitions of cultural and maritime history and stories of local sites.

### **The Olive Tree Market - The Olive Tree Virtual Online Platform**

The Virtual Olive Tree Market Platform, which will develop new income generating opportunities, capacity building and educational workshops for local creatives. Existing customers, supporters, and new online audiences will be targeted to buy local online, to re-connect and forge ongoing connections with creatives.



# City Taskforce Members



Nuatali Nelmes (Aug 7, 2020 10:55 GMT+10)

Signature

Nuatali Nelmes  
Lord Mayor Chair  
**City of Newcastle Newcastle Taskforce**



Signature

Peter Macadam  
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HUNTER WORKERS  
Join Unions



Signature

Bernadette Inglis  
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Signature

Brad Webb  
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ANTHONY J CADE (Aug 6, 2020 15:18 GMT+10)

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Justine Cogan (Aug 7, 2020 10:12 GMT+10)

Signature

Justine Cogan  
Co-Founder  
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Signature

Mark Fitzgibbon  
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Bob Hawes  
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Craig Carmody  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Port of Newcastle**



Philip Gardner (Aug 6, 2020 15:36 GMT+10)

Signature

Philip Gardner  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Wests Group**



# 1. Catalyst Areas for Greater Newcastle Projects, as identified in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan

## 2. Large-scale priority infrastructure projects:



Coastal Management Planning and Erosion Management, especially at Stockton Beach



Flood mitigation at Wallsend



Newcastle Airport Expansion



Port of Newcastle Diversification



Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct



Newcastle Light Rail Expansion



Lower Hunter Freight Corridor



Affordable housing initiatives



Metropolitan wide active transport (walking & cycling) improvements



John Hunter Hospital campus upgrades



Newcastle Art Gallery Expansion



Local Sporting Amenity Upgrades



Local Playground upgrades, particularly for disability inclusion



Ferry Terminal at Wickham



Pensioner Rate Rebates



University of Newcastle STEM Regional Transformation Hub

## 3. Local priority infrastructure projects:



Summerhill Waste Management Centre – Organics Processing Facility



Richmond Vale Rail Trail



Newcastle Beach Community Facility (Stage 2, Newcastle Beach – Bathers Way)



Junction to Merewether Cycleway



Newcastle West Bi-directional Cycleway – West End Stage 2, Phase 1



Newcastle East End Streetscape Upgrades and Cycleway



Foreshore Park All Abilities Playground



Western Corridor Active Hub



Local Centres Program