



STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION

MICHAEL PETERSSON MLA (CHAIR), JOHNATHAN DAVIS MLA (DEPUTY CHAIR), PETER CAIN MLA

Inquiry into referred 2019–20 Annual and Financial Reports
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Elizabeth Kikkert MLA: To ask the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs

Ref: 2020-21 Budget Outlook, p. 29

In relation to: Youth Unemployment

The Budget Outlook uses the December data to make the point that youth employment, which was 'most affected by the pandemic', is 'showing a particularly strong recovery' (p. 29). But the January data from the ABS show that the number of young people employed in the ACT following the spike in seasonal Christmas employment is actually lower than it was in March, June, August, September, October, November, and December last year. To what does the ACT Government attribute this decline in youth employment?

- a. What specific steps does the ACT Government take to track, analyse and enhance youth employment?
- b. The ACT Government recently advocated for higher welfare payments for young people with disability. Beyond this advocacy, what specific steps has the government taken in the past year to assist these youth with disability to access employment?

YVETTE BERRY MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:–

The Budget Outlook noted that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) had paused publication of labour force data in trend terms as a result of significant volatility in the data and changes in the labour market due to COVID-19. As a result, monthly outcomes should be viewed with caution.

All key labour force metrics, including youth unemployment, were not as strong in January 2021 as they were in December 2020. Employment outcomes in January can be particularly volatile reflecting the combination of public holidays, school holidays and lower business activity after Christmas.

In December 2020 youth employment (15-24 years) was 37,200 people, which was above the level reported in March 2020. However, in January 2021 youth employment in the ACT was 35,100 people and declined further to 34,300 in February 2021, despite improvements in overall employment. This was driven by a fall in full-time employment, with part-time youth employment increasing in the month.

The ABS has also supplemented traditional labour force survey data with more real time weekly payroll and jobs and wages data from the Australian Tax Office's single touch payroll system. For the week ending 27 February 2021, that data shows that the number of payroll jobs worked by people under 20 years was still 4.7 per cent below pre-pandemic levels. However, the number of jobs worked by that cohort had increased by 6.4 per cent compared with the previous month.



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- (1) The ACT Government tracks youth employment data as an indicator of the economic, social and education pathways of young people. The information sourced from youth employment data reflects patterns of full and part time work as well as educational retention rates. Youth employment data provides information the ACT Government can use to help inform policy development and targeted assistance.

Analysis of youth unemployment shows that young people have an increased chance of finding meaningful long-term employment if they are undertaking training while looking for work.

The ACT Government enhances youth employment opportunities through Australian Apprenticeships which can be full-time, part-time or school-based. The ACT Government's Australian Apprenticeships (User Choice) program provides training subsidies for over 500 Australian Apprenticeship qualifications across a range of industries.

The ACT Government's Adult Community Education Grants Program also supports delivery of accredited and non-accredited foundation skills training. The program enables participants—aged 17 years or older—to engage in informal learning that makes formal training possible and future employment more likely.

The ACT Government is currently jointly funding the JobTrainer program in the ACT with the Commonwealth Government. JobTrainer is a \$16.75 million program and offers free vocational education and training to young people (17 to 24 years, who have finished school), and job seekers across Canberra. JobTrainer is funding up to 3,500 training places through three streams in the ACT – through the Skilled Capital program (delivered by private RTOs), through the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), and through the Ginninderry SPARK training and employment initiative. As at 12 March 2021, CIT has enrolled 930 students in JobTrainer courses, of which 504 students (54%) are aged between 17-24.

The public provider of vocational education and training offers a range of ACT government subsidised training to support youth unemployment. As at 8 March 2021, across CIT there are 465 government subsidised students under the age of 25 that indicated at the time of enrolment they were unemployed. This represents 11.8% of the cohort of students in this age bracket. In 2020 there were 512 students in this category.

CIT also offers specific courses through its Pathways College to provide underpinning skills to prepare students for further work and study. These courses include:

Industry Pathways Course – delivered to years 9 and 10 at their schools. This program introduces students to work and post school options. As part of this course students may study subjects from a specific industry area.

Certificate for General Education for Adults – a course developed for adults and youth at risk who may have missed out on schooling with their peers. This is offered as an introductory Certificate I and Certificate II course. The Certificate II prepares students for Year 11 and 12 study. CIT is currently running a pilot for students with mild to moderate disabilities that includes vocational training in animal care, horticulture and business.

Year 11 and 12 (meets requirements of ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) Certificate) – targeted for students who have missed out on completing Year 11 and 12 with their peers. The age ranges from 17 to over 60, though most students are under 25. This course provides a high



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level of support services as well as access to vocational training that can be counted toward the BSSS Certificate.

- (2) The ACT Government's Skilled Capital program seeks to support youth with disability to access employment by providing training subsidies for a range of other courses across a broad scope of industries such as community services, aged care, early childhood education and care, information technology and construction. RTOs can access loadings to support students' access and course completion (\$500 for youth at risk and \$500 for people with a disability).

In addition, should an Australian Apprentice or Skilled Capital student require specialised equipment, an interpreter, a mentor or a tutor, assistance with transport, or other learning or wellbeing support, then additional support funding is also available (up to \$3,000 for an Australian Apprentice and up to \$1,000 for a Skilled Capital student).

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Community Inclusion

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Yvette Berry', written over a circular stamp.

Date: 30/03/21

By the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA