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MEDIA RELEASE

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia



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YACWA CALLS FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ACTION ON YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The Youth Affairs Council of WA is calling for the Federal Government to immediately remove the four week waiting period for young people to access income support.

YACWA was extremely disappointed that the measure was retained in this week's federal budget, and said it unnecessarily punished young people by refusing them access to financial support when they finished work or study.

"Whilst the government's overall youth employment announcement appears to represent a move towards the use of positive incentives for young people seeking work, we hoped to see the removal of the mandatory waiting period for welfare payments for young people already facing multiple and complex barriers to employment," said YACWA CEO John Thomson.

Mr Thomson said the organisation was broadly supportive of the new \$840 million youth employment package, but called on the government to now release critical details missing from the policy.

"While YACWA recognises the positive steps away from the work for the dole program, which only helped 2% of participants into employment, we have some concern about the lack of detail available about the new PaTH program," he said.

"While getting young people into internships can be a valuable opportunity for them, it can also open them up to exploitation by employers, and we have already seen this happen in other countries with similar programs.

"We would ask that government engage with YACWA and others in the youth sector to develop a best practice model to ensure that young people benefit from its program and are not exploited."

Mr Thomson said YACWA had produced a comprehensive position paper on the budget announcements, which it would deliver to the federal Employment Minister.

"We are very keen to engage with the Federal Government on the development and implementation of its youth employment package," said Mr Thomson.

"In WA, youth unemployment is almost double the state's overall unemployment rate, and we need to work together to develop meaningful solutions to getting young people into employment.

"Other than internships, we would like to see the government make a commitment to creating real jobs for young people."

Mr Thomson said the government should also provide immediate funding to the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (AYAC) to allow it to play a strong role in the consultation and engagement of youth specialists across Australia.

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