

MNC Local Jobs Program Newsletter

Edition 2 – May 2026

Welcome to the lands of the Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti, Birpai and Worimi peoples: the beautiful (DEWR-defined) Mid North Coast



JOB COORDINATOR SOAPBOX

Before I say anything else I must apologise for the fact we missed a newsletter. Both Stef and I had a few personal issues we had to manage last month, and the newsletter got relegated to the backburner.

To make up for it, I have decided to ask a big question and invite you to explore some answers:

What would a revolution in youth services look like?

We all know some of the challenges: uncoordinated services trying to help the same people with funding that never seems to actually fit what it is meant to do; the challenge of finding the time and headspace to really build trusting, long-term relationships with our clients; the grind of trying to keep abreast of ever-changing eligibility criteria, funding guidelines and the non-stop administration required to do our jobs.

It is easy to decide there is no answer, hunker-down and hope small wins are enough.

I reckon there IS an answer, and that part of it is sitting under our very noses!

A small school and social enterprise called [ShoreTrack](#) (that most of you already know) is supporting young people in a way that side-steps almost all the challenges I've listed above. They don't quite fit any category but the work they do, and the results they produce, speak for themselves and I think we can learn a lot from them.

On the morning of June 10th at their shed in Macksville we've organised a mini conference to learn about what they do, how they do it, how they intended building on their results beyond the Nambucca Valley and, most importantly for me, what the larger youth services system can learn from them about doing our work better!

ShoreTrack works with young people (10-25), especially those who are at risk of disengaging or no longer engaged in employment, education, or training and/or experiencing significant disadvantage. Young people are referred to ShoreTrack by themselves, schools, family, community, the Transition to Work program, or community service agencies and they work hand-in-glove with local community and industry to provide hands-on work and activities focussed on community and local industry needs.

To give you a sense of their success, 87% of the young people that start their Certificate II end up in employment and 24 months later, 88% of those people are still employed. Compare this to the broader employment system for youth funded by the Department (DEWR) and you have a 38% placement rate with 15% of them still employed in that same job at six months.

Very different figures.... you can see the possibilities.

The problem is that what ShoreTrack does in Macksville can only be done by *those* people in *that* place. You can't pick something like that up and just replicate it somewhere else. So, what to do?

First, understand what they do. In my view, there seems to be three things that make it work in Macksville (and this is entirely my personal view):

1. the relationships and trust built over time between the adults who work there, with the kids and then with the larger community, and
2. they have a shed! An actual place full of tools, working bays and a big kitchen where young people can come and learn and work (and eat) and the adults can support those kids in whatever they need, not whatever their funding allows the adults to provide

3. they have as much time as the young person needs, not as much time as the funding allows for!

That last part is the key: at ShoreTrack, the 'system' (i.e. the adults and their relationships) moulds itself to fit what the young people need for as long as the young people need it. Compare this with the larger system where young people (and all Australians really) are required to mould themselves to fit the criteria for each service they want to access (mental health, housing, medical, justice etc). Every time they have to redefine the issue they're dealing with to fit the criteria of the specific service they want to access. It isn't holistic, it isn't open-ended, it is built on a fundamentally transactional relationship (so limited trust) and they have to carve their life's challenges into boxes the government has decided, can be funded.

So, that's what we're going to look at on the morning of June 10th. What does this little enterprise do so well, what can we learn from them and how can we support this to grow beyond the Nambucca Valley?

Fortunately for us, the Siddell Family has funded ShoreTrack to develop a ten-year strategy. Because theirs is not an institution you can just replicate, this strategy is built around the concepts of Scaling up, Scaling Out and Scaling Deep.

If this piques your interest, you want to learn more, learn how you can support or attend the mini conference, please reach out to me directly (sonny.neale@dewr.gov.au)

Nb. If you want to know more about this model of servicing, they do it the UK in some places and it is called [The Liberated Method](#) (shout out to Bree Katsamangos from Mission Australia for introducing me to this – I love it!)

FUNDING & FREEBIES

- FREE Statement of Attainments by TAFE including Foundational Skills, Further Study Skills, Career Preparation, Beginner Computer Skills, Digital Literacy Essentials and more! Please see the [Referral Guide](#) for information on how to refer or utilise the contact details on the flyers for further information. [Email Anni](#) at TAFE if you experience any difficulties
- [Early Childhood Education and Care \(ECEC\) Scholarship Program](#) applications close **29 May**. A \$27m commitment to help grow a highly qualified and sustainable ECEC workforce has been made by the NSW government. Up to \$6,000 is awarded to successful applicants.
- Smart and Skilled: Limited Fee Free Tranche 2 places are available for July-December semesters in qualifications that support priority industries and cohorts (Care and Health sectors) and include:
 - **Cert II** Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander Primary Healthcare, Health Support Services
 - **Cert III** Early Childhood Education & Care, School Base Education Support, Community Services, Individual Support, Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander Primary Healthcare, Allied Health Assistance, Health Services Assistance,
 - **Cert IV** School Base Education Support, Youth Work, Youth Justice, Community Services, Housing, Ageing Support, Disability Support, Alcohol & Other Drugs, Mental Health, Leisure & Health, Mental Health Peer Work, Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander Primary Health Care, Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander Primary Health Care Practice, Allied Health Assistance
 - **Diploma** Early Childhood Education and Care, School Age Education and Care, Child Youth and Family Intervention, Youth Work, Counselling, Community Services, Alcohol and other Drugs, Mental Health, Nursing.

NSW Fee Free Apprenticeship and Traineeship initiative will continue for those enrolled in Smart and Skilled Apprenticeship and Traineeship courses.

- The [NSW Food Authority](#) is responsible for regulating and monitoring food safety across the entire food industry supply chain in NSW - from paddock to plate. They're offering a free Food Handler Basics short-course: 1hr and including 7 interactive modules, along with a knowledge test and Cert of Acknowledgement. The course can be taken in 5 different languages
- The [TAFE Paid to Learn Program](#) leverages the skills and experience of current industry professionals to help meet the increased demand for teachers across TAFE NSW. This program offers those with three to five years experience in certain industries, an opportunity to complete Cert IV TAE before becoming a teacher via this 14 week program.
- The [Ranks to Recognition](#) program, in collaboration with the [NSW Office of Veterans Affairs](#), supports the transition to civilian life for all Australian Defence Force veterans and their partners residing in NSW. The program supports participants gain the skills and qualifications needed for a successful career in the civilian job market.
- The ever useful [Ask Izzy](#) platform is a free, anonymous online platform that connects people with local support services across Australia. From housing to meals, to health services, counselling, legal advice and emergency support, it's a simple way to locate assistance in the community. A trusted tool to share widely.
- The [Medicare Mental Health Check-In](#) – a free service connecting clients with trained practitioners via telehealth. The service supports wellbeing and building practical skills to feel more in control. It provides a safe and supportive space to discuss experiences, work through online tools and develop confidence. Participants can learn practical strategies to manage life's ups and downs while strengthening resilience and self-care skills. From 30 May, clients can use the online tools on their own and/or choose to connect with a trained practitioner along the way for extra support.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- It's been several weeks now since fuel access has become a new focus. The Department is keen to understand the ongoing impacts of the fuel situation and its impacts on local communities, primary producers, transport and small business. Please take 2 minutes to answer 5 questions in our [Fuel Shortage Impact Survey](#) to help identify local issues and inform practical solutions for the region.
- The NSW governments Trade Pathways for Experienced Workers program helps experienced workers gain formal trade qualifications by recognising existing skills and providing targeted gap training where needed. Delivered through approved Smart and Skilled providers, the initiative supports workforce growth across key industries while improving career opportunities, job security and access to nationally recognised qualifications. Visit the [Trade Pathways for Experienced Workers program](#) for more information.
- New [Recredential Roadmap](#) – working in Australia with overseas qualifications: an easy-to-use online tool for migrants and refugees with overseas qualifications to learn how they can re-enter their careers in Australia. It's the one all-you-need-to-know place for refugee and migrant professionals to have their overseas qualifications and experience recognised in Australia. This Roadmap is publicly available and intended for use by employment service providers supporting the recredentialing journey as well as those seeking the service. The Roadmap is the proud product of a collaboration between the ACU's Faculty of Education and Arts and funding received from the Local Jobs Program Sydney Greater West.

DATA & REPORTS

Do you have a need for data? Reach out and depending on the nature of the data sought, we may be able to assist. In the meantime, have a look at:

- [DEWR Data Publication Schedule](#): A gold mine if you're into this stuff!
- [Jobs and Skills Atlas](#): labour market snapshots you can filter by national, state and regional levels
- The Jobs and Skills Australia [NERO \(Nowcast of Employment by Region and Occupation\) dashboard](#) provides a clear, near real time view of employment trends across regions and occupations – updated monthly
- [YourCareer](#) website hosted by the National Careers Institute provides information to help you choose or work towards a new career
- Migrants continue to play a vital role in keeping Australia's workforce strong. Jobs and Skills Australia's latest [Australian Labour Market for Migrants Report](#) explores where migrant workers are making the biggest impact, highlights key skills shortages, and offers insights into the trends shaping our labour market.
- The [Training Occupation Pathways \(TOP\) dataset](#) is new from Jobs and Skills Australia and is helping paint a clearer picture of where training can lead. By linking VET qualifications with possible occupations, it offers a practical way to explore career pathways and better understand how training choices connect with workforce opportunities. Users can use this dataset to explore potential occupations or otherwise exploring the training needed for their ideal occupation.
- DEWR regularly publishes data related to the delivery of employment services. This data is publicly available and found at [Employment Services Data - DEWR](#). This dataset includes information on Workforce Australia caseload, job placements and outcomes data, participant survey data and Workforce Australia activities data. Some reports are updated monthly, others quarterly.

International Approaches: How Australia Compares

- [Supporting the re-integration of formerly incarcerated individuals through entrepreneurship | OECD](#)
This paper explores the potential of entrepreneurship policy to help the re-integration of formerly incarcerated individuals into the labour market, giving an overview of the challenges individuals face and discussing entrepreneurship support measures and factors for success. Key actions include entrepreneurship training, loans, advice, mentoring and networking. This paper examines European Union countries only.

AROUND THE REGION

Coffs Harbour

- **Coffs Coast Careers Market** is happening this week **Thursday 28 May!** If its sister market held in Port Macquarie recently is anything to go by, then be prepared for the biggest and most elaborate display yet of all things career opportunities, study and training options, career pathways and types of work available! There will be numerous employers too – so head down to the Coffs Harbour Racing Club between 9am-2pm.

Port Macquarie

- The **TAFE Migrant Education and Employment Expo** will be held **27 May** from 10:30am-1pm at Block C, TAFE Campus. This Expo will bring together employers, support services, training providers and community organisations to support migrants and job seekers exploring local education and employment opportunities. The event will feature a careers and information hub, job matching desk, employment advice, job seeking workshops, free professional LinkedIn profile photos,

language support assistance and connections to local services designed to help participants build confidence, skills and pathways into work and training. [Contact Lilian](#) or 0426 453 619 for more.

Taree

- **Her Futures Wellbeing Program:** A brilliant Indigenous ladies' program that supports initiatives which strengthen the role, status and contribution of women and girls through culturally safe, strengths-based health and wellbeing activities. The ladies will be **graduating on 11 June** and we'd love to connect them with employers in the region. Since one of the impending graduates has set up her catering business through the assistance of the program, please [contact Lauren to register your attendance](#) to meet the graduates and to share your employment opportunities. ESP's and Employment Agencies welcome! 11am-12pm, First Steps Count Child & Community Centre, 4 Myall Ave, Taree.
- **CareerQuip 2026** – the biggest workforce-related event currently emerging for the Mid Coast region is returning to the Taree Universities Campus on **30 July** from 9am-2pm! The event will bring together local and employers, RTO's, careers advisors, students and jobseekers. Recent years have attracted more than 1800 attendees and 70+ exhibitors – so don your walking shoes!
- The **Taree Universities Campus Human Library** is now Live! The Human Library is a growing collection of MidCoast people sharing their career journeys, challenges, and the values that guide them – all designed to inspire and inform future study and career decisions. Check it out!

INSIGHTFUL INSIGHTS & COUNTER-INTUITIVE'S

- Increasingly, employers report that workforce shortages are less about population size and more about housing availability, transport, child care access and workforce confidence. Sometimes the barrier to employment isn't the job itself - it's everything around the job. Rather poignant, particularly in light of the success story that is ShoreTrack...

HAVE YOUR SAY

Our aim is to bring the most up-to-date, relevant information possible – straight to your inbox. Please share and invite others to subscribe. If you'd like to include your event or other information in our next newsletter or to provide feedback generally, please email [Stef](#).

If you'd prefer not to receive this regular newsletter, [OPT OUT](#) then press 'SEND'.

Sonny Neale
Job Coordinator, Mid North Coast

Stefanie Morgan
Program Officer, Mid North Coast

Local Workforce Solution Branch
Workforce Australia for Business | Employment and Workforce Group
Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations dewr.gov.au



The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.