

# Working Women's Centre

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## UNEMPLOYMENT PART 11: DISADVANTAGED YOUTH (EMPHASIS FEMALE.)

Unemployment rates of 7.4 per cent (ABS) and 6.7 per cent (CES) of the total labor force are appalling. (1) Youth unemployment is worsening and is particularly bad for young women, especially those born overseas. This paper discusses the situation of unemployment among young women.

Table 1. A. State of Unemployment.

	<u>Age Group.</u>	<u>% of Labor Force Nov. 77.</u>		
		<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Born in Australia	15 - 19	14.5	16.4	15.4
	20 & over	2.9	4.5	3.5
<b>Total</b>		4.2	6.5	5.0
Born Overseas	15 - 19	17.7	19.6	
	20 & over	4.0	5.1	
<b>Total</b>		4.6	6.3	5.2

Source: ABS: The Labor Force Ref. 6.20

As well as females born overseas, those living in non-metropolitan areas are particularly hard hit by unemployment. The non-metropolitan rate for junior females in May 1977, was 27.3 per cent compared to 14.3 per cent in the metropolitan area; 19.0 per cent compared to 13.5 per cent for junior males. \*

Table 11.

### Rate of Teenage Unemployment.

(Teenagers Unemployed as Percentage of Teenage Labor Force.)

	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>	<u>Persons.</u>
1972-73	6.2	6.8	6.5
1973-74	4.8	6.2	5.4
1974-75	9.2	11.4	10.2
1975-76	12.1	14.8	13.4
1976-77	13.2	16.0	14.5

Source: ABS; The Labor Force Ref. 6.20

Table 1 and Table 11 show the worsening situation for young people, particularly for women.

(1) "The Age" March 18, 1978. "Jobless Hits Record, on both Counts."

\* Estimated Unemployment Rates of Teenagers by Metropolitan/Non-Metropolitan location, May 1977. (ABS)

The following table breaks down youth unemployment into the categories where juniors are seeking work. Noticeably junior females are seeking jobs in the clerical and administrative area, and junior males in a range of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled work.

Table III.

Juniors Registered for Employment by Skill Classes.

	<u>Male.</u>		<u>Female.</u>	
	1974	1977	1974	1977
Rural	668	2091	140	394
Professional & Semi-Professional	137	415	324	921
Clerical & Administrative	1562	6364	10328	40346
Skilled	1475	8405	114	336
Semi-skilled	3364	16603	2137	8809
Unskilled	5110	22410	89	333
Service	308	1570	2906	8052

Source: Unpublished Material Collected by Dept. of Employment and Industrial Relations.

What is even more worrying is the number of junior females registered for a very narrow range of jobs. Table IV. gives a selection of occupations chosen by young people registered at the Commonwealth Employment Service. The figures show that the largest proportion of junior females are seeking work as shop assistants, whereas junior males are seeking work over a broad occupational range.

*"Clearly, one of the reasons that women and girls remain unemployed lies in their seeking such a narrow range of jobs." (2)*

Table IV.

Dissection of Occupations of Unemployed Applicants and Unfilled Vacancies.  
At 3/3/78)

	<u>Unemployment Applicants</u>				<u>Unfilled Vacancies.</u>			
	<u>Adults.</u>		<u>Young People.</u>		<u>Adults.</u>		<u>Young People.</u>	
	Male	Female.	Male	Female.	Male	Female.	Male	Female.
Clerks	9100	8291	6636	12307	265	310	340	527
Typists, Office								
Machinists	156	6051	94	11829	6	508	3	376
Selling Occupations	9092	8861	4861	29743	927	522	458	895
Skilled	28823	478	20502	801	3031	52	636	25
Semi-skilled	58951	14712	22997	9673	2543	1004	1006	443
Unskilled	49701	358	26870	470	825	53	332	61
Service								
Occupations	16880	14030	3117	11806	757	1408	217	333

Source: Monthly CES 3/3/78 Dept. of Employment office translations.

Training.

"The conditioning process of the community and the school place unemployed female school-leavers in an extremely difficult position. They invariably aspire towards such customary areas as office work, retailing, catering, nursing, clothing and textiles and hairdressing.

When jobs in these areas are not available, the unemployed female school leaver is not equipped with skills or personally, to seek employment in the traditional male areas." (3)

Thus, one major reason for the high unemployment figures for young women is their lack of education and training. Fewer women than men in the workforce hold qualifications. In the 1971 census 80.7 per cent of women and 67.5 per cent of men had no qualifications and only 1.9 per cent of women - compared to 20.3 per cent of men - held trade level qualifications. In addition, 94.6 per cent of women employed as "tradesmen, production process workers, labourers" - compared to 60.2 per cent of men in that area had no qualifications. (4)

The A.C.T.U. Working Women's Charter Conference calls for:

*"Affiliates involved in traditional male preserves to campaign to encourage girls to move into trade and technician training in these areas"*

and for the compilation of a

*"comprehensive set of examples which would show women who are employed in positions which traditionally were occupied by the opposite sex." (5)*

It is heartening to note, that the number of women entering apprenticeships, other than ladies hairdressing, is slowly increasing. In 1977, in Victoria, there were 283 female apprentices in trades other than ladies hairdressing, compared to 212 females and 70,900 males over the years 1968 - 1975. Yet for jobs in apprenticeships:

*"where boys apply, there are 6 applicants for every job, and where girls apply, there are 15 applicants for every job, the majority being in hairdressing. For all other jobs, where boys apply there are 12 applicants for every job and where girls apply, there are 21 applicants for every job" (6)*

These figures indicate once again that girls are not applying for as broad a range of jobs or training as boys. The Report on the Transition from Secondary Education to Employment (June 1976) notes that:

*"More young girls than boys are consistently registered as unemployed and ... there are few changes in the range of employment they contemplate and the level of responsibility attained. The concentration of girls and women in a narrow range of jobs, is confirmed in all studies...." (7)*

And the Fifth Main Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Poverty and Education, 1976) commented :

*"...that females constitute the largest single group of disadvantaged persons in Australia. Their life chances are likely to be more limited than those of males due to lower expectations and restricted scope for employment. The disadvantages suffered...tend to become more and more cumulative with low skill fathers and rural residence... It is also apparent that mothers tend to transfer their low expectations on to their daughters. In other words, strong cultural forces operate in Australian Society to keep many women in subservient roles." (8)*

\* Unfortunately, the Industrial Training Commission no longer keeps sex-segregated statistics regardless of recommendations from State Government reports to the contrary.

Early School Leavers.

With increasing unemployment, those who leave school early are likely to be hardest hit. The unemployment rate among those who left school at 14 (between 1971 and 1976) was a "staggeringly high" 24 per cent, while only 6.2 per cent of those leaving school at age 18 or over were unemployed. (9) Of these people, the Fifth Main Report of the Poverty Inquiry stated:

*"For the unschooled and unqualified, society holds out quite different expectations. They must contend with the instability of the unskilled job market and with increasing unemployment. The jobs they can get are mostly repetitive, uninteresting, physically exhausting and often dangerous. They are jobs which rarely provide opportunities for acquiring skills, for promotion or for responsibility .... Their jobs will be low-paid, reflecting the worth society places on unskilled labour."* (10)

It must be remembered too that women seek and obtain lower status jobs than men in almost all areas of the labor market.

However, the reasons why girls leave school early and what happens to them are not adequately explained, and little research is available. The Poverty Inquiry commissioned a small research study of 62 female school leavers. It found that 89% left school early and the majority were in semi- and unskilled jobs; (11.9 per cent were employed or engaged in home duties.) Most of the early female school leavers are daughters of semi-skilled and unskilled labourers.

*"It would be a fair hypothesis to assert that many of them become locked in to a life-cycle of poverty - they marry earlier, have children at an earlier age and some perhaps subsequently need to support their children as sole breadwinners."* (11)

A recent Four Corners Report on youth unemployment found that many unemployed girls were looking to motherhood to find a fulfilling role in life without really having any concept about what motherhood really means and how it is going to affect their whole future.

*"There's no work for them, there's no future, so they think they might as well become a mother."* (12)

SYETP, NEAT & CYSS. \* Government Assistance.

The NEAT scheme has altered over the past couple of years from being largely concerned in the area of "formal training" to covering on-the-job training. Formal training has been limited to those occupations where there is a strong labor market demand.

Table V.

	<u>NEAT Approvals.</u>					
	<u>Full Time.</u>		<u>Part-Time.</u>		<u>On the Job.</u>	
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.
January, 1975	956	2902	563	989	538	267
January, 1976	1792	2148	356	352	1753	635
February, 1977 *	1476	1132	206	215	4744	2393
February, 1978	911	596	88	109	5401	3284

Source: NEAT Approvals, Dept. Employment & Industrial Relations.

- \* SYETP - Special Youth Employment Training Program,  
 (Introduced in October, 1976)  
 NEAT - National Employment & Training,  
 CYSS - Community Youth Support Scheme.

The SYETP (a 6 months on-the-job scheme where employers receive \$66 per week government subsidy) was designed "to help school-leavers who have been unable to find stable employment." By August 1977, SYETP represented 43.8 per cent of total trainees for NEAT - probably as a result of restricting eligibility for NEAT, reducing the training allowance and imposing a means test.

Under SYETP, more females than males are receiving training. In January 1978, 9,262 females and 7,821 males were participating in the scheme. NEAT approvals for the last quarter in 1976 (the most recent figures available) show however that, except for the under 19 age group, women are receiving far less NEAT assistance than men.

Table VI.

NEAT Approvals October, December 1976, by Age.

	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>
Under 19	1733	1845
19 - 20	555	315
21 - 29	781	444
30 - 44	363	263
45 - 59	135	65
60 +	6	
	<u>3573</u>	<u>2932</u>

At the same time NEAT approvals for the following occupations, were -

Table VII.

NEAT Approvals October - December, 1976 by Occupation.

	<u>Males.</u>	<u>Females.</u>
Clerical	597	1550
Semi-Skilled	1704	1002
Rural	200	12
Unskilled	261	24
Service	119	161

Both the NEAT occupational categories and a sample survey undertaken by the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations on SYETP show that training is generally being carried out in a relatively narrow range of job categories, particularly for women. The SYETP sample survey indicates that the major job occupation for training is Assistant Cashier, followed by Typist/Receptionist/Clerk then Clerk. The major industrial groupings are Retail and Manufacturing.

It appears then that the majority of trainees are being trained for areas where there is already high unemployment (especially for young women) and where there is little or no labor market demand. Because of the short-term nature of training, it is likely that trainees are receiving non-transferable skills.

The training subsidy to employers does not encourage long-term training: for example, in areas where there is currently a demand for skilled labour. For each SYETP trainee an employer receives \$66 per week, for NEAT the employer receives \$55 per week for adults and \$40.50 for junior trainees. Under CRAFT \* (the apprenticeship scheme) employers receive per day \$13 for years 1 & 2, and \$17 for years 3 and 4 - these amounts do not really act as an incentive to encourage employers to develop long-term training programs in the skilled trades areas.

Another factor which has tended to disadvantage the long-term young unemployed is the extension, late in 1977, of eligibility of SYETP up to age 25 years. Because more people are now eligible, the most disadvantaged group which the scheme was designed to help, still remain disadvantaged in terms of getting into SYETP.

A current departmental survey of the CYSS \* project indicates that of those unemployed who do participate in CYSS projects, there are 45 per cent females and 55 per cent males. Given the higher rate of female unemployment, one would assume that there should be proportionally more females participating in CYSS.

Thus, it appears that more should be done to encourage girls to widen their occupational choices both while still at school and later for the 20 per cent or so who are unemployed,

- a. to assist in the transition from school to work,
- b. to help them cope with being unemployed,
- c. to, hopefully, open up career options outside traditional careers.

Current training schemes, while providing some sort of training, are reinforcing girls' narrow job options and are not opening up training, particularly in non-traditional jobs and trades. Newspaper advertisements for NEAT, SYETP and CRAFT have been largely dominated by photographs of males (although this has changed recently.) When asked why males appeared in advertisements, the Minister responsible stated:

*"Given the limited number of real situations that could be shown in the advertisements, and given the judgements that successful motivation of employers would require that they be exposed to a representation of situations within their common experience, I believe it would not have been realistic to depict a female employer and apprentices ... Indeed to do so would have risked prejudicing the achievement of the objective." (13)*

In contrast, the Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Schools stresses:

*"We believe that government instrumentalities and other areas of government employment, both State and Federal, should take the initiative in offering apprenticeships, on-the-job training and opportunities for upgrading skills to a proportion of girls and women in every financial year, and that the public, particularly employers, should be kept informed of these initiatives. There can be no justification for any government to be providing opportunities for one sex only." (14)*

Further,

*"If it is ethical and good sense for our nation to take young men, it is just as ethical and good sense for our nation to coax them to try young women in the trades - something which it appears they are willing to do on their own." (15)*

\*Commonwealth Rebate Apprenticeship Full-time Training.

\* These amounts apply for each day an apprentice is released during paid working hours for approved technical education instruction.

What Unions Can Do.

1. Follow the example of the A.C.T.U. Charter and, wherever possible, encourage girls to move into non-traditional areas of employment and training.
2. Research, if possible, firms using (or misusing) SYETP and closing off opportunities for promotion/advancement and further training, or getting rid of trainees soon after the training period is over.
3. Raise the problem of unemployment and lack of training within the union and on any relevant government or educational committee.
4. Ensure that government establishes recurrent education and retraining for people for the whole of their lifetime.

Finally, it should be noted that the severity of youth unemployment "is not so much a cyclical product, as of one or two generations of adults in the post-war era who have established an economic structure which they simply are not willing to adapt to the needs of their children." (16)

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16. McGuinness, "The Jobless Generation Born of the Baby Boom." Financial Review, Exhibit "U" Arbitration and Conciliation Commission, C/No. 1325 of 1977.