

Long-term risk for SA's jobless youth



Devastating cost of COVID-19

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LAURA Brenton was climbing her way out of long-term unemployment when COVID-19 stalled her ascent into a career in child care.

She's now back in the unemployment line. The 24-year-old from Adelaide's northern suburbs was unable to complete the final two hours of 120 placement hours needed to finalise her qualifications in March.

"I'm not sure when I can go back to complete the hours," says Laura, who was due to start work at a child-care centre last month. "It's so discouraging."

Laura was finding it increasingly difficult to compete for jobs against younger applicants. "It costs more to hire someone older," she says.

Her partner Cody-Lee Palmer, 24, lost his casual job in customer services. He's studying to be a high school PE teacher and his job was subsidising his education and living costs.

"Before COVID-19, it was taking years for young people to find a job – you can double that now," he says.

DISCOURAGING: Cody-Lee Palmer and partner Laura Brenton have both suffered because of coronavirus. Picture: TOM HUNTLEY

FROM PAGE 1

New figures obtained by the *Sunday Mail* show 552 SA trade apprenticeships have been cancelled or suspended across the state since March.

And 314 trainees have been terminated or deferred, says the National Australian Apprenticeships Association.

The biggest youth unemployment rate rises recorded last month were in the state's

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN YOUTH

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE INCREASES by REGION FOR APRIL/MARCH

- ↑ South Eastern SA: **21%** (rise of 3.6% from 17.4% in March)
- ↑ Southern Adelaide: **14.3%** (rise of 2.3% from 12% in March)
- ↑ Northern Adelaide: **19.1%** (rise of 1.4% from 17.7% in March)
- ↓ Central Adelaide and Hills: **12.9%** (fall of 0.6% from 13.5% in March)
- ↓ Barossa, Yorke & Mid North: **26.1%** (fall of 2.5% from 28.6% in March)
- ↓ Western Adelaide: **6.7%** (fall of 2.8% from 9.5% in March)

most recently unemployed," he said. "And those unemployed prior to COVID-19 will find it even more difficult to find a job now. Without timely and targeted intervention, young people are at a high risk of missing out on strong re-entry into the labour market and, therefore, of being financially disadvantaged and even being welfare dependent for much of their lives"

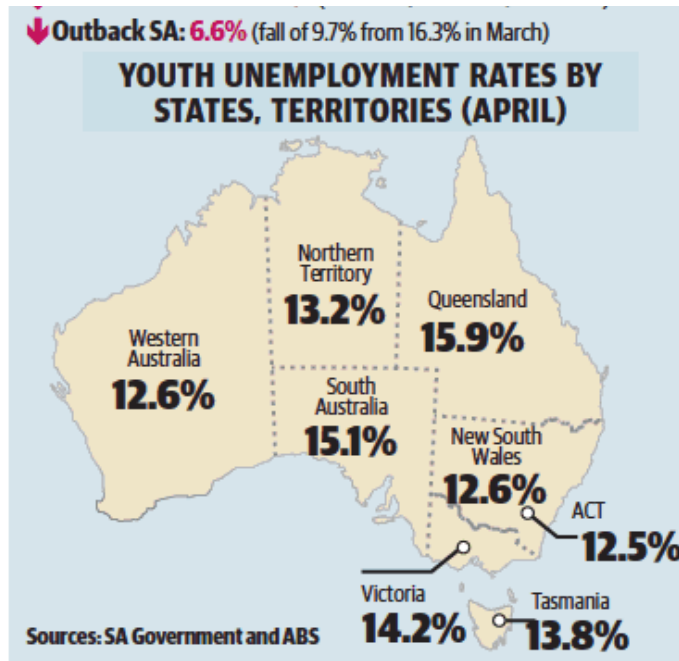
last month were in the states South-East, and the northern and southern suburbs, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The Barossa/Yorke and Mid North had the highest youth unemployment rate at 26.1 per cent, even though the region's rate fell by 2.5 points.

Centre for Social Impact (CSI) lead researcher Professor Paul Flatau said more than a third of the 40,800 South Australians who lost their jobs last month were aged 15 to 24.

If the economy did not bounce back in the second half of the year, he said youth unemployment could rise significantly, with a forecast 50 per cent or more of young people remaining unemployed for up to a year or more into 2021.

Prof Flatau is part of a team of researchers at the CSI re-tracing the youth unemployment effects of major global economic declines, including the 1991 recession and the



GFC from 2007-09. SA's youth unemployment rates peaked higher than the national rate at 23 per cent in 1992 and at 14.9 per cent in 2009.

"We found that many young people – particularly

those in their early 20s – remained unemployed more than 12 months after the crisis ended, largely because increased job competition meant employers could take the newest graduates and the

for much of their lives.

The state's lead advocate for children and young people said a targeted youth jobs policy was needed now more than ever to address the state's high unemployment rate.

"We can no longer have this cookie-cutter approach to youth unemployment rolled out from one state border to another, or from city to country, because each state and each region within that state has its unique challenges and solutions," Commissioner for Children and Young People Helen Connolly said.

A State Government spokesperson said its \$200 million Skilling South Australia program – which had seen a 20 per cent increase in new apprenticeships and traineeships in the September 2019 quarter – was "delivering outcomes".

Work to grow the defence, space, cyber safety, health and hi-tech industries was "presenting great opportunities for young South Australians".

PAGE 59: EDITORIAL