



## ***Stronger futures for all young Victorian: Discussion paper on the youth transitions system***

### **Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network (BGK LLEN) Response**

**June 2010**

#### **About the BGK LLEN**

The BGK LLEN is part of a network of 31 LLENs across Victoria. Established in 2002, the pivotal role of the BGK LLEN has been to act as a regional strategic and facilitation body, bringing together the entire Bayside, Glen Eira and Kingston region to collaboratively contribute to improving the education, training and employment outcomes for local young people aged 10 – 19 years. The BGK LLEN works in partnership with its key stakeholders including secondary schools, further education and training providers, community members, social and welfare organisations, youth agencies, local government and employers. The BGK LLEN is governed by a voluntary Committee of Management representing the key organisational stakeholders.

As of this year, the BGK LLEN is contracted to deliver the 'School Business Community Partnership Brokers Program' for the period 2010 - 2013. This program is a national one and part of the Australian Government's 'National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions' with an objective to facilitate stakeholder engagement, build community capacity and infrastructure and drive the government's education reform and social inclusion agendas. This will be achieved through the brokering of partnerships between education providers, business and industry, parents and families, and community groups to foster a strategic, whole-of-community approach that supports children and young people's learning and development and to work towards the new Victorian objective that 92.6% of all young people achieve Year 12 or its equivalent by 2015. In Victoria, the Australian Government recognised that the existing LLEN program broadly reflects many of the key objectives of the Partnership Broker program. On the basis of the similarities between the two programs, and in keeping with the principles outlined in the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, the Australian and Victorian Governments have agreed that the Partnership Brokers program in Victoria will be delivered along existing LLEN boundaries, through an enhanced LLEN model.

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#### **BGK LLEN Response Methodology**

The data used to inform the BGK LLEN's response to this policy document was drawn from the organisation's recent Strategic Planning, Environmental Scanning and a 'Stronger Futures Survey' distributed to over 300 BGK LLEN stakeholders during late May / early June 2010.

A wide cross-section of BGK LLEN stakeholders were represented in the responses to the BGK LLEN ‘Stronger Futures Survey’, and underscore our organisation’s response to this discussion paper. The BGK LLEN stakeholder survey response representation was as follows:

- Education and Training Providers – 58.3%
- Business and Industry – 16.7%
- Community Groups – 12%

## BGK LLEN Discussion Question Responses

### ***Section 1: Strengthening literacy and numeracy in the post compulsory years***

The BGK LLEN support initiatives where learning and the acquirement of literacy and numeracy skills are individualised. It is recognised that there are currently a significant range of government initiatives that are focused on either capturing accurate data for literacy and numeracy levels and also programs that are tailored at those groups of people who have significantly low standards of literacy and numeracy. Many education and training providers attempt to accommodate all students in literacy and numeracy provision but these are often ad hoc, not well supported and not systemic in approach across sectors.

#### **Q1. What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards take?**

Respondents indicated the following (NB. Respondents could nominate more than one response) :

Developed standards by a body made up of a mix of education & industry representatives	62.5%
Introduce a nationally assessed & benchmarked literacy & numeracy test at the senior school levels	37.5%
Introduce a Victorian assessed & benchmarked literacy & numeracy test at the senior school levels	37.5%
Develop standards solely by an educational body	25.0%

Respondents also provided the following comments:

- “Intervention should happen a lot earlier than Year 9”
- “Provision of significant, individualise resources need to be introduced across all education and training sectors.”

#### **Q2. In what ways can the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills be strengthened in the post-compulsory years?**

Respondents indicated the following (NB. Respondents could nominate more than one response) :

Assessing students’ literacy & numeracy skills throughout their education so that any issues can be addressed as they emerge not just at the conclusion of their education	62.5%
Increased opportunities for teachers in the secondary school sector to engage in cross-sector literacy & numeracy skill development with their VET & ACE training sector colleagues (& vice-versa)	62.5%
Opportunities for students to engage in ‘real life’ activities that allow them to practice their literacy & numeracy skills (eg. workplace training, community volunteering)	62.5%
Consider introducing specific learning plans in government secondary schools at Year 7 (or earlier), instead of just at Year 9 as proposed in the discussion paper	62.5%
Increased training for teachers so that they can deliver any new literacy & numeracy standards	50.0%

Respondents also provided the following comments:

- “Students are already assessed throughout their education. Unfortunately, if there are issues, we are not funded to provide extra assistance. The government needs to reassess the special needs

categories. Look at the functioning IQ levels that student must be below to attract integration support. There are many students with autism spectrum disorders, students who are functionally illiterate and we get no extra support for these students because 'orally' they can perform ok."

## **Section 2: Support for making informed education and training choices**

The BGK LLEN recognises that career planning, support and guidance is a significant factor in a young person's pathway development. While there are many initiatives that serve to inform and assist young people to make meaningful choices in regards to further education and employment, ensuring that all young people have access to quality guidance that is ongoing and a continuum (from primary school throughout secondary and beyond), holistic in approach (strengths-based and embracing the whole child and their primary supporters) and credible in intent is the core issue facing our sector.

### **Q1. Will a career plan strengthen young people's engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices both during schooling and in subsequent education, training and employment settings**

Respondents indicated:

Yes	100.0%
No	0.0%

One respondent identified that having all Careers practitioners qualified by 2012 is a waste of time and money. The core issue is the varied time allocations given to careers practitioners in schools (eg. A school with 750 students has 0.8FTE staff allocated, while another school with 1250 students has a 0.8FTE staff member allocated to careers which does not give students a lot of quality guidance/ individualised time). If there are no guidelines for school about careers time and resource allocations it will always be done ad hoc.

It has also been noted that the education system needs broader parameters to cater for greater diversity of abilities of students when dealing with career planning and support, especially at secondary levels. Many comments from our respondents focused on the need to work from a strengths-based approach with students. One comment outlined that, "As many people change career paths over a lifetime, options and possible future interests, 'education for life' coaching is a necessary component. Many disaffected youth want to get education over and done with and only see the social value of their education experience". Greater variety of learning choices in post compulsory years was also identified as important.

### **Q2. What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?**

All respondents highlighted the need for funding of intermediary services and programs that provide work experience, work placement, industry tours and career development assistance to careers teachers as a way to assist a more consistent approach (through capacity and knowledge) to career development to all young people.

62.5% of respondents also identified that funding non-school based career development services to ensure unbiased provision as well as increase access to teacher release programs that facilitate 'real life' teacher engagement with industry. An example of some good practice in career exploration was identified by one respondent as the 'TAFE Tasters' that are offered through local TAFEs which are term or semester long and explore applied learning and general career and work/ life skills.

### **Q3. How can business/ industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?**

Respondents indicated the following (NB. Respondents could nominate more than one response):

Fund intermediary services & programs that provide work experience, work placement, industry tours & career development assistance to careers teachers	100.0%
Funding non-school based career development services which ensure the provision of unbiased information to young people & their parents	62.5%
Increase access to teacher release programs that facilitate 'real life' teacher engagement with industry	62.5%
Funding programs that empower parents to provide sound career & transition support their children	37.5%

Respondents also provided the following comments:

- One respondent identified that age restrictions are causing difficulties with students accessing programs and placement opportunities (some are required to be 16 to access training).

### ***Section 3: Arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications***

The BGK LLEN (and stakeholders) are in support of any reforms and initiatives that will assist young people, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged ones, to achieve Year 12 or its equivalent. Similarly, the BGK LLEN (a funded 'partnership broker') is in support of any initiatives that assist in building partnerships between the education, training, business and community sectors that facilitate collaboration for the benefit of young people completing qualifications that meet allow them to achieve positive 'learning and earning' outcomes.

The BGK LLEN supports Victorian reforms such as MIPs, expanding vocational subjects in the VCE and establishing the VCAL as we have witnessed the capacity of these to lift completion rates on both individual student, school and regional levels. Whilst schools cannot meet the subject choice needs of all students due to funding, staffing, timetabling, space and logistic concerns to name but a few it is possible for neighbouring schools to partner and share resources to enable subject provision. As noted in the discussion paper, greater subject provision is likely to lead to a reduction in early school leaving. Ongoing government support in developing such provision partnerships and networks continues is seen as something of need in this region. The BGK LLEN congratulates both the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments for the recent Workplace Learning Coordinator Program funding which will assist in the ongoing brokering of applied learning partnerships and provision arrangements at a regional level.

The VET sector plays an increasingly important role in the development of young people both during their secondary schooling and post leaving school. The VET sector also plays an important role in training a skilled workforce for the increasing demands of globally, competitive and changing industries. As such initiatives aimed at increasing apprenticeship completion rates should be two-pronged strategies that are focused on both the young person and the employer. Making access to pre-apprenticeship programs and School Based Apprenticeships (SBATs) whilst young people are at school should be strongly supported by government and strategies to reduce provision barriers (such as timetabling) should developed. As a significant number of businesses within Australia are small to medium enterprises (and this is particularly true within the BGK LLEN region) it is important that the government supports those employers to provide a work environment that is conducive to a young, apprentice employee. Support strategies may include training programs for supervisory staff, coaching and mentoring arrangements.

#### **Q1. What additional actions should Government take to support young people to complete initial qualifications in the VET sector?**

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide open comments to this question which included:

- *"Provide support systems to foster retention. eg mentors"*
- *"Take away the ridiculous 'Skills Reform' Agenda rules, such as: if students have a qualification (Cert III) and want to gain another qualification that enhances the first, they get no concession rate if the*

*qualification is Cert II or III - so, if a student wants to complete their Cert II Electrotechnology and then go on to Cert II Building & construction, under the new rules they have to pay over \$2,000 for the 2nd qualification - why? If the Govt wants students to complete their training, then don't restrict what they can do - and provide appropriate funding for it. Again, if a student wants to complete a Cert II Automotive course, a TAFE may charge the school about \$1,700 - we only get about \$920 in funding for the course, and the school is expected to pay the shortfall? Where from? The teacher that has been released by not having to teach that student? That is ridiculous - the school and classes still run, minus the students completing VET studies. There is no funding provided for this."*

**Q2. Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum & qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision, & support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?**

Respondents indicated:

Yes	62.5%
No	37.5%

**Q3. What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools & VET sectors?**

Respondents indicated the following (NB. Respondents could nominate more than one response) :

The development of a Victorian Government communication strategy which promotes vocational learning programs as being equally important to academic ones	100.0%
Encourage the development of cross-sectoral, cross-institutional regional partnerships that facilitate wide subject offerings for students	83.3%
Greater flexibility in school timetabling	66.7%
Greater flexibility in school / training availability & hours (eg. night / weekend classes, summer semester to accommodate independent students etc)	50.0%

Respondents also provided the following comments:

- *"We have a strong network of schools that is organised through Youth Connect. It would be great to see that partnership broadened and strengthened. At present we have major partners in Youth Connect, Sandringham Secondary College, Holmesglen and Cheltenham Secondary College - I would like to see other schools offer their courses to external students and set up a real network of VETiS providers. I believe the LLEN should be involved in this"*
- *"Until there is parity of esteem for vocational educational and training pathways held firm and communicated strongly by Government, parents, teachers, principals and the media it will continue to be difficult for students to access the appropriate mix of course options in their local area schools!"*

**Q4. How can businesses & industry be involved in increasing completion rates – especially for apprenticeships?**

Respondents indicated the following (NB. Respondents could nominate more than one response) :

Advocating for government funded programs that provide businesses (particularly small to medium sized enterprises) with mentoring & coaching training for apprentice supervisors	85.7%
Participation in School-Based Apprenticeships & Traineeships (SBATS)	85.7%
Developing sustainable partnerships with local schools & training providers	85.7%
Allowing supervisory staff to participate in apprentice mentoring & coaching training	71.4%

**Section 4: Systems that assist students to move effectively between courses, institutions and sectors**

The BGK LLEN (and its stakeholders) are in support of any initiatives and reforms that will allow young people particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged ones, to remain meaningfully engaged and retaining in education and training. Furthermore the BGK LLEN is only too aware that many young people do not

experience linear pathways and as such require articulation arrangements that recognise the bank of skills and/or qualifications that they may have achieved throughout their education or training career.

The BGK LLEN has for many years been a strong supporter of strategies and organisations that support increasing applied learning provision and genuine workplace learning opportunities across the local region. The BGK LLEN is also in support of regional approaches aimed at improving the perception of applied learning and celebrating the success of those students, schools and employers who achieve excellence in VET and workplace learning. The issue of articulation between school-based and higher-level VET programs is something that has been an issues within the VET sector for some years and it is of some concern that it still continues be a statewide policy concern. The BGK LLEN welcomes government support building positive community perceptions of applied learning, providing schools with assistance in building their VET programs to avoid issues around students lacking pre-requisites for higher level VET qualifications (eg. external support agencies), ensuring the quality of all VET providers and building an awareness that applied learning relies on a combination of on and off the job learning and must therefore be accompanied by a period of workplace learning.

**Q1. How can student transition to the VET sector, higher education & full-time employment be improved?**

Respondents indicated the following (NB. Respondents could nominate more than one response) :

Ensuring that all young people receive transferable learning, life & work skills that are universal across the sectors	87.5%
Increase opportunities for young people to apply for courses using a variety of indicators (ie. not just the ENTER score)	87.5%
Continue to track individual students & support their transitions	75.0%
Develop a clear, flexible & easily understood articulation framework	62.5%

Respondents also provided the following comments:

- *“Provide opportunities for young people to access VET and Higher Ed facilities at various times through their schooling. This would help to minimise the impact of the higher education environment.”*
- *“Provide appropriate funding for courses.”*
- *“Increase opportunities for young people to apply for courses through means other than just the ENTER score – eg. interviews, folios etc”*

**Q2. What other steps are required to assist schools’ connection to the world of work?**

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide open comments to this question which included:

- *“Have clear guidelines for schools in allocating Careers personnel the appropriate time and resources for their positions”*
- *“Provide schools with assistance to source work placements for students – we need an external organisation with the skills and the contacts to do this.”*

**Section 5: Articulation within the VET sector and from VET to higher education**

As per the previous section the BGK LLEN supports efforts to enhance articulation arrangements between and with courses and sectors, particularly where this will enable young people to complete qualifications that allow them to achieve positive ‘learning and earning’ outcomes.

**Q1. Should efforts to improve VET to higher education articulation & credit arrangements focus on particular occupational pathways & skill priority areas, for example in engineering & nursing?**

Respondents indicated:

Yes	83.3%
No	16.7%

Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide open comments to this question which included:

- “Undecided as those occupations chosen may be seen as second rate and devalued . If the emphasis were as a result of future predictions of need or job over supply then a sound argument would eliminate that negative connotation”

**Q2. How can governments ensure that reforms to the VET & higher education sector address both skill needs & student demand for particular qualifications?**

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide open comments to this question which included:

- *“Educate Careers personnel regularly on the skills needs list updates.”*
- *“Provide training that targets ESL, CALD and refugee students and families”*
- *“Student surveys, market research, social science research, social planners, bi partisan support at local and federal government levels. Australia to be a forerunner in any OECD initiatives”*

**Q3. How can governments improve provision & articulation arrangements to better support young people, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?**

Respondents indicated the following (NB. Respondents could nominate more than one response) :

Open up schools to deliver vocational certificate courses to the community during non-school hours (eg. weekends, evenings)	85.7%
Expand the provision of higher education courses in TAFEs, through partnership arrangements	85.7%
Build learning centres in growth belts that are multi-functional & multi-sectoral	85.7%
Increase access to online & distance learning options	57.1%

Respondents also provided the following comments:

- *“Allow students the opportunity to try trades and gain qualifications without them feeling 'bound' to the trade because of funding restrictions if they decide the industry is not for them”*

***Section 6: Opportunities for young people to re-engage with education and training***

Enabling an education and training system for all children and young people that is a continuum of programs, pathways, flexible learning options and individualised support throughout this journey should not be a far-off dream. The BGK LLEN believes that there are provisions, networks and the ability and eagerness throughout our sectors and community to ensure that all young people can be supported through transitional periods, especially for those young people who find themselves disengaging from the system. It is how we coordinate, create a culture of sharing and taking responsibility and embrace the individual challenges within this sector that will only lead to strengthening what we have in this State already.

**Q1. How can Youth Connections be implemented in Victoria to most effectively re-engage young people with education and training? What services should Youth Connections service providers use to establish effective referral and working arrangements?**

- Youth Connections service is focused primarily on young people ‘at risk’ and already disengaged outside of the mainstream school sector. There is now less provision within schools for supporting young people at risk of disengaging and such provision is required.
- Many respondents commented that Youth Connections does need to have a higher visibility in schools and educational settings and undertake a lot more preventative work.
- Youth Connections, it was identified, needs to be more personal and work a lot more closely with schools, school bodies (Regional Offices), and be visible at welfare agency and school welfare meetings
- The BGK LLEN acknowledges that there is still a lot of transitioning of the Youth Connections program into the region and the differences in service provision from the Youth Pathways to Youth

Connections is confusing for many school and community agencies. What has been identified is this confusion but also a lack of clarification of where the gaps provision can be found.

**Q2. Should LLENs be provided some flexibility to facilitate and broker service provision to young people 20 and over, in line with the flexibility in Youth Connections service provision?**

- The BGK LLEN acknowledges at this time that this question is difficult to respond to as most stakeholders are still getting to know the new program provision of the LLENs and how this impact on them directly. The LLENs are not contracted to broker provision of services to young people, so this is misleading. The BGK LLEN is not in a position to comment on behalf of its constituents.

**Q3. Is the range of qualifications on offer to re-engage young people adequate? (Existing qualifications include VCAL, adult VCE, the General Certificate of Adult Education and the Diploma of Further Education.)**

- One key theme arose from this question and has also been identified by the BGK LLEN's stakeholders:
  - Age restrictions are problematic on course entries and requirements and this has direct impact on young people aged 13-14 (or younger) wanting to engage in some sort of qualification outside of mainstream school and are unable to. There needs to be the introduction of certifications for younger aged people so that agencies and education providers can run these as a way to re-engage young people back into mainstream learning.