

RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER

STRONGER FUTURE FOR ALL YOUNG VICTORIANS

Submitted by:

Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network

Strengthening literacy and numeracy in the post-compulsory years

The NMLLEN supports the proposal to introduce explicit literacy and numeracy standards into the VCE and VCAL and specific learning plans for those students who have yet to meet literacy of numeracy benchmarks in Year 9.

The NMLLEN also supports the proposal that literacy and numeracy requirements be made more explicit in the development of occupational and foundation VET qualifications.

Support for making informed education and training choices

The NMLLEN supports the four new initiatives outlined on p.17 of the discussion paper.

The NMLLEN also agrees that more career development services need to be provided to young people at TAFE and ACE.

The NMLLEN also believes that the important role that Year 7, 8 and 9 home room teachers provide as a potential source of valuable career development advice for young people in schools, has been under utilised. Programs that provide opportunities for home room teachers to undertake industry visits and training in general career development advice would be a significant step in the career development process.

Arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications

The NMLLEN has brokered a partnership between 12 schools (Government, Catholic, Independent and a NSW High School) to submit an application for funding under the Trade Training Centres in Schools Program.

The collaborative service model that has been developed for funding demonstrates the capacity of a cross sectoral approach towards providing improved opportunities for young people in the region. This model (if successful in gaining funding) will result in a trebling of VET enrolments over a four year period. The educational outcomes will be:

- Improved school retention rates to Year 12 or its equivalent (ie Certificate II)
- Improved engagement of students who are risk of disengaging from school.
- Increased numbers of students pursuing post secondary pathways at TAFE or University.
- Improved retention and engagement of Koorie students.
- The use of the TTC for re-engagement programs for disengaged youth in the region.

This project demonstrates the benefits of collaborative cross sectoral partnerships that will benefit all students and contribute towards the national and state goals of raising attainment rates.

The NMLLEN recommends the continued support and resourcing of schools (all sectors) to develop and fully implement tools that aid the early identification of 'at risk' students eg DEECD Student Mapping Tool (SMT) and that such tools be used at both primary and secondary levels. It is taking time for the SMT to 'embedded' in the practice of all schools as well as the development of the skills to effectively use the tool. Nonetheless, every effort should be made to ensure its full adoption and continued use.

Opportunities for young people to re-engage with education and training

The NMLLEN's view is that the Youth Connections Program is providing a very valuable and effective service in the region. Strong collaboration and co-operation between the Youth Connections provider and the NMLLEN is occurring eg establishment of an interface with schools to identify and refer at risk students to Youth Connections and the monitoring of their progress.

Most LLENs could easily identify young people, aged 20 and over, that have both directly and indirectly benefited from the activities and involvement of the LLEN.

The extreme nature of barriers as well as the number of barriers facing some of the 'at risk' young people who the LLENs deal with are not easily overcome. This being the case, they often need ongoing support to stay connected to education and training, as well as gaining and maintaining employment, well beyond the age of 19 in order to successfully transition into adulthood.

The current Enhanced LLEN contracts clearly reflect the current policy drive that recognises that earlier intervention is required for young people. To add to the identified young person cohort of 10-19 year olds for LLEN's, there is a real danger that LLENs will have to:

- become experts on the needs of a larger range of already very diverse young people
- deliver on outcomes that they are not funded for under their contracts
- again undertake significant governance changes, and
- also be expected to become everything to everyone in a climate when we are still coming to terms with the changes that have occurred in 2010.

With current resources already spread thinly across the state, to formally broaden the age range would simply create more of a strain and lack of capacity to carry out the core work of the LLENs.

However, if additional resources were made available, the NMLLEN would consider an extension of broker service provision to the 20-24 year old group.

Ron Broadhead
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