



Outer Eastern LLEN (OELLEN) Submission in response to:

Stronger futures for all young Victorians Discussion paper on the youth transitions system

The response has been developed after consultation with the OELLEN Board and local key stakeholders

Profile of the OELLEN region

The OELLEN region encompasses the Local Government areas of Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges and covers a total of 2,675 sq kilometres. The population, based on the latest estimated resident population data, indicates that approximately 401,000 people currently live within the boundaries of the OELLEN. By 2016 the projected resident population is estimated to be 418,965. In 2008, the number of 10 – 19 year-olds in the OELLEN region was 58,582. There are 163 educational institutions including 41 Secondary schools, of which 19 offer VCAL and 37 offer VET subjects. During 2009, a total of 28,676 were enrolled in Secondary Schools and the apparent retention rate to Year 12 was 72.2%. The number of students completing Year 12 or equivalent (Certificate II or above) is slightly lower than the Victorian average of approximately 85%. Swinburne is the only University/TAFE located in the region. The 2009 youth unemployment rate of 26.1% for 15 – 19 year olds was similar to the national figure (26%), and highlights the difficulty many young people face in gaining a foothold in the employment market.

Strengthening literacy and numeracy in the post-compulsory years

1. What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards take?
2. In what other ways can the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills be strengthened in the post-compulsory years?

The OELLEN would welcome the introduction of literacy and numeracy Individual learning plans for students who have yet to meet Year 9 standards. The Learning Plans would need to be a working document that would be regularly reviewed – not just a piece of paper. Literacy and numeracy would need to be taught through ‘real life’ situations. The literacy and numeracy standards for the later years would need to be in a form that potential employers will understand in terms of competency to perform in the workplace. They should align with industry pre-apprenticeship testing and training packages.

Increase literacy and numeracy teaching skills for TAFE & RTO trainers

Literacy and numeracy acquisition in the post-compulsory years would be strengthened by a requirement for TAFE and RTO trainers to have specific qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Currently, many hold a Cert IV in Training and Assessment and are not equipped to skill students who have not met Year 9 standards.

Early intervention

There needs to be more resourcing for the early primary years as current resources are insufficient to cater for ALL children with low literacy and numeracy skills. Resources are therefore targeted at the very lowest performing children, and as students progress through the levels the gap widens for those who have not been able to access early intervention. In addition, where students have been withdrawn for intensive literacy or numeracy intervention, there needs to be more interaction between the specialist teachers and classroom teachers to ensure progress continues.

Youth Connections/school response to early school leavers

There needs to be follow-up (such as a student support group) between schools and Youth Connections case workers for early school leavers

Support for making informed education and training choices

1. 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?
2. What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?
3. How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students’ career choices?

Quality career advice

A career plan may to a certain extent increase young people’s capacity to make informed study and career choices however, to really strengthen engagement and career options, young people need have a clearer understanding of the breadth of options and what the jobs really look like.

Young people need access to full-time, qualified career advisors who have sound knowledge of the range of professional, business and industry options and the skills and qualifications required for a successful career in the field of work. Career advisor’s qualifications should include some business/industry experience. Career advice could possibly be provided through Youth Access Centres.

Career education integrated into curriculum

Career education needs to be included in all levels of the secondary curriculum and the ILP needs to be flexible and reviewed at regular intervals.

Engagement with parents

To raise student aspirations there needs to be more engagement with parents to increase their understanding of career options. Programs such as PACTs should be offered widely. An on-line program could assist parents in remote locations.

School/industry programs

There are a number of programs available to some students including the Careers in Manufacturing tours, Careers in Manufacturing Young Ambassador programs and SP AusNet Victorian Energy Education and Training program (VEET). The VEET program provides opportunity for site visits to experience aspects of the industry. Programs such as this across business and industry would increase students capacity to make informed career and subject choices.

Vocational Education

1. What would further strengthen the delivery partnerships between government and non-government schools and between schools and VET providers?
2. What additional actions should Government take to support young people to complete initial qualifications in the VET sector?
3. Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision, and support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?
4. How should schools, VET providers and system authorities use the new transparency and accountability arrangements in Victorian schools and the Victorian Student Number to improve the completion rate of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications?
5. What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools and VET sectors?
6. How can businesses and industry be involved in increasing completion rates – especially for apprenticeships?

Alignment of fee structure

There is a wide variation in the current cost of VET programs across providers in the outer east. Delivery partnerships would be strengthened through the introduction of uniform fee for service structures.

Funding model

The current VET band funding is less than the amount young people can access through Skills Victoria Youth Compact and therefore there is currently incentive for young people to exit school to access VET training.

Funding to school clusters

Some funding needs to be allocated to clusters/networks of schools to facilitate local arrangements between schools, VET providers, business and industry.

Culture change

OELLEN has been instrumental in brokering partnerships to address disadvantage. There needs to be a concerted effort to address potentially disadvantaged young people such as those from backgrounds with long-term unemployment, generational poverty, Koorie and newly arrived refugees.

A significant number of young people come from homes where there is an entrenched culture of low educational attainment and resulting unemployment. There needs to be an increase in the number of programs and networks available to parents and young people with a focus on broadening understanding of the benefits and options available through education and training.

Greater curriculum specialisation and qualification delivery

he OELLEN believes that greater levels of specialisation and qualification delivery would result in improved quality provision, and would support increased student attainment to Year 12 or equivalent.

More rigorous accountability and tracking of students

The OELLEN welcomes the new structures and looks forward to more rigorous monitoring of accountability at all levels. Introduction of the VSN will enable better tracking of students while they are enrolled in school, and use of the common Exit Form will also assist in tracking however, curriculum content, delivery and flexibility in Secondary schools (from 7-12) is the key to retention and attainment.

Strategies to lift qualification completion rates

- Increase the availability of pre-apprenticeship programs that give credits towards an apprenticeship
- Improve wage training benefits for young people
- Investigate and implement ways of linking and accrediting pre-apprenticeship programs to VCAL and VET.
- Increased financial support for young people and employers in remote locations.

Business and industry

Business and industry needs to consider employing young people after Year 12 and supporting them to complete higher education.

Provision of a guide for business and industry leaders/employers (such as McCrindle Research *'Bridging the Gap' employers guide to managing and retaining the new generation of apprentices and trainees*) to develop greater understanding of how to work more effectively with young people

Articulation from school to VET and higher education

1. How can student transition to the VET sector, higher education and full-time employment be improved?
2. What other steps are required to assist schools' connection to the world of work?
3. What other initiatives would improve school to tertiary education articulation and support young people to take advantage of the expansion of these sectors?

Cost prohibitive

Despite government funding, many young people still find the cost of the transition to VET and higher education can be prohibitive.

Connecting schools to the world of work

There is a need for specific and innovative programs within the core curriculum. All Year 10 students could complete Certificate I in Work Preparation and Year 9 and/or 10 students could participate in programs like the Foundation for Young Australians World of Work program or the Siemens (Bayswater) simulated program in the discovery centre. This would increase their understanding of careers, the workforce and employability skills.

Parity across programs

There is a need for common content and assessment in VET programs across all providers to ensure credit and articulation into the next level with any provider.

Articulation within the VET sector and from VET to higher education

1. Should efforts to improve VET to higher education articulation and credit arrangements focus on particular occupational pathways and skill priority areas, for example in engineering and nursing?
2. How can governments ensure that reforms to the VET and higher education sector address both skill needs and student demand for particular qualifications?

3. How can governments improve provision and articulation arrangements to better support young people, especially in regional and rural areas, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?
4. What other actions should be contemplated by institutions and government?

Central data base

Locating articulation and credit arrangements for all Victorian providers on a central site such as VQRA would make it easier for students to test how their qualifications could lead to higher education.

While it is desirable to encourage young people into skill priority areas there needs to be a broad offering available to cater for all students. Narrowing articulation and credit arrangements to specific skill priority areas would need to take into account skill priority areas at a local level and be monitored regularly, and adjusted, where necessary to meet the prevailing skill priorities. Careful consideration would need to be given to ensure equity and access for young people in rural, regional and peri urban locations.

Addressing skill and student needs

Governments could ensure that reforms to the VET and higher education sector address both skill needs and student demand for particular qualifications by remaining conversant with, and responding in a timely fashion to the changing demands. Governments need also to support/fund reforms accordingly.

Governments could also expand regional higher education hubs and improve access to these.

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

1. How can Youth Connections be implemented in Victoria to most effectively re-engage young people with education and training?
2. What services should Youth Connection service providers use to establish effective referral and working arrangements?
3. 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?
4. 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.)

Youth Connections providers need to demonstrate good understanding of local pathway options and facilitate entry/enrolment into the most appropriate course to achieve ongoing successful re-engagement of young people into education and training. This would need to be supported where required by sound understanding and referral to local service(s) that would most meet the individual needs of the young person. A student support group would assist in monitoring and encouraging successful re-engagement.

Extension to LLEN provision

OELLEN would like to be able to broker partnerships for the 20-24 year old cohort however it would need to be resourced accordingly..

Range of qualifications

The existing range of qualifications offers a number of options for re-engagement and articulation into further education and training. Perhaps specific units with a focus on employability skills need to be added to all the existing range of qualifications.