

Regional Youth Commitments

Formative Evaluation

De-identified* published copy

August 2008

Published by Youth Transitions Division, Office for Policy, Research and Innovation
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Melbourne
August 2008

© State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) 2008

The copyright in this document is owned by the State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), or in the case of some materials, by third parties (third party materials). No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, the National Education Access Licence for Schools (NEALS) (see below) or with permission.



An educational institution situated in Australia which is not conducted for profit, or a body responsible for administering such an institution, may copy and communicate the materials, other than third party materials, for the educational purposes of the institution.

Authorised by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development,
2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002.

ISBN 978-0-7594-0517-2

Acknowledgements

The publisher acknowledges the contribution to this report from a large number of cross-sectoral stakeholders involved in education and training and career and transition support for young people 15 to 19 years in Victoria.

For more information on youth transitions visit: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth>

Table of contents

Executive summary	6
Chapter 1 – Introduction	12
Background to the project	12
Objectives of the review of the RYC	13
<i>Requirements identified in the Project Brief</i>	13
<i>Key project questions</i>	14
Methodology	15
Conceptual framework.....	18
Outline of this report.....	19
Chapter 2: Key Findings	20
A Regional Youth Commitment is.....	20
Implementation to date.....	20
<i>Status of implementation</i>	21
<i>Approach to implementation</i>	24
<i>Achievements in RYC implementation</i>	30
<i>Shortcomings associated with implementation</i>	31
<i>Outlook for sustained action around the RYC</i>	33
Lessons learned.....	37
<i>At the regional implementation level</i>	37
<i>At the Departmental implementation level</i>	40
Benefits arising from the commitment	43
<i>Overall</i>	43
<i>Good practices</i>	45
<i>Effective interventions</i>	49
Chapter 3: Transition requirements	57
Generic transition requirements	57
<i>Common challenges associated with implementation</i>	57
<i>What needs to be in place to move from stage to stage</i>	58
<i>Broad actions required to be undertaken by key stakeholders</i>	63
<i>Tracking progress</i>	67
Specific transition requirements.....	67
<i>High level changes needed in each region</i>	67
<i>12-month action plans for each region</i>	69

Chapter 4 Recommendations	70
Summary of recommendations.....	71
Chapter 5 Case studies	77
Case study 1: Stakeholder identification and engagement.....	78
Case study 2: Importance of the Regional Director	81
Case study 3: Governance, collaborative planning and an action-oriented approach	84
Case study 4: Promoting achievements and maintaining momentum	87
Appendices*	89
Appendix 1: Online survey questionnaire	89
Appendix 2: Online survey summary of results	94
Appendix 3: Discussion paper distributed to workshop attendees.....	97
Appendix 4: Roundtable Workshop Participants.....	100
Appendix 5: Interviewees.....	103
Appendix 6: 7S framework.....	104
Appendix 7: About the status reports	105
Appendix 8-15: Individual Region status reports* (Supplied to DEECD Regions for distribution as appropriate).....	
<i>History</i>	
<i>Status</i>	
<i>Assessment of initiative</i>	
<i>Achievements to date</i>	
<i>Shortcomings of the project</i>	
<i>Next steps</i>	
<i>Actions required</i>	
Appendix 16: Formative Evaluation Project Reference Group.....	106
Table of figures	
Figure 1: Project overview	15
Figure 2: Main elements and interrelationships of the proposed methodology	16
Figure 3: Phases of a program intervention.....	19
Figure 4: Implementation progress to date across the regions.....	21
Figure 5: Main stages of a RYC and typical activities.....	27
Figure 6: With the exception of schools, awareness of the RYC is linked to proximity to State Government and the education sector.....	31
Figure 7: Benefits achieved to date by regional groupings	44

Figure 8: Virtuous circle of principles which underpin future sustainability and success of the RYC	70
Table of tables	
Table 1: High level roles of key stakeholder groups in the RYC	22
Table 2: Models of the Regional Youth Commitment	25
Table 3: Critical success factors for a RYC implementation at a local/regional level: importance and indicators	28
Table 4: Region-by-region assessment of presence of critical success factors and prospects for future advancement	36
Table 5: What has occurred in the best and in the poorer performing regions	39
Table 6: What has and has not worked well at a Departmental level	41
Table 7: Online survey responses on effectiveness of the initiative to date	43
Table 8: General observations on benefits realised to date.....	45
Table 9: Examples of good practice and why they are useful.....	46
Table 10: Main challenges that need to be overcome by stage of implementation	57
Table 11: Typical actions that need to be undertaken and collateral developed in each stage of implementation	58
Table 12: Broad actions required by stakeholder group and stage of implementation	63
Table 13-20: Actions for each Region* (Supplied to DEECD Regions)	69
Table 21: Summary of recommendations, rationale and implications for implementation	71

Executive summary

CONTEXT AND APPROACH

The Regional Youth Commitment (RYC/ the commitment) arose as a result of work initiated in 2005 by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) in the Grampians region. This work, known as the Grampians Youth Options Guarantee (GYOG), was built on a recognition that more action was required to reduce the number of young people who were leaving school prior to completion of Year 12 or equivalent and neither continuing their education and training nor obtaining full-time employment.

GYOG brought together a range of stakeholders whose common aim was to improve services and their coordination so that young people aged 15 to 19 years were better supported to engage in education or training pathways to attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications.

The RYC initiative gathered momentum in 2006 when, based on positive experiences in the Grampians region, seed funding for similar activities was made available to all regions in Victoria through the Youth Transitions Division (YTD) of DEECD. Funding from YTD was made conditional on approval of a project plan and agreement by the regional office to match funds on a dollar for dollar basis and apply them to employment of a project officer for a 12-month period. The seed funding approach adopted by YTD gave the RYC initiatives initial impetus, but recognised that ultimately success would depend on how well particular regions were able to generate and maintain momentum.

Regional Youth Commitments have therefore been established at a relatively modest cost and now operate in 8 of the 9 regions in Victoria. Due to different starting points and different rates of progress, the participating regions vary both in terms of their maturity in implementing the RYC, and in the benefits that have been realised to date.

In late 2007, YTD identified the need for a formative evaluation of the initiative to analyse:

1. The background and purpose of RYC including clarification of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders
2. RYC achievements to date
3. Critical success factors to successful RYC implementation, and
4. The outlook for continued implementation of RYC.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to provide advice to DEECD which could be used to assess progress to date and to improve future success and sustainability of the RYC,

dandolopartners was commissioned to conduct the evaluation. Based on qualitative and quantitative research conducted between December 2007 and May 2008, the evaluation incorporated an online survey which was distributed to over 400 stakeholders, facilitated workshops in each of the eight participating regions, 20 depth interviews and a review of documentation provided by the regions including strategic and action plans, Memoranda of Understanding, Heads of Agreement, referral protocols, marketing collateral, progress reports and other key documents.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EVALUATION

Concept and function of a Regional Youth Commitment

In its broadest sense, the Regional Youth Commitment (RYC/ the commitment) is a framework negotiated within and between all local and regional stakeholders to link and coordinate pathway and transition support arrangements for 15 to 19 year olds, and to ensure that there is continuous support for a young person to remain in or re-enter education and training and attain as a minimum Year 12 or equivalent qualifications.

The RYC is one of a number of vehicles for progressing the Victorian Government policy target of 90% completion of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications by 2010.

A RYC is neither a program nor a project. It functions both as a call-to-action and a symbolic and practical mechanism which enables regions to:

- Raise levels of awareness of the importance of youth pathways and transitions, and
- Embrace a variety of activities undertaken in a geographic area by a wide range of stakeholders under a common “umbrella”, demonstrating the links between them.

The establishment of a RYC is a complex and long-term undertaking, requiring interactions within and between many individuals and organisations and a progressively staged implementation. Measurable benefits of a RYC are not generally attainable in the first twelve months of implementation. Regions intending to commence a commitment must be prepared to make a substantial investment in both time and resources before retention and re-engagement benefits in the target cohort of 15-19 year olds are visible.

Progress to date

Progress has been made in most regions

Most regions have made some progress in implementing the RYC. In terms of progress achieved to date, three groups have emerged: *starters (region g, region e and f)*, *momentum builders (region a, region b and region c)* and *focused achievers (region d, region h)*. There is good alignment between stakeholders’ understanding of the objectives of the commitment and its actual, stated objectives.

A clear, preferred model for the RYC has emerged

Four models for implementing the RYC have emerged characterised by the organisation or entity driving implementation. The models are LLEN-Driven, Department-Driven, Driven by a Broad-Based Collective and No Clear Driver. Most successful is the broad-based model, as it enables communities to initiate systemic change and tackle macro issues on a region-wide, coordinated basis. It also has the highest potential for sustainability. Within each model, a region’s approach to implementation can vary considerably. The Regional Office Driven Model can generate short-term momentum but is unlikely to provide a basis for long-term sustainability.

The most advanced regions have been able to raise levels of accountability among a broad range of stakeholders

The level of accountability among stakeholders is a critical pre-determinant of progress. The most advanced regions have been able to construct governance arrangements and measures that make actions and results (and conversely, inaction and lack of results) more visible and transparent. Advanced regions have also been able to get broad buy-in to the overall vision of the commitment, effective coordination and leverage of the resources of a number of participating organisations.

The least advanced regions have had difficulty overcoming challenges with both the design and implementation of the RYC

The biggest challenges that regions have faced are related to identifying stakeholders, defining the commitment, gathering stakeholder support and translating commitment into action. These challenges have been potentially compounded by a range of other factors, including variation in the levels of support and involvement from the regional office, difficulties in engaging and/or retaining suitable project officers, and differing approaches to project management and governance.

A number of factors are present in successful implementation of the RYC

A number of critical factors were identified for RYC momentum to be generated and sustained: a clear and agreed scope, strong support from the regional office, strong support from LLENs, an effective governance structure, role clarity among participating stakeholders and understanding of the scale scope and complexity involved, motivated, networked & adequately resourced Project Officer, an agreed project plan and collaboration and information sharing across/between stakeholders.

Examples of best practice are emerging that could help less advanced regions accelerate progress

Work to date across the regions has led to the development of a body of lessons learned, a raft of good practices in the form of tools, documentation, processes and practices, and many examples of effective interventions in schools, the TAFE sector, local government and with specific groups. This information is of use to all regions - especially those in earlier stages of implementation.

SHORTCOMINGS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION

Little quantitative data exists about the success of the RYC

Most regions have yet to capture results related to retention and re-engagement and therefore little quantitative data is available. This was a limitation of the study identified at the outset. Most achievement has been recorded as anecdotal or qualitative evidence, usually on a case-by-case basis e.g. young person receives assistance with travel to education/training venue and therefore re-engages.

Stakeholders outside the core coordination group tend to have low awareness of the RYC

While there is significant regional variation in the levels of awareness of the commitment amongst stakeholder groups, a general observation is that in most regions, stakeholders closest to State Government (e.g. LLENs,

Regional Management Forum, government agencies and departments) tend to be most aware of the RYC, while those with looser links (e.g. local government, industry) tend to be less aware. The clear exception is schools, which, according to feedback from the regions have low levels of awareness.

To date there has been limited work undertaken with schools

Greater engagement with schools remains a key challenge across all regions. For the RYC to be successful this requires a cultural mind-shift in schools to take ownership of young people until they are successfully engaged with another service provider or are involved in another meaningful education or training pathway. Stakeholders also report difficulties engaging TAFE/ACE and local government, and generally believe that it is too early to involve industry when first implementing a commitment

Opportunities to learn lessons form others' mistakes are not being exploited

Currently, the regions least advanced in their implementation of the RYC are implementing the initiative rather empirically. They appear to be strongly influenced by a desire to do things their own way or from first principles, and in some cases are not initiating basic good practices such as developing a project plan or formalizing a governance structure. Better communication and information linkages could be made at numerous levels: regional, working group, project officer, LLEN, school etc.

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE RYC

The high levels of commitment to RYC - though not always effectively translated into action - provide a foundation for future success

While it has taken regions some time to define the commitment and gather the interest of stakeholders, once this occurs, the RYC generally gains a high level of notional support. This provides a good foundation for future success, but only if momentum is not lost.

It is too early in some regions to determine whether the RYC will be achieved

In most regions it is too early to determine the likelihood of the initiative's effectiveness in any reliable way. Most regions have spent the first 12 months focused on activities that do not create immediate retention or re-engagement outcomes.

A number of risks to future success exist, including changing priorities, under-resourcing and leadership challenges

Regions face a heightened risk of losing momentum after the first 12 months of implementation, due to the potential interaction of a number of factors around this time:

- *Personnel changes* – commonly the full-time RYC Project Officer appointment will expire after the initial DEECD funded period.
- *Unmet expectations* – often after a year of activity a region will schedule a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding or a public launch of the commitment. Unless there is adequate follow-up these events can promote a sense of completion in stakeholders' minds, when in reality they are symbolic events which are *precursors* to the traction phase of the initiative.
- *Changing regional priorities* – funding from DEECD central office for the commitment signals to the region that the initiative is a priority. However, when funding concludes, and in the absence of explicit direction and clearly communicated expectations from central to the regional office, there is a risk that the many other priorities in a region supercede the commitment.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE THE CHANCES OF EFFECTIVE TRANSITION

The RYC is a complex, long-term change initiative, requiring strategic and practical action across multiple stakeholders to succeed. It is dependent on the commitment and contribution of a community, not just a school or the individuals within it. For some stakeholders it will require substantial adjustment to ideology, practices, processes and relationships. These things take time, considerable resources and require leadership and a persistent belief that the effort and investment is worthwhile. No region has all of the pre-requisites for success fully in place. Nor has any region achieved all there is to be achieved. Even the most advanced regions are yet to see consistent activity, for instance, in government schools.

From the research and findings, a set of recommendations was developed to enhance the effectiveness and support the future sustainability of the

RYC. Implementation of these recommendations relies on actions initiated by both DEECD central and the DEECD regions. The recommendations are:

1. *Elevate the importance of the RYC*
 - Specific actions could include the Minister acknowledging RYC as a high priority, ensuring RYC visibility in core policy documents, e.g. Blueprint, corporate plans and business plans (regional, LLEN and school level) and more senior level promotion
2. *Encourage broad government endorsement & support across other agencies, sectors and levels of government*
 - Specific actions include encouraging the Commonwealth to frame other initiatives to align with the RYC; encouraging Skills Victoria and Victorian TAFE institutes to get more involved, and; encouraging Victorian government departments & agencies to align programs and increase support for the commitment
3. *Increase accountability for delivery of RYC objectives*
 - Specific actions include development of better tracking mechanisms and employing them in a standardised way, development of more effective feedback loops to schools and other key participants
4. *Strengthen capability in the regions*
 - Specific actions include distribution and encouraging use of the findings of this evaluation; provision of examples of effective project planning, project management and good practice; establishment of a common forum (e.g. website) for lodgment of case studies, good practices, effective interventions, tools and documentation and conduct of a twice yearly get together of RYC initiatives across the State
5. *Get schools more involved*
 - Specific actions include helping schools to incorporate the RYC into annual plans and strategies, establishing transition teams in all secondary schools and supporting them with appropriate information and training
6. *Enable lagging regions to secure additional funding*
 - Specific actions include setting higher thresholds for funding assistance, instituting a requirement for performance measures and securing commitments prior to funding
7. *Consider expanding the scope of the RYC – perhaps after initial results are clearer*
 - This could include expanding the scope to include all regions, non-government schools and a younger age cohort
8. *Develop measures to monitor progress and performance of the RYC*
 - Specific actions include the development and use of better tracking mechanisms to enable progress and achievements to be measured and monitored across

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Background to the project

A robust global economy has intensified the international competition for talent, bringing education and training into sharper focus. Victoria's track record in educational and training outcomes has been strong, but there is a recognition that even more needs to be done if the State is to meet domestic demand for skilled labour and at the same time build a strong export economy.

Recognising that economic prosperity depends heavily on achieving strong educational and training outcomes for young people, the Victorian Government has made significant investments in the State's education and training sector since it was elected in 1999. The investments have targeted a number of areas, including equipping young people to take advantage of new technologies.

One of the strongest impetuses for investment was a review by a former Secretary of the Department, Peter Kirby AO. The review revealed that young people were facing difficulties not encountered by previous generations. For example, an estimated 20% of young adults (nearly 300,000 individuals) were considered in 2000 to be 'continually disadvantaged' in the labour market. The severity and persistence of these problems was concentrated in particular groups and regions. It was noted that in the future, the consequences for individuals with poor levels of education, and for countries with comparatively low and uneven educational foundations, would be more severe than they were at the time of the report.

The Victorian Government's response was decisive, and wide-ranging. It included the establishment of the following programs, all of which are still operating:

- Local Learning & Employment Networks (LLENs)
- Managed Individual Pathways (MIPS)
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
- On Track Data.

Recognising that program-based responses alone were not enough to shift attitudes and change behaviours, the Victorian Government committed to a number of additional responses. One response was the establishment of a specific, measurable target of 90% completion of Year 12 or equivalent by 2010. The establishment of the target sent a strong message to schools, training providers, parents and students that the Victorian Government was determined to improve attainment outcomes.

In 2005 the Grampians region began to develop the foundations of what was to become a Regional Youth Commitment. Known as the Grampians Youth Options Guarantee (GYOG), the Grampians' initiative brought together a range of stakeholders and aimed to improve services and their coordination so that young people aged 15 to 19 years in the region had better opportunities to engage in education or training pathways to attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. The Regional Youth Commitment initiative gathered real momentum in 2006 when, based on

the positive experiences in the Grampians region, seed funding for similar activities was made available to all regions in Victoria.

The Regional Youth Commitments now operate in 8 of the 9 regions in Victoria. Support from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) for the commitment recognises that there is a role for seed funding and initial impetus, but that ultimately success will depend on how well particular regions are able to generate and maintain momentum. In providing a limited term resource to assist with the establishment of the initiative, and by keeping the terms of reference reasonably flexible, the Youth Transitions Division (YTD) of DEECD has acknowledged that the best chance of success is for individual regions to develop ideas that are customised to their unique challenges. The fact that the seed funding is for a limited term also challenges regions to develop ideas for which there is genuine enthusiasm and need, which are prerequisites for sustainability beyond the funded period.

This model for education policy makes sense on a number of levels. First, it enables a program to be 'mainstreamed' quickly and establishes early on that the initiative will not become an ongoing subsidy. Second, it ensures that the people responsible for implementing the program take responsibility for outcomes, as they will be the custodians of the initiative in the longer term. And third, it makes strategic sense as the government moves towards a devolved decision-making model for the administration of the education and training sector.

This evaluation of the Regional Youth Commitments initiative is important, given the initiative's role in helping to achieve the 90% completion target and its relative immaturity. The evaluation provides an opportunity to benchmark performance across the State and ensure that knowledge generated in each region is consolidated and available to be shared for common benefit. It will also enable government to refine its approach and assist in making an impact on the completion target prior to 2010.

Objectives of the review of the RYC

The overall objective of this project was to conduct a formative evaluation¹ of RYC implementation that identifies and clarifies findings for DEECD's use.

Requirements identified in the Project Brief

From the Project Brief, the review should provide advice on:

- A definition of the nature of Regional Youth Commitments and how they should be understood by participating agencies
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities of the participant members of the commitments
- Critical success factors including solutions to any barriers
- Successful implementation strategies to facilitate the sharing of good practice

¹ i.e. an evaluation which considers the worth of a program or initiative while it is still forming, with the objective of improving it

- How intent can be translated into practice particularly for stakeholders involved in more recently established Regional Youth Commitments
- The sustainability of Regional Youth Commitments beyond funded establishment
- Refinements to DEECD policy settings to better support local and regional career and transition arrangements and the operation of Regional Youth Commitments
- Preliminary evidence of the value of the Regional Youth Commitments to improving successful outcomes for young people who have left or are at risk of early leaving prior to completing Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. (Evidence to include numbers of young people retained or reengaged as well as effective interventions including education and training pathways.)

The Project Brief states that outcomes envisaged from the evaluation are:

- Improved connections between staff within and between organisations that are providing transition support for young people, and
- Improved numbers of young people retained in education and training until Year 12 or an equivalent qualification is achieved.

The main purpose of this evaluation therefore is to establish how effective regions have been to date in contributing to the Regional Youth Commitment and what more can be done to improve effectiveness and sustainability. The intent is to be educative and instructive rather than conclusive. Where comparisons of regional performance are made, they should be read as indicative, but not deterministic.

Key project questions

There are seven key project questions arising from the objectives of the evaluation that the report must answer:

1. Is the RYC well understood and supported by stakeholders, and are stakeholders clear about their roles and responsibilities?
2. What are the main achievements of the RYC to date and how effective have RYC initiatives been in achieving stated objectives, as evidenced by: retention and re-engagement of young people at risk, effective interventions, and good practices
3. How well are regions progressing with their RYC initiatives and what challenges do they face to progress?
4. What factors are critical to success of the RYC?
5. What challenges are faced by those implementing RYC initiatives and what good practices been developed to overcome them?
6. In what areas, and how, could the RYC be improved to support its success?

7. What are the next steps each region needs to take over the next 12 months and what non-financial support could be provided to assist with the transition beyond the initial 12 month DEECD funded phase?

Methodology

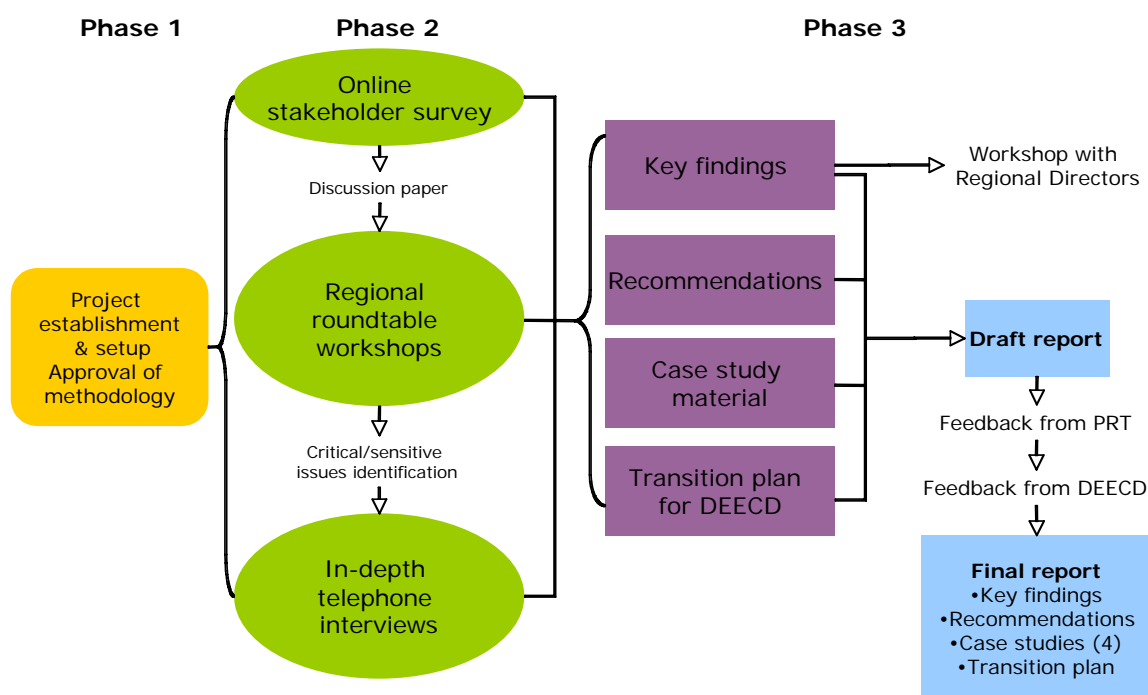
A three-phase process was used for the formative evaluation of the initiative, depicted at a high level in Figure 1 and elaborated upon in the discussion that follows. The methodology combined quantitative and qualitative research techniques and included an online survey, in-depth focus groups (which for the purposes of this project are referred to as “roundtable workshops”) and one-on-one interviews (conducted either face-to-face or by telephone). The methodology placed significant emphasis on getting the questions right, rather than simply assembling data and presenting un-synthesised, assertion-based observations.

Figure 2 illustrates the main project phases and their interrelationship.

Figure 1: Project overview

	Phase 1: Project planning & methodology	Phase 2: Fieldwork	Phase 3: Analysis, synthesis & reporting
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define key objectives, project plan & agreed methodology ● Identify & secure participation of stakeholders for Phase 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct research ● Undertake preliminary synthesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Synthesise findings into end products for DEECD
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a detailed project plan ● Develop & agree methodology with DEECD & Project Reference Team (PRT), including indicative questions for fieldwork ● Identify stakeholders in each region and obtain contact lists ● Develop a draft table of contents for final report and draft framework for case studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct qualitative and quantitative research with agreed stakeholders through agreed means (our preferred methodology is described in further detail in this document. Briefly, it involves an online survey, development and circulation of a discussion paper prior to conduct of a series of regionally-based roundtable workshops, followed up by in-depth interviews). ● Collect and analyse data from field research to address key project questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyse and synthesise findings of quantitative and qualitative research from Phase 2 ● Brief Regional Directors on key findings ● Produce a draft report for review by PRT & DEECD ● Incorporate changes & produce a final report
Outcomes & outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Detailed project plan ● Agreed stakeholders, engagement methodology and focus ● Strategy for contract data collection developed & initiated ● Roundtable workshops with regional stakeholders scheduled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback established from key stakeholders ● Material gathered to formulate final report, case studies, transition plan, key recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation of Draft report to PRT ● Draft report for review by PRT & DEECD ● Final report that meets the requirements of the brief delivered by June 15, 2008
Timetable	Weeks 1-11 (N.B. 3 weeks of this period are excluded from active project work due to Christmas/New Year vacation period)	Weeks 12-19 (N.B. 1 week of this period is excluded from active project work due to Easter vacation period)	Weeks 20-27

Figure 2: Main elements and interrelationships of the proposed methodology



Each stage of the project is discussed in further detail in the following sections, with key tasks, outcomes, and research questions arising provided.

PHASE 1: PROJECT ESTABLISHMENT, PLANNING, & QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & SETUP

The purpose of Phase 1 was to develop a clear framework that defines the project purpose and eventual outcome, to establish a plan for conduct of the project, develop and agree the research methodology and schedule participation of key stakeholders in the qualitative research phase.

The key questions answered in Phase 1 included:

- How will the final report be used, and are any of the findings to be made public?
- Where should greatest effort be spent on the project?
- What does the final deliverable look like, including structure, tone and length?
- How does DEECD want to engage with the consultant project team, including the desire for formal versus informal meetings and status updates?
- Whose opinions are particularly important to the study, and why?
- What are DEECD's hypotheses going into the project?
- What is the intent of the case studies and who is the audience? Are there any areas that DEECD would like the case studies to focus upon?

PHASE 2: FIELDWORK

Phase 2 of the project involved qualitative and quantitative research and formed the main part of the project. During this phase we:

- a. Conducted an online survey of key stakeholders as a preliminary data collection exercise to inform a discussion paper which was provided to participants prior to the round-table workshops described in (b). Email invitations to participate in the online survey were sent to over 400 stakeholders. Two hundred and twenty individuals logged on to complete the survey of which 129 fully completed it, representing a total completion rate of 59%. A copy of the online survey questionnaire is provided at Appendix 1, general survey results at Appendix 2, and a copy of the discussion paper at Appendix 3.*
- b. Conducted 8, three-hour roundtable workshops (i.e. large focus groups) with participants from key stakeholder groups within the regions participating in RYC initiatives. These workshops involved 10-14 people involved in the commitment from each region, and included representatives from the DEECD regional office, schools, transition support agencies, TAFEs, RYC LLEN partners, the RYC Project Officer, ACE providers and the Regional Management Forum. Participants were selected by RYC Project Officers and in some cases a representative from DEECD central office was also present. The workshops were facilitated by dandolopartners. Workshop findings were written up and circulated to the formative evaluation project manager and to each region for review and comment. A list of participants at the workshops is provided at Appendix 5.*
- c. Conducted 20, 20-30 minute follow-up telephone interviews with a combination of workshop participants (to further explore issues raised in the roundtable workshops that may be either sensitive or require more in-depth exploration) and a selection of Regional Directors (to obtain a high-level regional view of RYC). A list of interviewees is provided at Appendix 6.*

PHASE 3: ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS AND REPORTING

Phase 3 of the project focused on analysis and synthesis of findings from the fieldwork conducted in Phase 2 and preparation of a final report. The report was based on a template agreed by the project steering committee.

Conceptual framework

dandolopartners undertook some foundation work in this area for the DEECD Youth Transitions Division as part of an earlier project. Specifically, dandolopartners was engaged to assess the readiness of individual programs for 'mainstreaming' and necessarily had to develop a conceptual framework for assessing readiness. This framework is fundamental to the review of the RYC initiative as it provides a diagnostic for assessing how advanced particular initiatives are, what challenges remain and future options for government. The framework developed for the mainstreaming assignment is depicted below, is designed around the lifecycle of a program intervention, and is made up of two key components.

The first component of the framework represents the lifecycle of a government intervention². The lifecycle has three main stages: initiation, traction and mainstream. The initiation stage describes the early period when an intervention is newly introduced and those responsible for implementation are focused on clarifying what needs to be done. Traction describes the next stage when what needs to be done is known and understood, and attention moves to clarifying how to do it. Mainstream, the final stage, occurs when what needs to be done is known, resources are amassed to do it, and the focus is on implementation. From a government perspective, effectiveness will improve over time and as the initiative moves through the three main stages of the lifecycle.

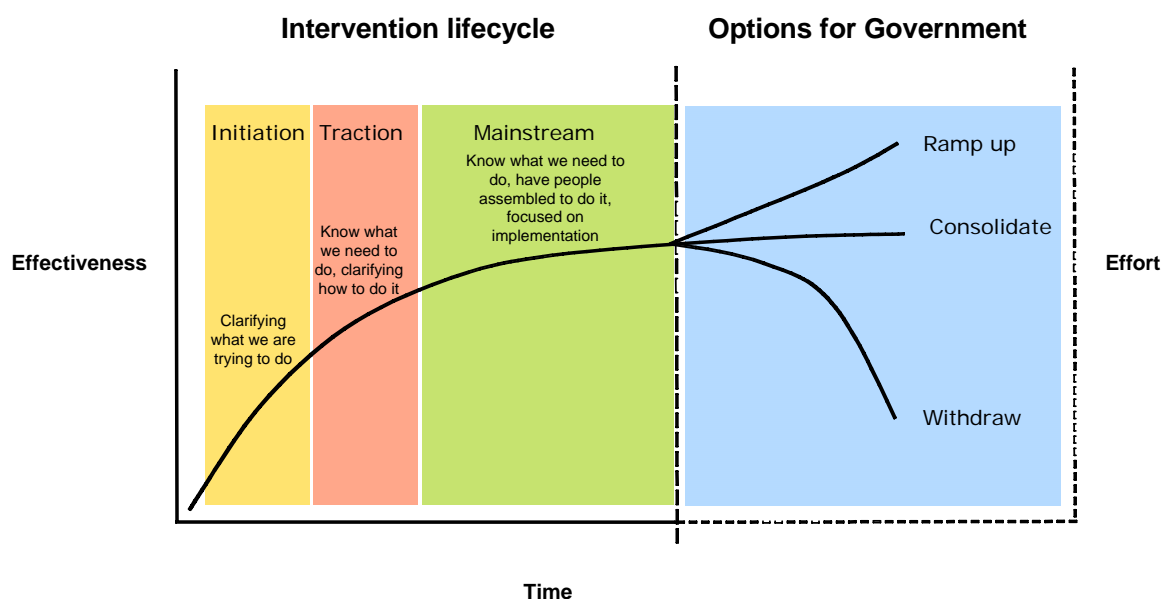
At each stage of initiation, traction and mainstreaming a number of fundamental questions arise which will need to be asked as part of this project. These include:

- What particular policy challenges exist at each stage?
- What is the appropriate role of government to ensure that momentum is sustained?
- What are the indicators that an initiative has matured to a point where it is suitable to move to the next phase?
- What are the areas of best practice and are they replicable?
- How do we progress without creating a continuing reliance on government?

The second component of the framework represents the three main options for government in considering the future of an intervention. The options can be exercised at any point in the lifecycle and will depend on results of reviews, evaluations and/or other events which change strategic priorities. Government can ramp up the intervention, for example by extending it more broadly or investing more resources in it. It can consolidate the intervention, providing resources if and where most needed, or fully withdraw, allowing the intervention to operate independently.

² In intervention may be either a program, pilot, project or initiative

Figure 3: Phases of a program intervention



In the case of the Regional Youth Commitments initiative, by restricting funding to an initial 12-month period, it was assumed that regions would be in a position to sustain momentum after one-year of intensive support from a project officer. This evaluation will help to determine whether that assumption was correct, and how withdrawal should be executed.

Outline of this report

This report is set out in five chapters, of which this chapter is the first.

- Chapter 2: Key findings - presents the major observations from the evaluation, focusing on implementation, lessons learned, benefits, good practices and effective interventions.
- Chapter 3: Transition requirements - identifies generic steps required by key stakeholders to ensure that the RYC is further embedded across Victoria and contains advice on the roles and responsibilities for individuals and organisations involved in the RYC. The chapter also sets out specific 12-month action plans developed in regional workshops (these are extracted from regional status summaries located in Appendices 8-15).
- Chapter 4: Recommendations for continued success of RYC – outlines assumptions, guiding principles and recommendations for potential changes to RYC implementation
- Chapter 5: Case Studies – provides a snapshot of successful initiatives and activities that have been pursued under the umbrella of RYC.

Chapter 2: Key Findings

The following section captures key findings from the evaluation, broken down into sections covering the nature of a commitment, implementation to date, lessons learned and benefits. Key findings are based on a synthesis of data obtained through the fieldwork. We have relied on evidence collected through the online survey, roundtable workshops and follow-up interviews to develop these findings, which are presented at a high level. Localised examples can be found by reading the detailed regional status updates in Appendices 8- 15.

A Regional Youth Commitment is...

A Regional Youth Commitment is a framework negotiated within and between local and regional stakeholders to link and coordinate pathway and transition support arrangements for 15 to 19 year olds. It is designed to promote the view that all young people of post-compulsory age should be supported to remain in or re-enter education and training and attain as a minimum Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. The RYC underpins the Victorian Government's policy target of 90% completion of Year 12 or equivalent by 2010.

A RYC will vary from region to region, but will generally involve a range of stakeholders in a community (including the education, health, justice, local government, industry, and welfare sectors) working together to improve support and services which potentially lead to enhanced levels of Year 12 or equivalent educational attainment in the 15-19 year old population.

A RYC is neither a program nor a project. It is both a call-to-action and a symbolic and practical mechanism which enables regions to:

- Raise levels of awareness of the importance of youth pathways and transitions, and
- Embrace a variety of activities undertaken in a geographic area by a wide range of stakeholders under a common "umbrella", demonstrating the links between them.

The establishment of a RYC is a complex and long-term undertaking, requiring interactions within and between many individuals and organisations and a progressively staged implementation. Measurable benefits of a RYC are not generally attainable in the first twelve months of implementation. Regions intending to commence a commitment must be prepared to make a substantial investment in both time and resources before retention and re-engagement benefits in the target cohort of 15-19 year olds are visible.

Implementation to date

Implementation findings are categorized into five areas:

1. Status of implementation
2. Approach to implementation
3. Achievements of the implementation
4. Shortcomings associated with implementation
5. The outlook for implementation

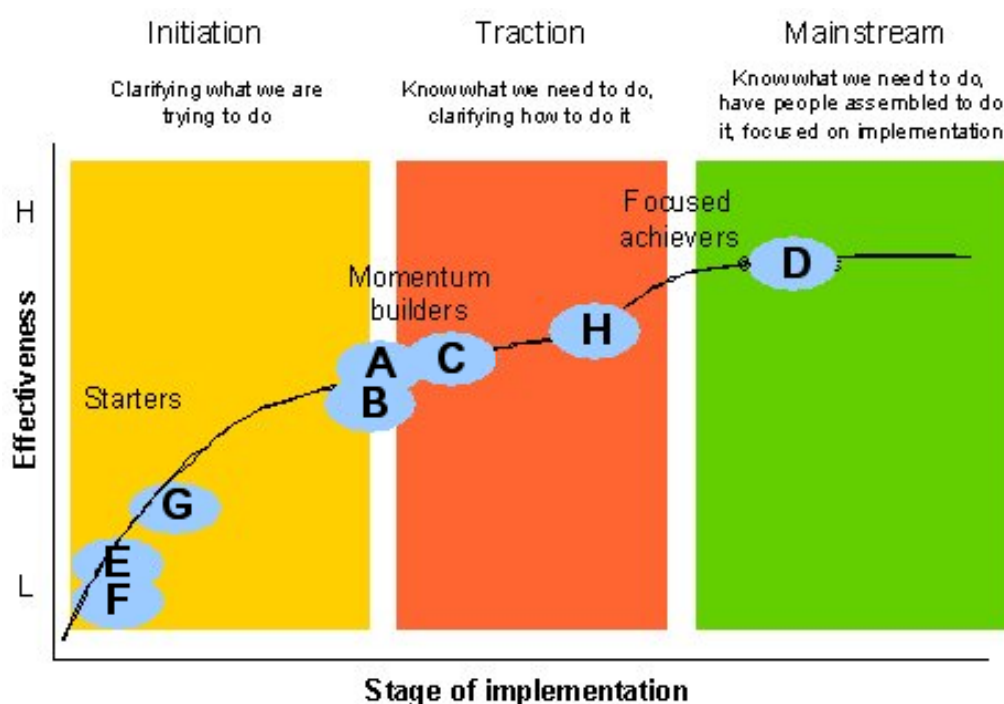
Status of implementation

Progress has been made in most regions

Most regions have made some progress in implementing the RYC. In terms of progress achieved to date, three groups have emerged, as shown in:

- *Starters*: these are regions which, for a range of reasons, have made limited progress in the first 12 months of the initiative
- *Momentum builders*: these are regions which have used the first 12 months of the initiative to concentrate on building the foundations of the commitment and are on the cusp of translating commitment into action
- *Focused achievers*: these are regions which as a result of pre-existing activity or a longer period of implementation have already worked through many of the issues and challenges and are beginning to achieve results in retention and re-engagement.

Figure 4: Implementation progress to date across the regions



The gap between the most advanced and least advanced regions is significant

As Figure 4 indicates, there is considerable variation in the effectiveness of the implementation to date. This is partly attributable to the duration with which the initiative (or similar) has been operating. For example, Region D and Region H have been operating the longest, and have been more effective to date than Region B or Region G which have operated for a comparatively short time.

However duration of activity is not the sole factor influencing success. Both Region C and Region E commenced the RYC in early 2007, with distinctly different results to date. Region C built a strong coalition of support, identified its objectives, developed a project plan and achieved important milestones in the first 12 month period, whereas Region E is still trying to define the commitment and garner support from stakeholders. It has no

project plan, and lacks clarity and momentum. Clearly, differences in the quality of activity in the regions and the nature of the barriers that need to be addressed also have an impact on advancement and ultimately effectiveness of the initiative.

The objectives of the RYC are generally well understood and supported by stakeholder representatives involved in planning and co-ordination

There is good alignment between stakeholders' understanding of the objectives of the commitment and its actual, stated objectives. In the online survey, for instance, stakeholders more commonly acknowledged engaging young Victorians in education and training pathways to Year 12 or equivalent, improving the provision of education and training for 15 to 19 year olds, and improving collaborations and connections between stakeholders as the key objectives of the initiative. These objectives are closely related to the stated objective of the RYC, which is to ensure all young Victorians aged 15 to 19 years are engaged in education or training pathways to attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications.

Understanding of stakeholder roles is generally clear and relatively consistent across the regions

Key stakeholders generally have a good understanding of the high-level roles of various parties involved in the commitment. Stakeholders can articulate with relative ease the main role and function of various entities, and their views are relatively consistent across the eight regions. Broad roles are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: High level roles of key stakeholder groups in the RYC

Stakeholder	Broad role in the initiative
LLEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support government in the implementation of the RYC by acting as a networker/broker between schools, young people and the wider community • To coordinate planning at a sub-regional level
DEECD - central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide policy direction and funding to implement the commitment and to review its effectiveness • To provide state-wide coordination as appropriate
DEECD - regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be a central driver of a RYC, providing operational support and ensuring performance against objectives • To provide regional coordination
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify students at risk of disengagement and respond accordingly
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the commitment by recognizing the links between local strategic planning and provision of local health, welfare, transport and other services and young people's capacity to engage in education and training
Federal Government (e.g. LCPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide programs and policies which compliment but do not compete with the commitment
TAFE & ACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide additional education and training pathways

Stakeholder	Broad role in the initiative
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support transitions to and from TAFE/ACE to other appropriate education and training alternatives
Health & Welfare organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide services which support a young person in addressing health and welfare issues that present a barrier to engagement in education and training
Regional Management Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote the commitment and provide high-level endorsement and support of its objectives across government
Industry & Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide meaningful and sustainable education and training opportunities for young people and to contribute information on skills gaps/ needs

However, perhaps due to the early stage of implementation in which most regions find themselves, stakeholders are less clear about responsibilities, how they are shared, and how they interrelate. This is especially true in regions that are yet to formalise the commitment in Memoranda of Understanding or other documentation.

Stakeholders are also unclear about the *relative* importance of different groups to the initiative's success (e.g. federal government versus schools), and tend to rate all stakeholders as critical, as is shown in the regional status reports in Appendices 8-15. This may suggest a lack of discrimination in amassing support for the commitment, particularly in the early stages of implementation when there is low recognition that while all groups are important, some are more important than others.

It is too early in some regions to determine whether the RYC will be achieved

In most regions it is too early to determine the likelihood of the initiative's effectiveness in any reliable way. Most regions have spent the first 12 months working through the initiation phase and have focused on activities that do not create immediate retention or re-engagement outcomes. They are yet to reach or have just entered the traction phase where commitment translates into action, and starts to produce results. It will take some time before the effectiveness of the initiative can be known, and determining results will require introduction of uniform performance indicators and monitoring processes.

The least advanced regions have had difficulty overcoming challenges with both the design and implementation of the RYC

The progress of the "momentum builder" regions (see Figure 4 above) shows that it is not uncommon for regions to take at least a year to move through the initiation phase. The "starters" have, however, taken a lot longer. The biggest challenges they have faced are related to:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Defining the commitment
- Gathering stakeholder support, and
- Translating commitment into action.

These challenges have been potentially compounded by a range of other factors, including variation in the levels of support and involvement from the regional

office, difficulties in engaging and/or retaining suitable project officers, and differing approaches to project management and governance.

Approach to implementation

A number of models for implementing the RYC have emerged

Four clear models for RYC implementation have emerged. The models are characterised by the organisation or entity broadly driving implementation, and include:

- LLEN-driven
- Department-driven
- Broad-based
- No clearly identifiable driver.

Table 2 illustrates these models and provides further detail on their advantages and risks. It also shows a categorization of the eight regions participating in the RYC into these models.

Within each model, a region's approach to implementation can vary considerably. For instance, Region B, which is primarily LLEN driven, has adopted a focus on schools, whereas Region A, which is also strongly LLEN driven, has not at this stage.

Table 2: Models of the Regional Youth Commitment

Driver ³		LLENs	Regional Office	Broad-based collective	None
When it works it enables...	Development of local solutions and strong, localised coalitions	Co-ordination Better resourced solutions	Tackles the big issues (systemic change potential) Shared responsibility Shared decision making Breadth of actions Integrated actions across stakeholders	(Never works)	
Risks	Can be limited by lack authority to convene LLENs and their stakeholders not working as intended Limited capacity to advocate for region-wide systemic change Competition between LLENs	Ongoing burden for the Regional Office Poorly leverages assets & resources of other stakeholders Can be perceived as “just another initiative from the directorate”	Takes a lot of time and resources to achieve Can lack focus and lose momentum	No impetus	
Long-term outlook for success	M	L-M	H	L	
Regions demonstrating this approach	Region A, Region B	Region G	Region H, Region D	Region E, Region F ⁴	
		Region C			

³ Driver describes the entity or organisation broadly leading the initiative. The driver is primarily responsible for: initiating the commitment and convening stakeholders; undertaking the majority of administration for implementation; brokering participation and involvement from partners; and providing the majority of human resourcing (HR, not \$)

⁴ N.B. Region F has no agreed model to date, but is currently working on its development

The most successful model for implementation is the broad-based model

The broad-based model puts a broad coalition of stakeholders at the core of the commitment. This group is responsible for defining the direction of the commitment, for translating commitment into action, for appraising results and for refinements and improvements. The group relies on cross-sectoral collaboration, shared understandings, agreed actions and priorities and a recognition of a “whole-of-community” responsibility for a young person’s attainment of Year 12 or equivalent. Of the four models outlined in the table above, it offers the best prospects for successful implementation of the RYC because it:

- Involves a range of stakeholders developing the vision and supporting actions for a commitment – actions and priorities are not generated from the perspective of a small or restricted group
- Raises the level of accountability - when more and varied stakeholders are involved, actions and results (and conversely, inaction and lack of results) are more visible and transparent
- Improves the potential for coordinated effort and a substantive shift in attitudes about a community’s responsibility to ensure young people are supported in achieving Year 12 or equivalent – both on a region-wide and sector-wide basis
- Leverages the resources and includes the perspectives of many groups – each of which contribute to a more sustainable and targeted regional response to youth at risk.

The model with the least chance of success is one characterized by having no apparent driver. It has virtually no prospect of achieving results because there is no person or organisation taking responsibility for initiating and building momentum, coordinating action, or promoting achievements.

In between these two are the LLEN-led and regional office led models, each with advantages and disadvantages, but both with lower prospects of fostering long-term, equitable and sustainable implementation of the commitment.

In the LLEN-led model, LLENs – either collectively or individually – take the lead role in implementing the commitment. They are the instrument through which stakeholders are convened, the commitment is defined, and plans and actions are developed. While the LLEN-led model can lead to highly localized and positive responses, it can at its worst entrench inequities across a region: youth in some areas may be well-served where a LLEN is motivated, capable and well-networked, but poorly served if LLENs are skeptical about the initiative, or unwilling to collaborate with each other on some issues.

In the regional office led model, usually the Project Officer working with a small team of stakeholders is the driving force for implementation of the commitment. Approach and rollout is strongly defined by the region, often in direct response to the Regional Director’s vision for the commitment. The regional office led model can result in good progress in the early days of an implementation due to the high level of control it facilitates, but in the longer-term, unless a coalition of support is widened and other stakeholders are offered meaningful roles and the capacity to influence direction of the commitment, this model will remain constrained by its small base. In addition the model poorly leverages other stakeholders’ resources and is not sufficiently widespread as to generate a broad attitudinal shift across a community.

There are typical activities which occur in the three stages of implementation – it is difficult to transition from one stage to the next without undertaking these activities

The activities shown in Figure 5 are indicative, and are neither prescriptive nor comprehensive. They are designed to illustrate what *typically* happens by implementation stage.

Figure 5: Main stages of a RYC and typical activities

Initiation Clarifying what we are trying to do	Traction Know what we need to do, clarifying how to do it	Mainstream Know what we need to do, have people assembled to do it, focused on implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employ Project Officer ● Identify stakeholders & their positions ● Communicate the need for action ● Gain stakeholder interest & involvement ● Secure leader/champions ● Develop governance structure ● Develop project plan ● Define & agree the commitment ● Develop terms of reference, agreements, & MOUs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Launch the commitment ● Work with stakeholders to refine/develop process & practices aimed at retention & re-engagement, e.g. use of MIPS tool, referral protocols, cross-agency collaboration ● Develop tools to assist stakeholders carry out their commitment, e.g. self-assessment tool, sample action plans, forms, checklists ● Promote the commitment & achievements ● Develop a transition plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ongoing management of the initiative ● Continued process improvement ● Continued monitoring & review ● Promotion ● Actions designed to maintain momentum & stakeholder interest

A number of factors predicate successful initiation of a RYC

There are a number of common features in regions where activity has gained momentum. Critical factors for the initiation phase include:

- A clear and agreed scope for the RYC
- Strong support from the regional office
- Strong support from LLENs
- An effective governance structure
- Stakeholders who agree on need for action, are clear about their roles⁵ and are willing to align and coordinate actions
- Stakeholders who understand the scale, scope and complexity involved
- Motivated, networked & adequately resourced Project Officer
- Agreed project plan
- Collaboration & information sharing across/between stakeholders

⁵ Roles can be clarified through the Memorandum of Understanding

The absence of any of these factors fundamentally undermines a region's capacity to successfully implement the commitment.

While it is not a pre-requisite for success that involvement with schools is widespread at the initiation stage (as with other stakeholder groups, only a small number representatives from schools are needed in the planning and coordination groups), in order for a RYC to gain traction, broad engagement with and widespread activity in schools is vital. In the traction phase, schools must be actively developing responses that improve capacity for early identification and support for both students at risk of early leaving and young people who have disengaged.

Table 3 lists the critical success factors and summarises why they are important and how their presence in a region is indicated.

Table 3: Critical success factors for a RYC implementation at a local/regional level: importance and indicators

Critical success factor	Why it is important	Indicated by
A clear and agreed scope for the RYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces ambiguity about overall purpose of the RYC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Memorandum of Understanding, set of principles and/or stated objective for the RYC
Strong support from the regional office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raises RYC as a priority in the region • Communicates leadership priorities • Raises awareness at senior management levels in other organisations, e.g. RMF • Makes meaning, builds a felt need and creates energy to stimulate action • Empowers pivotal personnel, e.g. Project and Senior Education Officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority given to RYC by the Regional Director, Assistant Director and senior staff • Resources allocated to the RYC • Timing of resource allocation (i.e. Decisions not delayed) • Regular involvement of the Regional Director e.g. in planning, governance or communications aspects of the RYC • Continuity of commitment
Strong support from LLENs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a critical interface between DEECD, schools and the wider community • Leverages existing networks & affiliations, as well as local knowledge • Enables organisational interaction with an independent body • High degree of alignment between LLEN mission and objectives of the RYC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RYC clearly articulated in LLEN schedule and annual plans • LLEN attendance at meetings • Enthusiasm for the commitment • Practical involvement, e.g. takes on role of referral point • Non-competitive approach

Critical success factor	Why it is important	Indicated by
An effective governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embodies driving vehicles for the commitment • Balances strategy & tactics and retains focus on the core objective • Shares the responsibility of decision making • Raises accountability for results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and operational governance mechanisms in place (e.g. Steering and working groups) • Regular meetings with defined agendas and outcomes (recorded in minutes) • Communication links between strategic/operational layers and the project officer
Stakeholders who agree on need for action and are clear about their roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a foundation for ongoing project commitment • A pre-cursor to allocation of sufficient resources to sustain activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiasm for RYC • Recognition of RYC's existence at senior levels of stakeholders' organisations • Allocation of dedicated (part or full time) resources to support activities under banner of RYC
Stakeholders who understand the scale, scope and complexity involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without a good understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to commit to significant action or change, as evidenced in nature of undertakings in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Memorandum of Understanding ○ Project & action plans, and ○ Organisational business plans ○ Resource investment (time, \$) allocated to the RYC
Motivated, networked & adequately resourced Project Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to generate early momentum • Enables stakeholders resources to be more effectively coordinated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgment by stakeholders of the project officer's important role • Project Officer takes responsibility for convening key groups
Agreed project plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifies actions, targets, measures, responsibilities & timing • Provides a reference point to track progress (especially useful when personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan itself • Regular reference to the plan

Critical success factor	Why it is important	Indicated by
Collaboration & information sharing across/between stakeholders	change) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidifies/ recalibrates (learn about learning) • Leverages experience through sharing • Enables adjustment & fosters sustainability • Celebrates/ promotes progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix of formal and informal interactions • Duplication of effort is minimized • Success stories are shared quickly

A body of good practice is being developed however it is not being dispersed optimally

Regions are much clearer in retrospect on what works, and what doesn't (see Table 5) and both regional offices and stakeholders are developing processes, tools and knowledge as they work through the implementation stages (see Table 9). Quarterly meetings of RYC project officers facilitate some information sharing, however more opportunities should be created to share good practice and lessons learned than currently exists, both amongst this group, and more widely. Efficient and comprehensive information sharing could reduce duplication of effort and help less advanced regions to avoid some of the pitfalls and benefit from the knowledge, practices and tools developed elsewhere.

Currently, the regions least advanced in their implementation of the RYC are implementing the initiative rather empirically. They appear to be strongly influenced by a desire to do things their own way or from first principles, and in some cases are not initiating basic good practices such as developing a project plan or formalizing a governance structure. Better communication and information linkages could be made at numerous levels: regional, working group, project officer, LLEN, school etc.

Achievements in RYC implementation

Little quantitative data exists about the success of the RYC

Most regions have yet to capture results related to retention and re-engagement and therefore little quantitative data is available. This was a limitation of the study identified at the outset.

Most achievement has been recorded as anecdotal or qualitative evidence, usually on a case-by-case basis e.g. young person receives assistance with travel to education/training venue and therefore re-engages.

There is little quantitative data available on the achievements of the RYC. At best, some regions can demonstrate figures on numbers of students engaged in specific programs or receiving specific support (see regional status reports, Appendices 8-15). In its current form this data is of limited use as a means of quantifying RYC achievements as it:

- Does not support linkages between retention/re-engagement and the commitment

- Is not uniform and thus is not comparable across regions or over time, and
- Is not tracked against meaningful benchmark metrics or expressed as a proportion of, for instance, total enrolments, e.g. numbers of identified youth at risk as a percentage of total enrolments.

The main achievements of the RYC include rising stakeholder awareness of the importance of the commitment

This is especially true in regions in the earlier stages of implementation, where the majority of time and effort to date has been spent on initiating the commitment.

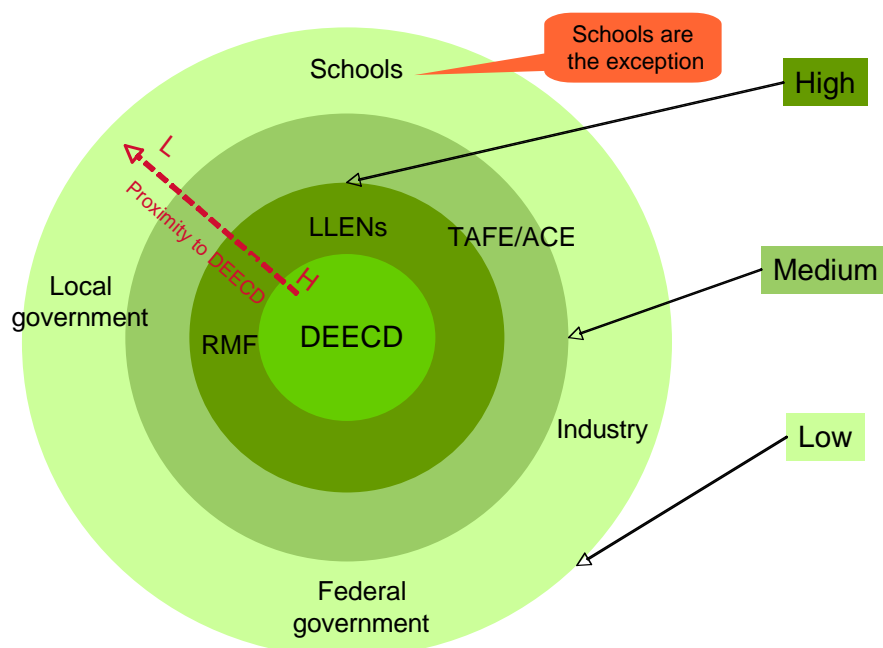
Where implementation is more advanced (e.g. traction through to mainstreaming) evidence is emerging of retention and re-engagement outcomes. However, stakeholders are cautious about linking these outcomes directly with the RYC. Most regions have yet to develop a performance tracking/ monitoring process to measure retention and re-engagement arising from the RYC.

Shortcomings associated with implementation

Stakeholders outside the core coordination group tend to have low awareness of the RYC

While there is significant regional variation in the levels of awareness of the commitment amongst stakeholder groups, a general observation is that in most regions, stakeholders closest to State Government (e.g. LLENs, Regional Management Forum, government agencies and departments) tend to be most aware of the RYC, while those with looser links (e.g. local government, industry) tend to be less aware. The clear exception is schools, which, according to feedback from the regions have low levels of awareness.

Figure 6: With the exception of schools, awareness of the RYC is linked to proximity to State Government and the education sector



The exception is Region D, where a combination of the broad-based coalition model and sustained duration of the commitment has resulted in strong awareness across the breadth of stakeholder groups.

For regions that are less advanced than Region D, levels of awareness are closely tied to degree of involvement in planning and co-ordination of the initiative. Stakeholders outside the planning and co-ordination groups are likely to be either unaware of the initiative or if aware, relatively unclear about their role. This explains why schools in most regions where the commitment is still in the initiation or early traction stage exhibit relatively low levels of awareness: most schools have simply not been directly involved in planning and co-ordination.

To date there has been limited work undertaken with schools

Greater engagement with schools remains a key challenge across all regions. For the RYC to be successful this requires a cultural mind-shift in schools to take ownership of young people until they are successfully engaged with another service provider or are involved in another meaningful education or training pathway.

Most regions have yet to undertake substantial work with schools. Where interaction with schools has occurred, results have been patchy, and have usually relied on the direct involvement of a project officer (DEECD or LLEN) to help the school by identifying issues and illustrating the potential for change. The inconsistent effects of the RYC to date in schools is illustrated by the fact that at the time of writing:

- Only two regions have signed up all government schools to the commitment
- Schools vary in their use and application of the MIPS and Student at Risk Mapping Tools, and
- Even amongst those schools that have signed Memoranda of Understanding attesting to their commitment or incorporated the RYC into annual plans, transition or other support teams/ mechanisms may not have been instituted and use of referral protocols is inconsistent.

Clearly schools confront a range of implementation challenges – from software incompatibilities, to lack of time and dedicated resources for initiation of transition teams, to not knowing where to start. In addition, the devolved management and decision-making practices in schools do not neatly accommodate “optional” – or at least non-mandated – activities such as the RYC. Each school determines its own response. The capacity of the RYC to gain traction in schools is therefore heavily influenced by the attitudes of key school personnel to the commitment, and their understanding of where it sits on a scale of priorities.

Leadership and direction from senior school personnel are critical to successful implementation of the commitment in schools. There may also be a need for more active engagement and support for schools in establishing transition teams and instituting process changes which lead to earlier identification, better support, and ultimately higher levels of engagement in education and training of young people at risk.

In some regions important stakeholders have not been effectively engaged, including TAFEs, industry and local government

In general there was a low level of representation in the online survey and at roundtable workshops from industry, local government and TAFE/ACE providers. While in some cases this was the result of practical factors such as diary clashes, it may suggest lower levels of engagement in these groups. Even in the early stages of implementation, these stakeholders' involvement is important.

TAFE/ ACE and industry represent significant alternative avenues for education and training outside the school system (e.g. between them they offer Year 12 equivalent qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment opportunities).

Local government can play a considerable role in raising awareness of the commitment across a local area and contributes as a provider of vital social, health and welfare services. Local government can also advocate to State and Federal governments for improvements in the provision of important services such as transport and infrastructure, and can act "laterally" to help address factors that lead to youth disengagement, e.g. by changing planning by-laws local councils can make geographic zones alcohol-free, limit operating hours or place moratoria on the issue of new liquor licences – each potentially helping to address youth binge drinking and alcohol-fuelled violence, one of the factors contributing to disengagement.

Stakeholders report difficulties engaging TAFE/ACE and local government, and generally believe that it is too early to involve industry when first implementing a commitment. Feedback from these organisations, however, suggests that an opportunity exists to lift levels of engagement.

Providing data on the extent of the problem of youth disengagement in an area, the consequences to individuals and communities, and some examples of what stakeholders can actually do helps to crystallize a response. For example, hard evidence helped to convince councilors in the Glenelg Shire of the need to act and the shire is now developing a coordinated youth strategy where previously action had been tactical rather than strategic (see Glenelg Shire Youth Strategy, p. 50).

When stakeholders see that their action not only serves the commitment, but also fits in with their own organisational mission and objectives, they are more likely to engage. For example, the *UB TAFE Transition program* (see p. 49) provides transition support for current TAFE students who are at risk of disengagement, as well as young people outside the TAFE system who are at risk of dropping out of education and training. This dual focus serves to improve retention rates within the TAFE (an important TAFE objective), and use TAFE resources to support the objectives of the commitment.

Outlook for sustained action around the RYC

The high levels of commitment to RYC - though not always effectively translated into action - provide a foundation for future success

While it has taken regions some time to define the commitment and gather the interest of stakeholders, once this occurs, the RYC generally gains a high level of notional support. This provides a good foundation for future success, but only if momentum is not lost.

To maximize benefit from this foundation, some stakeholders will require active assistance from the Project Officer or working group to explore and develop practical ways to contribute to the commitment. Examples, reference points and case studies as well close interactions with the Project Officer can play a role here in helping stakeholders better understand what can be realistically done to support young people at risk (see examples of effective interventions, pp. 37-42).

A number of risks to future success exist, including changing priorities, under-resourcing and lack of leadership

Regions face a heightened risk of losing momentum after the first 12 months of implementation, due to the potential interaction of a number of factors around this time:

- *Personnel changes* – commonly the full-time RYC Project Officer appointment will expire after the initial DEECD funded period. In some regions the PO role has been extended to more than one full-time equivalent (e.g. Region G), but more frequently the role is continued on a part-time basis, and often with a change of personnel. While it is not always the case (e.g. in regions where the Project Officer is supported by senior executives in the region), a devolution in the resource allocation and a change in personnel can reduce a region's capacity to achieve traction and leverage benefit from the preceding year's effort. In some regions, there is no person with ongoing responsibility for the RYC beyond the funded period (e.g. Region E). It is difficult to envisage how the commitment can prosper in such circumstances.
- *Public or profile event* – often after a year of activity a region will schedule a signing of a Memoranda of Understanding or a public launch of the commitment. Unless there is adequate follow-up these events can promote a sense of completion in stakeholders' minds, when in reality they are symbolic events which are *precursors* to the traction phase of the initiative.
- *Changing regional priorities* – funding from DEECD central office for the commitment signals to the region that the initiative is a priority. However, when funding concludes, and in the absence of explicit direction and clearly communicated expectations from central to the regional office, there is a risk that the many other priorities in a region supercede the commitment. Stakeholder feedback in some regions suggests that buy-in at senior regional office level has not been optimal.

Some regions are at greater risk of failure

As noted previously (see Figure 4), regions are at different stages on the implementation maturity scale. It is well acknowledged that this is in part due to the different duration in which the initiative has been operating in the regions.

Region D has already effectively “mainstreamed” – the region continues to pursue the commitment without requiring substantial support or influence from DEECD. Similarly, Region H, having embedded the commitment into the pre-existing Youth Futures initiative, exhibits solid credentials which place it close to the mainstreaming stage: it has clearly identified objectives, a core of stakeholders who are engaged, a detailed action plan, and established a governance structure.

However, none of the remaining six regions are close to reaching this point, despite the fact that most have passed beyond the initial 12-month DEECD funded phase.

We have examined region's potential for advancement along the implementation maturity scale using two related approaches:

1. An assessment of past performance – this a rather rough indicator, but nevertheless a useful starting point, and
2. An assessment of the presence/ absence of critical success factors – this employs a more detailed tool that assesses each region against the factors that we believe must be in place for a RYC to progress.

On the rather simplistic basis of past performance, and in the (presumably unlikely) event of no change to progress achieved to date, it would appear that Region E and Region F are at greatest risk of not achieving the objectives of the RYC, followed by Region G. These regions have been the slowest to start and have not achieved significant momentum. Region G has however very recently assigned three full-time equivalent project officers to its commitment and has reported accelerated progress over the course (an partly as a result) of this evaluation, suggesting that past performance may not be a reliable predictor of future capacity.

Region A, Region C and Region B regions can each demonstrate good progress in different areas: a number of projects and initiatives have already arisen in Region A, Region C and Region D and Region B has recently rolled out a set of referral protocols to schools. Region A, Region D and Region H can also demonstrate good practices and effective interventions. These examples provide real evidence that the commitment is being translated into tangible actions.

On an assessment of the presence/absence of critical success factors, as shown in Table 4:

- Region E and Region F again appear to be most at risk
- Region G appears to be at moderate risk, and
- Region C, Region A and Region B have a lower risk of not progressing to the next stage, and
- Region D and Region H appear to be at least risk.

An important factor for regions entering the traction stage will be the extent to which they can engage and encourage action in schools.

Table 4: Region-by-region assessment of presence of critical success factors and prospects for future advancement

Critical success factor	Region B	Region G	Region F	Region A	Region D	Region C	Region E	Region H
A clear and agreed scope for the RYC	√√	√	X	√√	√√√	√√	X	√√√
Strong support from the regional office	√	√	√	√√	√√√	√√√	√	√√√
Strong support from LLENs	√√√	√	√	√√	√√√	√√	√	√√
An effective governance structure	√	√	X	√	√√√	√√	X	√
Stakeholders who agree on need for action and are clear about their roles and are willing to align and coordinate actions	√√	√	X	√√	√√	√√	X	√√
Stakeholders who understand the scale, scope and complexity involved	√	X	X	√√	√√√	√√	X	√√
Motivated/ networked/ adequately resourced Project Officer	√√	X	X	√√	√√	√√	X	√
Agreed project plan	X	X	X	X	√√√	√√√	X	√√√
Collaboration & information sharing across/ between stakeholders	√√	√	√	√	√√√	√√	√	√√
Prospect of future success based on presence of critical success factors	Good	Moderate	Low	Good	Very good	Good	Low	Very good

Key

Symbol	Evidence suggests
√√√	Factor is strongly present
√√	Factor is present but not at adequate levels
√	Factor is present and adequate
X	Factor is not present

More can be done to improve the chances of success of the RYC in future years

The RYC is a complex, long-term change initiative, requiring strategic and practical action across multiple stakeholders to succeed. It is dependent on the commitment and contribution of a community, not just a school or the individuals within it. For some stakeholders it will require substantial adjustment to ideology, practices, processes and relationships. These things take time, considerable resources and require leadership and a persistent belief that the effort and investment is worthwhile.

No one region has all of the pre-requisites for success fully in place. Nor has any region achieved all there is to be achieved. Even the most advanced regions are yet to see either widespread or consistent activity, for instance, in government schools.

There is much more work to be done to maximize the success of the initiative. What is required will vary from region to region (as shown in the action plans in Chapter 3 and the region by region status summaries in Appendices 8-15). Circulation of these summaries and the generic transition advice contained in Chapter 3 will benefit regions in their continued implementation of the RYC.

Lessons learned

Examination of documentation, progress achieved, and feedback from the regions forms the basis of an assessment of what has occurred in the best performing regions and what has occurred in the poorer performing regions to date. Findings are presented at two levels: at the regional (implementation) level, and at the central DEECD (instigation) level.

At the regional implementation level

Work in the regions to date indicates that there are some useful lessons to be learned about what works and what works less well from an implementation perspective. We have used the “7 S” model⁶ as a basis for categorizing what occurred in the better and in the poorer performing regions to date.

The 7 S model was developed by consulting firm McKinsey & Co and is a tool to commonly employed to understand the existing dynamics of an organisation across seven dimensions:

1. Strategy - Coherent set of actions aimed at achieving stated objectives
2. Structure - The components of an organisation or initiative which demarcate who reports to whom and how tasks are divided up and integrated
3. Skills - Capabilities possessed by the organisation/ initiative as a whole (i.e. not those of specific individuals)
4. Staff - People involved in management, administration, communications etc

⁶ Definitions of the 7S elements and a rationale for their importance are included in a table at Appendix 6

5. Systems - Processes or procedures through which things get done from day to day
6. Style - The way people behave collectively, especially with respect to use of time, attention and symbolic actions
7. Shared values - Ideas about what is right and desirable and which are typical of a group or common amongst its members.

Table 5 provides a summary of lessons learned at the implementation level using the 7 S framework.

Table 5: What has occurred in the best and in the poorer performing regions

Element	What has occurred in the best performing regions	What has occurred in the poorer performing regions
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear prioritisation of the RYC in the regional office • Spending time on identifying stakeholders, understanding their positions & objectives (in some cases one-to-one consultations between the Project Officer and the stakeholder representative has been required) • Spending time on building consensus on direction • Top-down and bottom-up strategic action • Building on existing relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the RYC without sufficient support from the regional office & leadership from the Regional Director
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layered & linked governance: strategic oversight/leadership & operations groups with regular communications between them • Small working or operational groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single layer governance (unless members are highly experienced, this can lead to silo thinking & concentrate actions in one or two areas only) • Poor or irregular communication between strategic & operational levels – one group has limited idea of what the other is doing
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior level stakeholder representatives involved, with capacity to initiate actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder representation at lower levels (even when commitment & motivation are high, capacity to change is low without senior level engagement)
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of a motivated, full-time project officer with pre-existing networks across stakeholder groups • Internal champion/s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High turnover of Project Officers (lose momentum, contacts, knowledge) • Part-time Project Officers; Project Officers with no background or interest in the area

Element	What has occurred in the best performing regions	What has occurred in the poorer performing regions
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed action planning • Regular, scheduled meetings • Outcomes clearly recorded and widely shared • Clear milestones • Regular communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of or inadequate planning e.g. no action plan, no milestones, no agreed allocation of responsibilities, very little description or agreement of how the commitment is tied together • Poor or irregular communications with stakeholders
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative, built on trust & understanding of stakeholders' aims & objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department-led, top-down only • Focusing on areas of difference or disagreement rather than accommodating difference but still working towards collaboration
Shared values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlying long-term commitment to improving outcomes for 15-19 y/o 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition between LLENs or other stakeholders • Short-term view of the initiative (puts focus on first year but not beyond that)

At the Departmental implementation level

The Youth Transitions division of DEECD commenced broad implementation of the RYC in 2006 (in the Grampians region the Youth Options Guarantee had been operating with departmental support since 2004). In extending the commitment to seven additional regions, the division required them to negotiate an agreed project brief to trigger initial funding support. Funding was tied to employment of a project officer for approximately one year to establish the commitment. There was an expectation that regions would match divisional funding, and continue support for the initiative beyond the first year. As with the regional level implementation, certain aspects of this approach appear to have worked well, and others less so. In some areas, it is too early to draw conclusions about effectiveness. These are summarised in Table 6 below.

Table 6: What has and has not worked well at a Departmental level

Element	What has worked well	What has not worked well	Too early to tell
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the RYC on a region-by-region basis Enabling regions to develop their own localised approach to expressing the commitment Orienting the commitment towards changing a mindset or “moral culture” rather than a short program/project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restricting LLENs from delivering services (especially in areas where there are few alternative options, e.g. rural/remote or low population areas) Not making expectations explicit about the milestones regions must achieve over a given period Leaving the level of continued support regions must provide to the commitment unspecified (in some regions, the project officer position is now 0.2FTE, which may not be adequate) Not requiring regions to demonstrate evidence that the initiative is a regional priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether restricting funding to a 12 month period will lead to growth and development of the RYC beyond the initial funded phase How long will it take to achieve a widespread change in attitudes & culture about the responsibility many stakeholder groups should adopt for ensuring young people are well supported to attain Year 12 or equivalent Whether more targeted responses would be more effective in some regions/ sub-regions to address needs & barriers
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devolving responsibility to the regional level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not making regional directors clearly accountable for achieving a basic level of progress with implementation (some regions have been able to spin the wheels for a year or more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether more clarity on regional offices will make: a) regional offices more accountable for achieving results, or b) the Youth Transition Division’s objectives over time and beyond the initial 12-month period better understood
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal project managers for each region are flexible, knowledgeable, & dedicated Good relationships have 		

Element	What has worked well	What has not worked well	Too early to tell
Staff	<p>been formed between divisional staff and regional project officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has been adequate to date & has provided the division with reasonably good knowledge of what is happening in each region 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The suitability of a more “hands-on” approach from divisional staff in “starter” regions
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly meetings of Project Officers to share knowledge & report on progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no uniform systems in place for tracking & monitoring progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether there has been adequate, readily accessible documentation made available for regions to learn & benefit from the Grampians experience
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A relatively hands-off approach Flexible (not ‘cookie-cutter’) approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The expectation that concrete evidence of retention & re-engagement achievements within the first 12 months will be available (has sent an unrealistic message to regions about performance & detracted from significant but generally non-quantifiable achievements to date) 	
Shared values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating need & rationale for initiative to Regional Directors 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether values associated with the commitment are shared in practice by all regions

Benefits arising from the commitment

Benefits arising from the commitment are considered in the following sections, first at a general level, and then more specifically through an examination of good practices developed and effective interventions made.

Overall

The ultimate goal of the commitment is to improve the outcomes of young people who have left or are at risk of early leaving prior to completion of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. This goal will be attained when there is evidence of significant and sustained direct benefits in the target cohort, as measured by, for example, improved retention and re-engagement rates of 15-19 year olds, and better access to and availability of programs and support in a region.

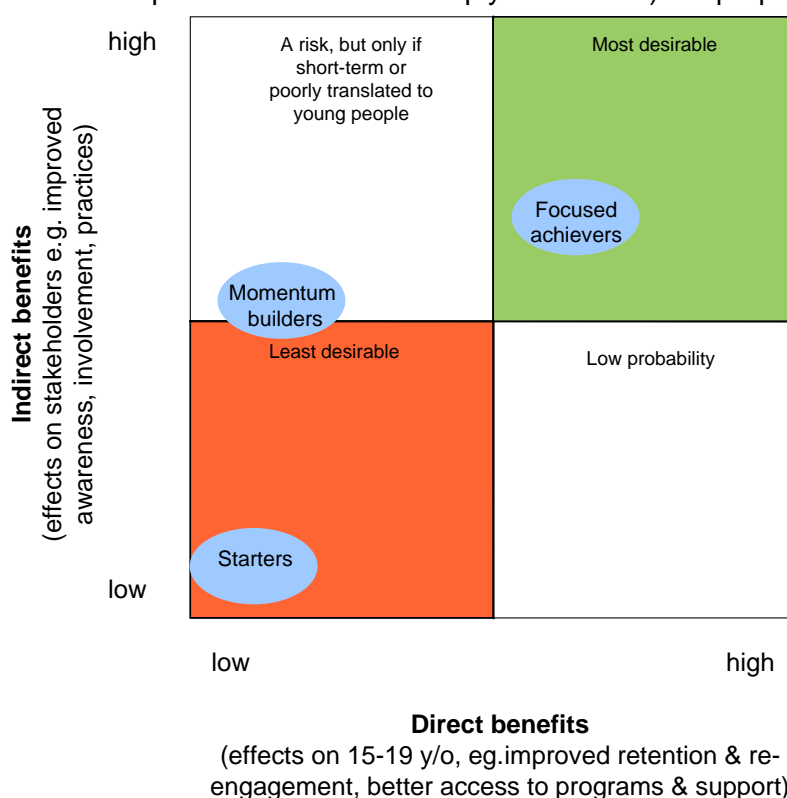
The success of the initiative should not, however, be determined on the basis of direct benefits alone. Indirect benefits should also be taken into account. This is especially true in the case of this evaluation for two reasons. First, with limited exceptions, the evaluation is being conducted relatively early in regions' implementation of the commitment. In most regions it would be unreasonable to expect improved retention and re-engagement rates. Second, in an initiative of this nature, indirect benefits are a pre-cursor to direct ones. Without changes in, for instance, stakeholders' levels of awareness of the risks and consequences of youth disengagement, the size of the problem in their region, or changes in stakeholder attitudes, intentions to act, and actual behaviours, direct benefits are unlikely.

Stakeholders' own assessment of the effectiveness of the initiative to date, for example as demonstrated by online survey responses, suggest that the main benefits arising from the commitment to date are indirect. Table 7 below summarises survey respondents' views.

Table 7: Online survey responses on effectiveness of the initiative to date

Stakeholders more commonly acknowledged effectiveness in these areas...	And less commonly acknowledged effectiveness in these areas...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving communication and collaboration between LLENs in the region • Heightening awareness of the need for a commitment to retain or re-engage young people in education and training • Improving collaborations and connections between key stakeholders • Generating a commitment to action from key stakeholders • Generating community linkages and building relationships • Improving transition support for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building regional capacity to retain/re-engage young people in education and training • Improving the relevance of education and training to local needs • Improving young people's awareness of the options available to support them in remaining in or re-engaging with education and training • Enabling better co-ordination of service delivery in your area • Retaining and re-engaging 15-19 year olds in education and training towards attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

Figure 7 provides a high level snapshot of the direct and indirect benefits achieved to date and is based on both our own observations and information requested from each region on: retention and re-engagement, effective interventions and good practices. As might be expected, the starters can demonstrate very little in the way of either direct or indirect benefits. They note that it is “too early to tell”. The momentum builders can demonstrate reasonably good levels of indirect benefits, but are not sufficiently well progressed (or prepared) to show direct benefits. In contrast, the focused achievers can provide evidence of both direct and indirect benefits. For example, as evidence of direct benefits, 2007 statistics⁷ show that in a LLEN in Region D (where the *Youth Options Guarantee* processes are most deeply embedded) the proportion of early



leavers who continued in education and training upon leaving their schools, as measured in 3 of the 7 schools in the LLEN, increased from an average of 48% to 72%, with one school increasing from 58% to 80% - the smallest increase was from 64% to 68%.

Figure 7: Benefits achieved to date by regional groupings

Various observations can be made about the benefits arising to date from the initiative, as described in Table 8.

⁷ Provided by the Region D office. See Region D status summary for additional detail

Table 8: General observations on benefits realised to date

Aspect	Observation
Nature of benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits are influenced by the maturity of implementation – the less developed the commitment, the lower the benefit realised, and the more likely it is to be indirect • Benefits are more likely to be indirect than direct - the immediate impact has been on stakeholders, not young people • There is a growing body of evidence of the development of good practices, especially with regard to project governance, planning, stakeholder identification and communications
Ability to substantiate benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most substantiation of benefits is qualitative and anecdotal – there is very little quantitative evidence of benefits available • Regions cannot in general quantify benefits and link them with the commitment – this raises questions about the presence or suitability of measures and performance monitoring processes
Comparability of benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits are difficult to compare either across or within regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data, whether qualitative or quantitative, tends not to be collected systematically (e.g. as a standard agenda item at regular meetings, or periodically) ○ Data is not collected consistently (e.g. the same metrics measured)
Distribution of benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits are not equally distributed either across or within regions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Due to the different stages of progress of a commitment across participating regions
Sustainability of benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult to establish confidently a view of the sustainability of benefits

Good practices

Good practices are designed to overcome barriers or problems associated with implementing the RYC. By emulating good practice, regions can potentially increase efficiency and effectiveness of the commitment. Adoption and integration of good practices may have resource and/or operational implications that regions should plan for and manage. Table 9 summarises examples of good practices observed in the course of fieldwork, covering four main areas:

1. Stakeholder engagement
2. Project management
3. Tools, and
4. Communications.

Examples are limited to those which are transferable/replicable, that is, they are not specific to operating contexts or environment.

Table 9: Examples of good practice and why they are useful

Area of good practice	Example of good practice	What it does	Barriers or problems it can address	Used by
Stakeholder engagement	One-on-one meetings with stakeholders	Enables project officers to establish personal relationships, identify appropriate level of stakeholder representation, and determine what needs to be done to foster engagement	Low stakeholder engagement Mismatch between project officer's understanding of stakeholders & stakeholder realities	Regions A, B, C
	Quantification of the problem & the future prospects for young people lacking Yr12/ equiv	Makes the issue of student disengagement concrete Demonstrates the consequences of inaction	Low stakeholder engagement Poor understanding of the importance of action	Various
Project management	Project plan	Provides stakeholders with an agreed action plan outlining major milestones & allocation of responsibilities Can be used to track & monitor progress and as an historical reference point	Slow momentum & lack of focus Confusion about roles, responsibilities, milestones & expectations	Regions H, C, D
	Sample action plan	Can be used by stakeholders to formalise & clarify actions, allocate responsibilities etc within the stakeholder organisation	Lack of focus or inefficient use of stakeholders' time & resources	Region C
Tools	Self-assessment tool	Stakeholders can assess their current provision in order to determine how well they currently	Lack of or poor understanding of how an organisation currently supports the needs of youth at risk of early leaving	Region C
	Student at Risk Mapping Tool	Links with a schools' CASES data & enables identification of students at risk	Failure to identify students at risk of early leaving	Various
	Referral protocols, forms & checklists	Systematise & formalise referral protocols Sets expectations & simplifies actions for	Inefficient, ineffective or untimely referrals	Regions B, D

Area of good practice	Example of good practice	What it does	Barriers or problems it can address	Used by
	those involved in referral process	Failure to refer	Region E	
	Lists all programs known to address youth issues in the LLEN & provides contact details Designed to be put on the notice-board of school staff-rooms	Teacher/parent lack of knowledge about program availability, where to go for help	Region E	
	Resource manual Consolidates a raft of information on the RYC in one place	Implementation barriers associated with not knowing what to do, how to do it, or where to get help	Region D	
	RYC database & data directory The database enables LLENs to capture the profiles of young people referred by schools to the LLEN as part of the referral process Enables information to be transferred to the LLEN as part of the school referral process	Lack of consistency and/or gaps in the information collected about a Student at Risk of disengagement Double entry of data Lack of an evidence-based approach	Region B	
	Service provider information A PowerPoint file distributed by LLENs to schools containing embedded links to service providers in the region Schools can add service providers and use as a tool to identify who to contact/ types of services available	Poor knowledge in schools of options and service providers	Region B	
Communications	Picture of the RYC	Provides a simple visual representation of the RYC – what it is, who is involved	Difficulty in quickly communicating the core purpose of the commitment & the	Region C, B

Area of good practice	Example of good practice	What it does	Barriers or problems it can address	Used by
	Showcase day	Provides a forum at which good practices, effective interventions & programs can be shared	stakeholders involved Limited ideas about translating commitment into action Lack of knowledge of what works, what doesn't	Region D
	1300 number	Provides a single point of reference for teachers/students/parents/ community members seeking information or advice on programs, support & pathways for youth at risk of early leaving	Lack of knowledge about program availability, eligibility, where to go for help etc	Region H
	Brochure/ other high-level communications document	Summarises the commitment – principles, objectives, participants – provides high-level information on “where we are, where we want to be”	Lack of awareness about the commitment, who is involved, what needs to be achieved	Regions A, C, D

Effective interventions

For the purposes of this report, effective interventions are considered to be those which improve connections between and within organisations and/or provide education and training pathways and support for young people. Effective interventions can arise from the commitment, or pre-cede it – of most importance is that they support its goal and objectives.

This section of the report highlights a number of effective interventions that have developed with the assistance and involvement of regions, schools, TAFEs and local government. The descriptions are designed to be instructive for regions and stakeholder groups looking for new ways to implement a RYC and to translate a commitment into action. They illustrate approaches, benefits and pitfalls and lessons learned.

Many additional examples of effective interventions were mentioned in roundtable workshops and are included in the regional summaries at Appendices 8-15. There was limited capacity to explore all of these within the scope of this study. Instead, presented in the following sections in detail are a small number of interventions that have occurred:

- In schools
- In the TAFE sector
- In local government, and
- Which target specific groups or needs.

INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOLS

School transition teams

School transition teams were initiated in the Region D and were based on established practices identified during an overseas study tour. Numerous school transition teams now operate in the Region D and the concept has influenced other regions' work with schools.

School transition teams are multifunctional groups that bring together a range of individuals from within a school who deal with or may be aware of youth at risk but might not otherwise communicate with each other. The core functions of transition teams are to identify students at risk of early leaving, ensure that students get the tailored support they need to reduce the risk of leaving, and in cases where the student leaves the school, support effective transitions to further education and/or employment.

The transition team is convened by a senior person at the school, for example the assistant principal, and generally comprises the school's curriculum *and* welfare coordinators, year level coordinators, student advocates *and* career counselors. The team meets on a regular basis and in Region D a member of the team will also be a member of the LLEN-convened community transition team to enable crossover with organisations operating outside the school environment.

The multifunctional aspect of school transition teams has several advantages over current practices. It:

- Facilitates better communication between school staff members
- Encourages earlier identification of students at risk

- Builds capacity for a more well-coordinated and holistic approach to identifying and appropriately addressing a student's needs, and
- Shares the responsibility for a student across a number of school personnel rather than making one person accountable.

Secondary College, Region D

The SHAAC (Student Health, Advice and Careers) is an example of one school's tailored approach to developing a school-based transition team. It is notable for its approach in co-locating services at a Secondary College in Region D. The SHAAC reflects a holistic and team based approach to addressing the range of health, welfare and transition issues that some students at the school experience.

Currently the SHAAC has three full time employees, a Student Counselor, Wellbeing Coordinator and a Pathways, Careers and MIPS staff member. There are also four part time staff, another MIPS counselor, a welfare worker, a General Practitioner and a school nurse involved in the project.

The integrated services concept of the SHAAC acknowledges that students should be recognised as individuals with potentially complex needs that cannot be addressed in isolation.

The collocation of these services in a shared space has provided the additional benefits of:

- Providing a more effective use of services as it has reduced the incidents of doubling up as staff are now more aware of individual programs and needs
- Breaking down the stigma attached with students seeking access to welfare services as it is positioned in a space away from the classrooms and other students cannot identify which services are being sought
- Providing staff with greater opportunities to support and learn from each other and to deal with the difficult and complex situations that arise
- Staff are also involved in the development of curriculum and have had the opportunity to embed good practices into the school's pastoral care program

There is a growing body of anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes for students and higher retention rates at the Secondary College arising from the SHAAC.

Keeping Young People on Track (KYPOT) - Senior College, Region A

A Senior College for Year 11-12 school in Region A. The area in which it is situated has one of the highest levels of poverty and unemployment in Victoria, and has been formally identified as a neighbourhood renewal priority area. Many students at the college come from families with entrenched, second or third generation unemployment, within which attitudes towards education and its value are unsupportive. Around one fifth of the student population is independent, and about half receive the youth allowance. Many lack social skills and positive role models, presenting a challenge to their continued engagement in education and training.

To address these issues, the college employs five staff in various pathways, transitions, career advisory and student wellbeing roles. It also runs a VCAL program in parallel with the VCE, and is a registered training organisation offering VET in school opportunities.

In 2007, 148 students, or between one third and one half of the student population, left the college, many to unknown destinations. The college knew it had to act and do something differently to prevent this from happening again. After contact from their LLEN, the college volunteered to become part of a pilot aimed at achieving earlier identification of students at risk and providing smoother, more sustainable and productive transitions for its student population. The pilot was called “KYPOT”.

The KYPOT pilot commenced in late 2007 and is still underway. It has resulted in considerable transformation of the college’s practices, and has introduced a more systematized and coordinated approach to identifying and helping students at risk.

With help from the LLEN and advice from the RYCPO, the college took action. A team of two staff with input from the transition and student management teams in the college initiated the pilot. A thorough review of existing documentation and practices was undertaken. It soon became clear that while a lot of good work was being carried out by individual staff members, the overall approach to risk identification, assessment of student needs and development of appropriate responses lacked coordination and consistency. Student needs were not being adequately identified, responses were not sufficiently holistic, or came too late to prevent leaving.

To address these issues, two teams were formed with similar composition but different functions: a transition team, and a student management team. The teams met fortnightly to discuss students, review documentation, identify students at risk, and develop transition support mechanisms.

A process flowchart was developed and agreed which clearly articulated roles, responsibilities, and the timing of actions. Checklists were created to help streamline the identification and response processes.

Terminology on documents and in the everyday language was changed from “exit” to “transition”. The enrolment process was also examined, leading to changes in the type and specificity of information collected on a students’ enrolment profile – more detail was obtained (with the student’s consent) from the feeder school about the student and the strategies that had been used in the past to meet his or her needs. This enabled the college to develop an individualized education support plan and ensure that new students were well supported from the start.

Parents, students and the college community were made aware of the pilot via newsletters and newspaper articles. The college maintains contact with its former students for *at least* 6 months after they leave, making follow-up calls at the three-month point, and the compulsory six-month point. Early contact with a student who has transitioned is considered more likely to result in re-engagement. Contact from former students is always welcomed.

Staff at the Senior College acknowledge that it will be some time before the effects of the pilot are known. However, the hard work invested to date has created a culture change in the way the college supports students at risk. They note that it would not have been possible without solid leadership

from the college Principal and Assistant Principal, and help from the LLEN and RYCPO.

INTERVENTIONS BY TAFE

TAFE Transition program, Region D

The *TAFE Transition program* is an initiative developed by the TAFE arm of the local University. It aims to support 15- 20 year olds to continue education and training in the TAFE system.

The initiative has its origins in a discussion between the university's Vice Chancellor and the Regional Director, DEECD Region D, during which it was recognized that TAFEs played an important role in helping to ensure young people remain in education and training. This led to the University becoming an early member of the Region D Education Partnership and an early signatory on the Memorandum of Understanding which embodied the Region D regional youth commitment.

After the MoU was signed, staff in the TAFE division of the university, with strong leadership and drive from the Vice Chancellor, were tasked with finding ways to implement strategies to support the university's commitment. An internal framework was developed outlining what was in and what was out of scope for the university, and the concept of the *TAFE Transition program* was conceived.

After careful research and investigation on where the needs were arising and what was realistic in terms of available resources, it was decided that TAFE would focus on the 15 – 20 year old age group who had not completed Year 12 or equivalent, but would exclude young people in first year apprenticeships or traineeships (of which there were over 1,000 at TAFE). A requirement for a staff person was identified, and funding support was sourced from various parties to finance one full-time position.

An important step in getting the *TAFE Transition program* up and running was to embed it within the existing TAFE organisational structure. As the transition support officer was clearly in the student support area, the TAFE student services portfolio seemed like the natural owner, and so student services was made responsible for recruiting a transition officer to implement the initiative.

The main responsibility of the transition officer was to support both internal and external transitions, e.g. existing TAFE students at risk of dropping out of courses in which they were currently enrolled, as well as young people currently outside the TAFE in schools or other environments.

Specifically, the transition officer was to be the first point of contact for those seeking transition support, whether they be a self-referred TAFE or school student, or a LLEN/ parent/school referring a young person to TAFE. Core elements of the transition officer's role were to investigate the student or young person's needs, interests and goals, identify barriers and issues that were putting the young person at risk of dropping out or not finding a meaningful pathway, and refer the young person to the appropriate service provider to address their needs. Needs would vary, from health and welfare support, to housing, and sometimes simply to information about pathways and options.

A young person outside the TAFE system is generally referred to the transition officer as a result of discussions held at a Region D Regional

Youth Commitment Community Reference Team meeting. During these meetings, Community Reference Team members work together to identify an appropriate referral for the young person. Subject to the young person's consent having been attained, the Community Reference Team or the LLEN uses agreed referral protocols to convey limited information about the young person to the TAFE transition officer.

The referral service puts the young person at the centre and is not distorted by attempts to secure or protect funding that follows a student – for instance, where it was considered the best option, students have been referred back to school rather than into the TAFE system.

The *TAFE* Transition program is seen as a success and the university remains dedicated to it. Estimates suggest that over 60 young people are supported in making better transitions each year, and that this is a reasonable load for one full-time position where the model is not one based extensive case management, but instead concentrates on needs identification and referral.

TAFE personnel involved in developing the *program* attribute its success to hard work, strong internal leadership, a personal commitment to the concept and philosophy behind the initiative, appropriate positioning within the organisation, recognition of the organisational complexities of TAFEs, and real partnerships between TAFE and other organisations through the Region D Education Partnership. The main advice to other TAFEs considering adoption of a similar model is to ensure these success factors are present, and to give the initiative time to develop and evolve. Good, sustainable programs do not arise overnight, nor do their effects.

INTERVENTIONS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Shire Youth Strategy, Region A

The Shire Youth Strategy (SYS) is currently in development, but provides a good example of how the RYC can help to stimulate complimentary action in local government.

The Shire had for some time engaged with local youth issues and had a dedicated youth development officer on staff. The position was a demanding one. There was a relatively high level of turnover in the position, and the community questioned the effectiveness of the Shire's approach.

A council worker was invited to attend a workshop held by the Region D early in its implementation of the RYC and a spark was ignited that gave the Shire's youth oriented activities extra impetus. It became clear that action to date had been tactical, not strategic, and was not underpinned by a strong policy framework.

To achieve better outcomes, council needed to be convinced of the value of changing current practice. Presentations were made to councilors by Shire staff on the size of the problem of youth disengagement in the area and the long-term flow-on effects on individuals and local communities. Data and reports to back up claims were provided by the RYCPO and the local LLEN. The evidentiary base provided a strong call-to-action and council endorsed development of a youth strategy for the area.

A consultative approach was adopted from the start. A project steering committee was formed, its members comprising shire staff, representatives of service providers, the local LLEN and members of the local community who responded to public advertisements in the local press. A research paper based on consultations in the local community is currently being compiled and is close to completion. The steering committee will work together to develop a youth strategy, policy and set of actions for the Shire.

The process has been a challenge and has taken two years to date. Anecdotal evidence suggests it has transformed thinking about the way in which a local area can respond to the needs of young people through, for example, advocating or instituting change in the areas of transport, health, local planning and neighbourhood renewal.

Success to date is attributed to a receptive CEO, support from the local LLEN, an inclusive and evidence-based approach, and persistence.

INTERVENTIONS TARGETING SPECIFIC NEEDS

Koorie LLEN Partnership, Region A

The Koorie LLEN partnership was established in 2005 with the aim of improving education and training outcomes for Koorie youth in Region A. It involved a network of local councils, TAFE, the local Community, ACFE providers and other agencies, and is now affiliated with the Region A Youth Commitment through the LLEN.

One of the first achievements of the partnerships was the establishment of a Koorie School Network which identified a person in each school who was responsible for Koorie students. This network meets three or four times a year to talk about resources and pathways, build community networks and provide opportunities for cultural awareness training. These representatives

have also played an important role in collecting more accurate and relevant data to inform service delivery.

The Koorie LLEN partnership has also undertaken workshops with families to inform them about pathways and the programs available in the local community for their children.

While there are no recorded quantitative outcomes feedback from the Koorie school contacts has been very positive. They have felt more supported in their roles and more empowered to work with youth and identify relevant support services. The greater visibility of these workers also means that Koorie youth themselves feel better supported and able to achieve better outcomes.

The Koorie LLEN partnership has been invited to facilitate a workshop on developing networks at the World Indigenous Conference to be held later this year in Melbourne.

Transition teams and regional working groups with health sector involvement

Many people working with youth at risk mentioned mental illness as an increasingly recognised risk factor leading to disengagement. Some schools and regions have formed close ties with health professionals either through school transition teams or regional reference groups. These links can result in a young person who has been identified as at risk of early leaving due to potential mental health issues receiving earlier assessment and treatment than might have been the case if the health provider was not linked in with the youth commitment. This leads the way to improved retention or re-engagement with education and training.

Region D transition support project

The Region D Transition Support (TS) project was established in February 2008 by Region D Education Partnership after it recognised that there was a cohort of disengaged young people in certain areas of Region D whose needs were not being met by other programs. In particular, the TS project picks up 3 LLEN areas in Region D that are not served by the Youth Transitions Support Initiative (YTSI), YTSI operates in 12 of the 31 LLENs across the state and covers 30 local government areas.

TS is an example of the fundamental belief in Region D that young people should have access to equitable support irrespective their geographic location or other factors which may mean that there are gaps in provision or difficulties with access.

Like the YTSI, TS aims to provide better support and referral for young people who have disengaged from education and training, and its eligibility criteria and reporting functions are based on the YTSI model.

The project has been established as a 12 month research initiative, with funding sourced from DEECD and a number of project partners (e.g. DHS, local University, LLENs, DEECD regional office).

An independent provider was selected through a tender process to manage the pilot, and a 0.8 full-time equivalent position, spread over 3 project staff, has been engaged to implement it. Project staff are responsible for:

- Identifying disengaged young people (through direct self-assessment, or referrals from schools, parents, LLENs, law enforcement, welfare or employment agencies)
- Assessing young peoples' needs and their eligibility for various support programs (both State and Commonwealth), and
- Arranging support for the young person.

The initiative was established with the aim of supporting at least 30 young people per annum. The initiative seeks to determine demand and the opportunity for sustainable funding from local partners beyond the initial establishment arrangements. Without such a program, youth in these regions could remain under-served and disadvantaged.

While it is too early to cite direct impacts of the GTS project, it is included here as an effective intervention as it provides an excellent example of the proactive steps a region can take to improve opportunities and services for young people. Such action crystallises the moral commitment engendered through the RYC initiative.

Chapter 3: Transition requirements

This chapter is designed to help regions to improve awareness and preparedness for implementing, or continuing to implement, a RYC. The chapter is based on our analysis of information collected through workshops, interviews and documentary review, and is set out in three parts.

The first part will be of most potential use for those regions in the earlier stages of implementation and is related to generic transition requirements. It covers four areas:

1. Common challenges associated with implementation
2. General high-level requirements to move from stage to stage
3. Examples of practical actions that stakeholder groups can undertake, and
4. Advice on tracking progress.

The second part of the chapter will be potentially most useful for the Youth Transitions Division of DEECD. It sets out our view, at a high level, of what needs to change in each region to support sustainability and continue or build momentum in the RYC implementations.

The third part of the chapter contains the 12-month action plans that were developed in the regional roundtable workshops and reflect views and opinions expressed by workshop attendees. These action plans have been reviewed by the regions as part of the workshop write-ups which were circulated to each region for review and comment. The action plans are included in the body of the report, and repeated in the status summaries at Appendices 8 –15 which can be easily extracted from the report and circulated to regional offices and stakeholders.

Generic transition requirements

Common challenges associated with implementation

Challenges associated with implementation of the RYC vary from region to region. However, there are a number of reasonably generic issues that need to be overcome across the board in order for a region to gather and sustain momentum. Table 10 illustrates these challenges by stage of implementation, and can be used by regions to identify potential future issues and put appropriate actions in place to mitigate risks.

Table 10: Main challenges that need to be overcome by stage of implementation

Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
Gathering data about the extent of current problem and specific local needs	Maintaining momentum after a launch or public event	Gathering data about the impact of the initiative
Identifying specific issues that need to be tackled	Settling on actions that address local needs but are also achievable	Maintaining momentum in an environment where policy emphasis changes
Defining the commitment and	Embedding actions across	Ensuring that the

Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
getting the language right	a region, and across stakeholder groups	commitment is promoted across a region
Locating appropriate representatives of various stakeholder groups	Ensuring that the right people with the right skills and resources tackle the right issues	Keeping senior level people involved and believing that there is more to be done
Clarifying & agreeing roles and responsibilities	Dealing with personnel changes and loss of corporate memory	Ensuring that good practice is continually documented and regularly shared
Identifying activities that can be effective across all sub-regions (rather than having all responses on a sub-region basis)	Assessing what works and what has not and adjusting plans/activities accordingly	Continuing to innovate and/or maintain programs and activities
Raising the visibility of the commitment within and outside the regional office	Monitoring progress against plan	Pushing through in areas which have been most difficult to penetrate
	Allocating adequate resources to keep the initiative growing	Broadening the commitment across sectors
	Communicating and celebrating success	

What needs to be in place to move from stage to stage

While the RYC model deployed varies significantly from region to region, there are a high number of reasonably generic steps and actions that need to be taken to advance projects. The intent of Table 11 is to identify the actions that *in general* need to be undertaken at each stage, and the nature of collateral (e.g. tools and documents) that could be created as a result of those actions.

How this table should be used

The steering committees, working groups and key personnel in the regions can use this table as a checklist. Not only will it assist in keeping the project focused, it also ensures that actions are taken on a number of fronts and that progress on project management, for example, does not end up out of step with progress on governance.

Table 11: Typical actions that need to be undertaken and collateral developed in each stage of implementation

Initiation		Traction	Mainstream
Vision	Input for RYC vision gathered from a range of	Vision for RYC is articulated Model for	Ownership of the vision for RYC becomes more broadly based, and is widely understood and

	Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
	<p>sources</p> <p>SWOT or GAP analysis conducted</p> <p>Case demonstrating need for action, & consequences of inaction, developed</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal SWOT or GAP analysis documented - Presentation on background to the issues & rationale for involvement produced - Names and organisations of relevant stakeholder groups compiled 	<p>implementing that vision is identified (e.g. is it LLEN led, etc)</p> <p>Vision is communicated to key stakeholder groups including DHS, etc</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision statement for region's RYC - Diagram depicting model 	<p>acknowledged by industry, training providers and the wider community</p> <p>Long-term vision for RYC is established (i.e. to guide for the next 5 years)</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal acknowledgment of RYC by organisations such as local government, locally based industry groups, TAFE Councils
Governance	<p>Stakeholders with a role to play in the RYC are identified</p> <p>Key stakeholders convened</p> <p>Project steering group and/or working group established</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal establishment of project steering/working 	<p>Project steering group meeting regularly (minimum twice yearly)</p> <p>Agenda for steering group created, with standing items include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress against action plan - Progress against communication plan <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standing 	<p>Project steering group oversees annual review of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevance of the vision - Comprehensiveness and usefulness of the action plan - Level of involvement and commitment of key stakeholders - Emerging risks <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performance self-assessment

	Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
	<p>group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signed MOU between key participants 	<p>agenda</p>	
Project management	<p>Project Officer is appointed</p> <p>Range of potential activities under RYC are identified, and process put in place for assessing merit of these activities</p> <p>Roles and responsibilities broadly identified</p> <p>Process for establishing project plan agreed</p> <p>Limited number of activities to support RYC are developed</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - List of current activities being undertaken in spirit of RYC is developed and prioritised - Project plan developed & ratified by steering group 	<p>Project Officer develops a plan for ongoing management of the project beyond their tenure & incorporates actions into project plan</p> <p>Replacement for Project Officer is found</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timelines and responsibilities for specific actions are tabled - Formal review of project plan progress is compiled 	<p>Replacement for Project Officer regularly reviews action plan, coordinates stakeholder involvement, coordinates communication efforts</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated action plan - Review of action plan progress is compiled - Achievements recorded (against action plan and wider project vision)
Human resources	<p>Stakeholders who have RYC as part of their broad mandate</p>	<p>Need for additional resources is identified and tabled with relevant</p>	<p>Effectiveness of dedicated resources on RYC is assessed by Steering Committee</p>

	Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
	are identified and encouraged to spend time on RYC	<p>organisations (e.g. Dept, local gov't, TAFEs, LLEN, schools)</p> <p>Additional resources are hired or seconded</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Position descriptions for new personnel developed, including success measures 	<p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal appraisal of impact of roles focused on achievement of RYC - Improvement plans developed
Communications	<p>Communications objectives established</p> <p>Responsibility for development of a communications plan assigned</p>	<p>Communication plan developed, taking account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communications objectives - Key messages - Channels - Roles and responsibilities <p>Standard written and electronic (e.g. PPT, PDF) description of the local RYC is developed and distributed to stakeholders</p> <p>Opportunities for media coverage commenced</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Standard presentation and briefing material developed - Communications plan developed - Media list developed, with potential story 	<p>Communications plan reviewed, and objectives refined</p> <p>Targeted campaigns conducted to address more entrenched issues</p> <p>Stakeholder groups such as Principals are enlisted to assist with spreading communications messages</p> <p><u>Collateral:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of communications plan completed - Articles printed in local and State press

	Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
		<p>ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Printed articles captured and distributed 	
Financial resources	Financial implications of RYC assessed broadly (e.g. what burden will action create on specific stakeholder groups)	Financial expenditure specific to RYC captured (e.g. appointment of specific RYC personnel), particularly in light of Project Officer tenure ending	Future financial obligations for RYC are identified and options for meeting them are assessed by steering committee

Broad actions required to be undertaken by key stakeholders

To transition effectively from one phase to another individual stakeholders and organisations need to undertake specific actions. Table 12 identifies the actions that all stakeholders should be taking in general and some stakeholders⁸ in particular. The table and indicative actions are not intended to limit the input of any group, but rather act as a demonstration of the tasks that stakeholders need to be performing if progress is to be sustained.

Table 12: Broad actions required by stakeholder group and stage of implementation

	Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
All stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the planning & coordination of the RYC Sign Memorandum of Understanding and/or other key documents (as appropriate to the region) Promote the YC across the organisation's constituency Include the YC in strategic plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the RYC in business and action plans Promote the RYC across the organisation's constituency Develop actions which complement the aims and objectives of the RYC and reduce barriers to continued education and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the RYC in business and action plans Promote the RYC across the organisation's constituency Continue to be involved & committed Monitor performance Contribute to refinements & improvements
LLENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate the RYC into strategic and business plans Use statistics to build recognition of the need for community collaborative action Identify and help to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to crystallize the vision and ensure strategy is achievable and likely to be effective Lead role in communication of project objectives and achievements, including with broader community Use the RYC to engage service providers in the provision of needed services which would 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play an active role in brokerage, networking, referral Document developments and provide proforma or exemplar documents

⁸ The table shows only those stakeholders for whom specific actions by stage of implementation have been identified.

Initiation		Traction	Mainstream
	<p>coordinate range of stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate project momentum 	<p>help disengaged better youth access education and training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on pilot projects with key stakeholder groups (e.g. Schools) to test identification and referral mechanisms 	
DEECD central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding and policy context • Raise profile and priority of the commitment • Provide information and project oversight on early stage of implementation • Generate momentum for the project • Provide central coordination (through Project Officer function) • Provide the bulk of administrative assistance to the project, including liaison with DEECD • Facilitate communications between stakeholders • Speak or present at relevant stakeholder forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide policy direction, seed funding and state-wide coordination as appropriate 	
DEECD regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funding and policy context • Raise profile and priority of the commitment • Provide information and project oversight on early stage of implementation • Generate momentum for the project • Provide central coordination (through Project Officer function) • Provide the bulk of administrative assistance to the project, including liaison with DEECD • Facilitate communications between stakeholders • Speak or present at relevant stakeholder forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote the RYC – need and importance • Provide fora and channels to highlight achievements • Refine resource provision • Continue to provide central coordination with a view to gradually reducing the role of the regional office to ensure that the RYC is more broadly based • Work with stakeholders to assist in translating the commitment into action • Work with stakeholders to identify potential issues and barriers which may cause stakeholders to lose traction or momentum on translating commitment into action • Provide examples of good practice and ways in which stakeholders have translated commitment into action • Lead development of core pieces of collateral: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vision statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to promote the RYC – need and importance • Provide forums and channels to highlight achievements • Monitor progress • Facilitate connections between interested stakeholders • Continue to provide assistance in disseminating information from DEECD to members of the project

		Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
Schools and Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to participate in further development of RYC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project plan • Communications Plan • Speak or present at relevant stakeholder forums • Include the YC in annual implementation plans and 4 year strategic plans • Develop student retention, transition and support teams • Develop a good practice framework for MIPS • Use the Student at Risk mapping tool and integrate it with student retention, transition and support teams • Develop alternative curriculum offerings to improve student retention and engagement • Develop protocol relationships with external agencies and support services to ensure support is provided to students at risk • Highlight what is and is not working • Identify staff/student implications of move to RYC, including potential training and skill gaps • Use consistent language which supports the objectives of the initiative, e.g. instead of “exit” use “transition” • Be a member of the core steering group for RYC • Send clear signals to community about the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play an active role in helping to identify at risk students • Facilitate referral of students to third parties (including LLEN) 	
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in identifying relevant local government agencies (e.g. community care, mental and physical health 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept partial responsibility for achievement of the commitment

		Initiation	Traction	Mainstream
		<p>services, etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify individuals in these agencies that can assist in meeting the RYC Use the YC as a guiding construct for the development of a Youth Strategy 	<p>importance of the issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work directly with other relevant agencies (LLEN, health & welfare etc) to achieve better outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit human and financial resources to the issue
Federal Government		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide programs and policies which compliment but do not compete with the commitment 		
TAFE/ ACE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be involved in discussions about local needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be involved in RYC forums (not necessarily as members of steering committee) and ensure an industry perspective is part of the debate Contribute ideas for new activities under RYC Manage the transition of students between school and TAFE, and ensure that at risk students are more intensively managed and monitored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participation in wider government programs, including for example establishment of a formal referral service
Industry & employers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little, if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be involved in RYC forums (not necessarily as members of steering committee) and ensuring industry perspective is part of the debate Send clear signals to TAFE that they support the RYC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be actively involved in programs to help at risk students find meaningful employment, including through TAFE

Tracking progress

A number of instruments are available to track progress. These include a mix of self-assessment and formal/informal Department reviews.

Self-assessment (i.e. by individual regions) review mechanisms include:

- Regular review of action plan
- Regular review of communication plan
- Regular review of ongoing relevance/effectiveness of vision

Departmental review mechanisms include:

- Annual assessments of quantitative impact of RYC (using On-track, census or similar data)
- Annual progress reviews using a questionnaire (slightly adapted from the one used in this evaluation) to monitor:
 - Clarity of objectives
 - Nature and regularity of activities
 - Level of stakeholder commitment and engagement
 - Results achieved in key areas of retention and re-engagement, effective interventions, and good practices developed

Specific transition requirements

High level changes needed in each region

The following sections summarise, at a high level, what we believe needs to change in each region in order to maximise success and sustainability. Summaries are based on analysis of documentation and feedback gained through interviews, workshops and discussions with project officers, and are intended as a ready reference for YTD in particular. The summaries are very selective and should be read in conjunction with the detailed status updates in Appendices 8-15 which will provide richer background information and context.

Region A

Good progress has been made in the region but there is a need to do more to encourage region-wide collaboration and coordination. Currently the model is heavily LLEN-driven and sub-regional, an approach that has worked to date but poses a risk that in future, without a central or guiding force, the initiative will fragment. Higher levels of activity in schools and local government are needed, as is the case in all regions. Development of referral protocols, systems and processes need to be extended beyond pilot schools, and more support may be needed to help schools implement new practices and transition teams. The biggest overall threat to progress is that momentum will be lost due to diminished involvement of regional office or LLEN personnel, who have been pivotal to achievements to date. There may also be some value in formalising an action plan for the region's RYC activities.

Region B

Good progress has been made in the region but there is a need to broaden activities and governance arrangements to improve sustainability. There is a risk that the initiative, which has been very schools-oriented and LLEN-led to date, will suffer from perceptions that it is primarily focused on the education sector. Key challenges for the region over the next 12 months are to successfully embed the referral protocols and practices in schools and to measure performance. LLENs in the region have employed a RYCPO to focus on this work, however continued formal involvement from regional office personnel could assist.

Region C

Region C has made substantial and well-coordinated progress to date, driven in large part by the regional office and the broad, consultative approach adopted from the start of the commitment. Over the next year it needs to focus more on gaining traction with stakeholders across the region, in particular the interfaces between schools, TAFE and ACE providers. There is a risk that the success of the early stage implementation will send messages to stakeholders that the commitment is “already completed”. The commitment is a high regional priority and therefore we believe it has a low probability of failing to achieve its intended objectives.

Region D

As the most mature and experienced region in terms of the RYC, Region D faces a different set of challenges when compared with the majority. Its key challenges are to maintain and extend the commitment more widely across the region, and ensure that stakeholders remain motivated and involved. Region D needs to do more in communicating its success and achievements over the following year. It must also develop and institute a standardised performance measurement and monitoring system so that the real impacts can be quantified more readily. Like Region C, the commitment in Region D is a high regional priority. This, and the substantial achievements made to date, suggest that there is a low probability that the commitment will not succeed in the long term.

Region E

There is an intention amongst key stakeholders to progress a Regional Youth Commitment in Region E. The region needs to consider each of the critical success factors mentioned earlier in this report with a view to them being in place within the next year. The development of a confirmed governance structure, project plan and aspirational goals would be helpful.

Region F

Region F is the least advanced region, and like Region E, has a long way to go to attain a position in the “momentum builders” group. The region must recognise that a more significant investment of time and resources and a more planned and collaborative approach is essential to building momentum. Stakeholder sentiment is positive – there is real recognition of the need for the commitment, and LLENs in particular are supportive – but if there is continued poor progress this base will diminish. Region F needs to adopt a broad-based model, develop a governance structure and project plan, and learn from the experiences and lessons in other regions. Clearer signals from the regional director as to the priority of the commitment, and

more active engagement at senior level with, for example, the RMF, would also help to build momentum.

Region G

The RYC model in Region G is driven by the regional office. The region needs to develop and agree a strategic plan for the RYC, and more effectively and collaboratively engage stakeholders. It will be important to develop a better response to communication and coordination between the strategic and operational levels of the governance structure. The region has employed three project officers to implement the commitment with a focus on government schools over the next year. These project officers will need to encourage a good understanding of the aims and objective of the RYC in Region G. An agreed project plan, which we understand is in development, is also required.

Region H

Region H has embedded its RYC into an existing initiative, and has as a result achieved a good base of involved stakeholders. It has strong support from the regional office, and an agreed project plan and governance structure. The key challenge for Region H is continuing to translate commitment into action. More needs to be done in schools, TAFEs and with local government and industry to make the commitment tangible. In schools, there is a need to extend the focus from encouraging use of the Student at Risk Mapping and self-evaluation tools, to getting transition teams or similar arrangements operating. The biggest risk facing the RYC in Region H is that a sense that “the work has been done” will become pervasive and therefore limit future progress.

12-month action plans for each region

The 12-month action plans were developed in roundtable workshops and represent attendees’ views on the major goals, actions and priorities for the next year. The plans have been reviewed by each region’s RYC project officer prior to inclusion in this report. In some regions there may be other action plans, documents or planning processes underway. In that event, the action plans contained here can be used as a cross-reference to refine and improve other planning processes.

ACTIONS FOR EACH REGION HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE PUBLISHED REPORT

Table 13: Actions for Region A

Table 14: Actions for Region B

Table 15: Actions for Region C

Table 16: Actions for Region D

Table 17: Actions for Region E

Table 18: Actions for Region F

Table 19: Actions for Region G

Table 20: Actions for Region H

Chapter 4 Recommendations

This chapter provides overall conclusions and recommendations for actions designed to enhance the effectiveness and support the future sustainability of the RYC initiative. The recommendations are based on findings from the formative evaluation conducted over a six-month period in 2008, and have been developed on the basis of some key assumptions which are outlined below.

Assumptions

Key assumptions framing the recommendations include:

- That the Victorian Government maintains its target of achieving 90% completion of Year 12 or equivalent by 2010
- That the RYC continues to operate in the eight participating regions
- That the overall objective of the RYC remains
- That the devolved accountability system currently in place in the school system continues
- That LLENs continue to operate with the same objectives as currently
- That the recommendations should, in the main, focus on non-financial interventions

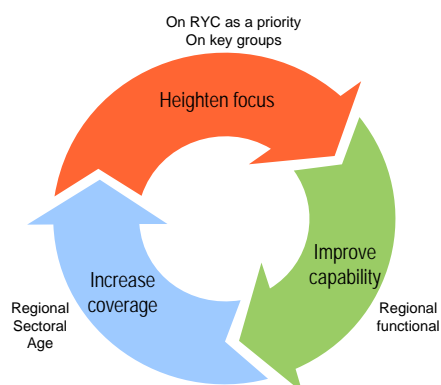
Guiding principles to support future success of the RYC

There are three guiding principles that will underpin the future sustainability and success of the RYC. These are to:

1. Heighten focus on the RYC - at appropriate levels, and using appropriate mechanisms
2. Improve capability – in some regions and amongst some groups and key players current levels of capability are limiting the success of the RYC
3. Increase coverage – for the RYC to be a true and lasting success it needs to make an equitable impact on the lives of young Victorians.

These principles work in a virtuous and self-reinforcing cycle to enhance sustainability and success.

Figure 8: Virtuous circle of principles which underpin future sustainability and success of the RYC



Summary of recommendations

The formative analysis has resulted in eight high-level recommendations designed to improve the success and sustainability of the Regional Youth Commitments. Due to the devolved nature of the Victorian education system and the characteristics of the commitments themselves, implementing these recommendations is dependent upon activity by DEECD central - led or driven by the Youth Transitions Division – and the DEECD regions. Table 21 summarises the recommendations, provides a rationale for each, and outlines the implications for both DEECD central and regions.

Table 21: Summary of recommendations, rationale and implications for implementation

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Implication for implementation (DEECD central)	Implications for implementation (Regions)
1	Elevate the importance of the RYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders (internal and external) don't consistently see RYC as a priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister to acknowledge RYC as top priority Ensure RYC is visible in core policy documents, e.g. Blueprint, corporate plans and business plans (regional, LLEN and school level) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RD's to promote within regions – to schools, RMF, TAFE/ACE sector, LLENs, other key stakeholders RDs to promote to non-government sector RYC POs & SEOs to promote to schools LLENs to promote to schools & broader community
2	Encourage broad government endorsement & support across other agencies, sectors and levels of government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better awareness and coordination across government could improve success of the RYC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Commonwealth to frame other initiatives to support & align with the RYC, e.g. Youth Pathways Encourage Skills Victoria & Victorian TAFE institutes to get more involved in the RYC e.g. through development of transition programs, participation on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for better alignment and communicate appropriately, e.g. to DEECD central or to specific agencies/departments Foster and support constructive collaboration across and between

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Implication for implementation (DEECD central)	Implications for implementation (Regions)
			<p>Community Reference Teams/ RYC steering groups, development of referral protocols etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Victorian Government Departments & agencies to support & align programs with the RYC • Encourage government departments and agencies to provide data which supports the RYC, e.g. DHS, Centrelink 	<p>agencies/departments and regional stakeholders</p>
3	<p>Increase accountability for delivery of RYC objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific roles & responsibilities are not widely understood • Progress is not easily identified or tracked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate data back to schools, including underperformance • Communicate progress with RYC initiatives across regions • Tighten accountability arrangements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All (to ensure that someone is constantly responsible for a young person) ○ Regions/ Regional Director (KPI, performance plan, job description and/or strategic plan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate expectations, targets and objectives

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Implication for implementation (DEECD central)	Implications for implementation (Regions)
4	Strengthen capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capability gaps exist at most levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools (annual & corporate plans) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LLENs Provide documentation that outlines role, responsibilities & typical actions of stakeholder groups (including through content generated in this report) Distribute and encourage use of findings from this evaluation Provide examples of effective project planning, project management and good practice Establish a common forum (e.g. website) for lodgment of case studies, good practices, effective interventions, tools and documentation Hold twice yearly get together of RYC initiatives across the State Enable LLENs to act in a service provision role in areas where there is no adequate or alternative provision currently Encourage LLENs to establish a RYC position Encourage regional offices to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute and encourage use of findings from this evaluation Promote and ensure an effective governance structure that links strategic with operational level activities and is supported by regular communication Ensure SEOs working on the RYC have appropriate secondary skills & background Ensure that information and good practices are shared amongst stakeholders

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Implication for implementation (DEECD central)	Implications for implementation (Regions)
5	Get schools more involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are a key player and yet they are not sufficiently involved now 	<p>specifically dedicate a staff resource (time commitment to be commensurate with task and activities required) to maintain/build momentum of the RYC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand YTSI (or similar) to areas currently unserved Reinforce the importance of schools' involvement with the regions, by leveraging communications, other complimentary programs & initiatives, and accountability mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RD to communicate RYC as a high priority for schools and provide support via SEOs and other regional staff Schools to incorporate the RYC into annual plans and strategies Better communication of best practices to schools Provide a referral service & toolkit for schools (how to diagnose, what to do, who to contact, etc) Establish transition teams in all secondary schools & support with appropriate information and training Increase use of MIPS and Student at Risk Mapping

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Implication for implementation (DEECD central)	Implications for implementation (Regions)
			Tool in schools	
6	Enable lagging regions to secure additional funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assuming the RYC objectives remain important, equitable outcomes across and within regions are desirable: without further support these are unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set higher thresholds for qualification for funding Institute a requirement for performance measures & securing partner commitments prior to funding allocation Require agreement to adoption of the broad-based model (referred to earlier in the report and representing a whole-of-community approach to leading, building and actioning the commitment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In lagging regions, understand higher eligibility thresholds and if necessary orient/reorient activities to meet requirements
7	Consider expanding the scope of the RYC – perhaps after initial results are clearer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a student-centred policy environment it is important to have coverage across both government and non-government schools Reflective of new definitions in legislation At risk factors arise earlier than post-compulsory age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All regions Non-government schools sector, especially via alignment of programs and objectives with Commonwealth strategies Younger age group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and communicate opportunities for expansion of the RYC

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Implication for implementation (DEECD central)	Implications for implementation (Regions)
8	Develop measures to monitor progress and performance of the RYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently there is no consistent or broadly-accepted method for monitoring progress or performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop better tracking mechanisms & employ them in a standardised way to enable progress and achievements to be monitored across regions and over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ and encourage the use of consistent tracking and monitoring mechanisms

Chapter 5 Case studies

Case studies are designed to highlight best practice or provide useful advice and information that will support regions in their implementation of the RYC. Four case studies are presented in this chapter, focusing on the following areas:

1. Stakeholder identification and engagement
2. The role of the regional director
3. Governance, collaboration and a planned approach to implementation, and
4. Promoting achievements and building momentum

Case study 1: Stakeholder identification and engagement

Case study summary

Regional Youth Commitments (RYCs) are collaborative by nature. One of the most important – and potentially most difficult – tasks associated with gathering momentum in an RYC is effectively engaging with key stakeholders.

This case study outlines how RYCs have established effective relationships with participating organisations. Issues covered include:

- The importance of clearly understanding which stakeholders have a role to play
- Effective strategies to create a value proposition for those stakeholders to take an active role in an RYC
- Overcoming initial resistance or lack of interest/commitment.

Stakeholder identification

One of the first challenges for RYCs is the task of identifying potential stakeholders with a role to play in the commitment's design and implementation. In some cases this process is made simpler if groups of interested stakeholders already meet regularly in a particular region. The decision about which stakeholders should be included in the commitment was often dictated by the stage of the commitment rather than a group's relevance to the final objective. For example, in Region G there was a conscious effort to resist involving industry in the RYC until the activities were further advanced.

Most regions used the following specific tactics to identify potential organisations, programs or individuals:

- Forums with the regional Director and Project Co-ordination committee, including roundtable discussions and brainstorming sessions with core stakeholders– from DEECD, LLEN, TAFE and ACE – to identify existing networks and organisations and individuals relevant to the initiative.
- A comprehensive scan of the region on a sector by sector basis
- Utilisation of personal knowledge and contacts of the Project Officers responsible for the initiative in the region or other participants (e.g. LLENs)
- Self selection of stakeholders via personal invitations sent from the Regional Director to attend forums and working meetings

Stakeholder engagement

Effective engagement with stakeholders tended to demand two things:

1. The organisers/facilitators of the commitment are able to demonstrate a compelling case for involvement
2. A willingness by the stakeholder to take an active role

The two regions interviewed for this case study – Region C and Region A – offered common themes as to how stakeholders were effectively engaged with the RYC. Key success factors included:

- The delivery of consistent and effective messages focusing on the need for a whole of community approach that is well supported by clear documentation, research and local data.
- Personal approaches via one-on-one or relevant group meetings within the region – such as staff conferences, networking meetings etc.
- Exploiting strong existing networks, and leveraging the cross-sectoral experience of the Project Officers.
- Time and effort spent on relationship building and real engagement. This is particularly true for stakeholders that are champions in the community and who will willingly accept a leadership and high profile role in the commitment.
- Strong documentation and visuals to assist in communication, including pictorial representation of the model to ensure stakeholder understand implicitly what their involvement would be, tailored presentations
- Convincing potential stakeholders to think about the RYC emotionally rather than academically, including the use of personalised questioning to engage with stakeholders and impress upon them the importance of the health and wellbeing of young people across the community.
- Providing stakeholders with a belief that their involvement in the commitment would make a material difference to the overall outcome and for specific young people.

The Region C, Region H and Region A regions also stressed the importance of strong leadership from the Regional Director and close involvement with the Regional Management Forum to ensure a high level of interest and top-down pressure on stakeholders at a more grass-roots level.

Engaging specific groups

Across the State two groups of stakeholders were found to be more difficult than others to engage effectively: schools and industry. In the case of schools the key difficulty was winning mind-share from Principals and teachers that already had to juggle a number of priorities. For industry it was convincing them that the RYC had a direct impact on them and that there was an effective role for them to play. Recommendations for successful engagement with these groups included:

Schools

- Strong leadership and support from the Regional Director to ensure that the RYC was on the agenda of all Principals and staff.
- Developing close working relationships between stakeholders and Senior Education Officers.
- Ensuring the objectives of the RYC are included in schools' annual plans, and are then fed into Principals' performance plans.

- Conveying to schools that the RYC is collaborative. It was important that schools felt that in being part of the RYC they did not have to take full responsibility for its implementation. Rather, a range of other stakeholders would become involved at various stages to provide additional support.

Local government

- Identifying how the RYC supports the municipality's youth programs and charter, including demonstrating alignment between the RYC and their strategies/policies and relevant community development plans.
- Providing evidence and data that provides a local context for the RYC. Specifically this involves illustrating clearly the social and economic implications of disengaged and at risk youth to the community.
- Showing how the RYC provides the municipality with the opportunity to develop relationship with other agencies that are serious about dealing with youth issues rather than looking for opportunities to shift costs. Greater awareness and linkages means that the local networks are more effective and allow for better information flow.
- Demonstrating how the commitment will reduce the duplication of services and therefore the more efficient allocation of resources and the identification of gaps in service provision.

Case study 2: Importance of the Regional Director

Case study summary

The Regional Director plays an important role in the community, providing the on-the-ground representation for DEECD. Given the nature of the RYC – a broad commitment requiring involvement by schools and other community groups and organisations – the role of the Regional Director is pivotal.

This case study outlines how effective leadership from Regional Directors (and their immediate staff) can make a positive change. Issues covered include:

- The specific role that a Regional Director plays in a region
- Effective interventions that a Regional Director can make at each stage of the RYC maturation cycle.

The specific role that a Regional Director plays

Regional Directors interviewed as part of the project suggested that the importance of the RYC necessitated their strong and active involvement. The high profile nature of the commitment – both as a brand but more as an aspiration – meant that the penalty for failure was significant. In addition, the fact that RYC's had a strong impact on schools meant that active involvement of the regional office was crucial.

Specific roles that Regional Directors play in the implementation of the RYC include:

Role 1: Champion

According to some Regional Directors the RYC required one or many community champions to succeed. The Regional Director – with a significant stake in the achievement of targets such as 90% completion of Year 12 or equivalent – is a natural champion for the RYC in their community. In this role tasks that fall to the Regional Director include:

- Being an enthusiastic advocate for the RYC in schools, and specifically motivating schools to be involved
- Acting as a spokesperson for media events
- Actively promoting the RYC in the broad range of community meetings and forums they attend

Role 2: Coordinator

The Regional Director's coordination function is particularly important in the early stages of the RYC. At this stage the Regional Director has a responsibility to:

- Identify potential stakeholders that should be involved
- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Establish and be part of governance arrangement for the RYC in their area, including establishing a program of meetings and designing agenda items, and

- Directly overseeing the work of the Project Officer employed by the Department.

The Regional Director also plays an important role in interacting with the LLENs who are responsible for coordination on a sub-region basis.

Role 3: Mobiliser

To effectively implement the commitment required active engagement with a range of stakeholder groups, including those in other government departments. Often this required senior level interactions and it was important that the Regional Director was an active participant. In addition, the role of industry was also important and greatest success tended to occur when the RYC was able to involve –often in a personal way – Chief Executives. The same was true of local government and other formal community groups. To ensure that senior people remained engaged it is important that the Regional Director be an active participant in key RYC forums.

Role 4: Negotiator

In some regions, including Region C and Region D, the RYC has become a vehicle to raise funds from other sources to support activities under the commitment umbrella. In many cases this funding flows after a sustained and senior level engagement between the Regional Director and the CEO of a company or organisation. This CEO-level engagement is important because in many regions only they have authorization to commit the company to financial support.

Role 5: Devolver

Selecting the right model for a RYC is important. Regional Directors agreed that to succeed it was necessary to have broad-based support for the range of activities undertaken across the region. In regions where Regional Directors have taken a particularly active role in the establishment and coordination of commitments is it often necessary for them to consciously devolve responsibility so that that the RYC is sustainable. While the Regional Director would expect to take an ongoing and strong role in chairing key forums, this process of devolving decision-making and responsibility is achieved by:

- Building support among senior people in participating organisations, including signing up organisations to an agreement that commits them to specific actions rather than a set of principles
- Demonstrating that the commitment is a community responsibility, and that having the Regional Director driving the agenda in the long term is not in the best interests of the community
- Mentoring staff in other organisations take responsibility for coordination, negotiation and mobilization roles
- Positioning organisations and individuals as champions for the RYC, including enabling them to take an active role in media promotion
- Get others to agree to report back to the central committee in 12 months

Interventions by the Regional Director once the RYC is well established

Regional Directors identified a number of critical ongoing roles:

- Chairing the partnership group or steering committee to demonstrate senior, sustained departmental commitment to the initiative
- Continued involvement in negotiations with industry groups who have an expectation that they will interact at this level
- Keeping an oversight function for overall progress of the RYC in the community.

The Regional Director also has a strong role in influencing the ongoing policy direction that the RYC takes in their community. For example, the Regional Director provides an effective conduit between the Department (and its policies) and the local community. In Region C, for example, the Regional Director has taken an active role in steering the RYC towards programs that support wider government policy:

- Increasing the number of young people (compulsory years) studying maths and science. This not only helps to build the State's human capital base, it also has strong commercial potential because these skills are in high demand by local industry in the region
- Increasing the capability of teachers in maths and science to ensure that the growing demand for these subjects is met.

Case study 3: Governance, collaborative planning and an action-oriented approach

Case study summary

Regions that have progressed well with their commitments exhibit seven common features:

1. An established governance structure
2. A clearly articulated and agreed plan of action
3. A collaborative approach
4. Stakeholders who believe in the commitment and are prepared to support it
5. A suitably motivated and qualified project officer
6. Strong support from the regional office, and
7. Strong support from the LLENs.

This case study examines the first three on the list, and provides a description of what they are, why they are important, and how they can be realised in the context of a RYC.

Introduction

A good governance structure, a clearly articulated plan of action, and a collaborative approach to the initiative are important components of an effective and sustainable RYC. They form the “bedrock” upon which regions that have achieved progress in implementing a commitment have proceeded.

Building these three elements into a commitment in the early stages of implementation will enhance a region’s capacity to successfully and sustainably achieve the objectives of the RYC and should therefore be a primary goal of all regions.

Governance

Governance describes the process of decision-making and the procedures through which decisions are made. Governance is typically a strategic and oversight function designed to keep a project or initiative on track and performing optimally.

Good governance is a vital requirement of any multi-stakeholder initiative and is especially important for long-term initiatives where changes of personnel, different perspectives and the simple passage of time can lead to lost focus, diminished momentum, and unproductive distractions. Good governance has many benefits. It ensures that the agreed problems are addressed, that stakeholders maintain a clear focus on the important (versus the urgent or interesting) parts of an initiative, that issues which could derail a project are readily identified and efficiently addressed at appropriate levels, and that the initiative proceeds in a unified rather than a fragmented way.

Good governance depends on transparency, accountability and participation and is supported by inclusiveness, a consensus orientation, efficiency and rules.

Regions' responses to governance arrangements for the RYC have varied.

In some regions, a two-level approach has been adopted from the beginning. Typically, a small executive committee has been formed comprising the Regional Director, LLEN CEOs, and possibly one or two other stakeholders. The role of this group is to provide high-level support and strategic direction for the commitment. A second and usually larger group works in conjunction with and under the direction of the executive. This group's role is to operationalise the strategy. This approach only works effectively if communication channels are established between the two groups.

In other regions, a single group has been responsible for both the strategic and operational components of implementation and decision-making.

The two-level approach has a major practical advantage: it directs resources to where they are needed most, and allocates responsibilities according to capacity, capability and skills. A single layered governance structure can appear more manageable, but in the end it is less sustainable: the high-level resources needed to lend an authorising environment may not have either the time to spend nor the skills and networks needed to operationalise the commitment.

Regions have found that getting the composition right on governance committees is vital. A balance needs to be struck between representativeness and effectiveness. Smaller groups are flexible and can be simply convened, however they may not provide the range of knowledge or networks which are needed to give the commitment momentum and credibility.

A clear and agreed action plan

Knowing when and where you want to go, what you need to get there, and who can help are key to reaching any destination. In this sense the RYC is no different from any other project. Having an agreed and well-documented action plan, complete with actions, responsibilities, milestones, targets and indicators of achievement is a basic requirement for all regions implementing a RYC.

The action plan should be developed collaboratively, and agreed by all involved stakeholders. It needn't be long, or long-winded, but it does need to be explicit and unambiguous. Someone completely new to the initiative should be able to read it and understand who will be doing what, when, why, what resources they will require, and how achievement will be measured or assessed.

Regions have found that a documented action plan is beneficial in a number of ways. It is a useful tool to communicate the practical steps that must be undertaken by a community and the various stakeholders within it to support the commitment. It is a neutral reference point when perspectives and opinions diverge, or when personnel change.

Developing an action plan and securing stakeholders' agreement to it can be time-consuming and resource intensive.

A collaborative approach

Success in the commitment is not possible without the voluntary involvement and contributions of a myriad of organisations and individuals. Stakeholders need to be prepared to listen to and respect a diverse range

of perspectives and to break down old allegiances and old ways of doing things. Regions that have made good progress with implementation frequently place a strong emphasis on trust and non-competitiveness. They tend to put the best interests of young people before other considerations.

One of the ways to build trust and increase collaboration is to spend time properly understanding where stakeholders are coming from – in particular what drives and motivates them. Aligning the commitment with their objectives will encourage involvement and improve the potential for the RYC to become a moral commitment in a community rather than an activity that is recognised as being a current focus in the education sector.

Case study 4: Promoting achievements and maintaining momentum

Case study summary

Promoting achievement is recognised as an effective strategy to generate and consolidate momentum for projects generally, and the RYC specifically. Region D registered a number of significant achievements in the four years since implementation of the RYC commenced, including:

- Establishing early momentum
- Generating a broad-based commitment to the RYC by making organisations feel ethically bound to support activities in the region

Region D's experience

Region D's Education Partnership has been focused on achieving a cultural change across the region. A key success measure for the RYC was that stakeholders were made to feel ethically bound to take ownership of at-risk and disengaged youth to ensure they are involved in appropriate education or training pathways. To achieve this goal they have conducted regular meetings and staged key events to ensure that achievements are celebrated and learned from.

Promoting achievement in the early stages

The early stages of initiation and development, when stakeholders find it difficult to envisage what the commitment actually means, was acknowledged as the time when the initiative was a greatest risk of losing momentum. Indeed, once a clearer idea has emerged about how the commitment will translate into action and cultural change stakeholders appear easier to motivate and engage.

The following have been critical to the success to date of Region D RYC:

- Up until the beginning of 2008 members of Region D's Education Partnership met once a month and a further six meetings have been scheduled for the coming year. These regular meetings have provided strong guidance and ensured that issues have been resolved in a timely manner. The discussion and outcomes of these meetings have been well documented via comprehensive and actionable minutes so stakeholders are kept up to date and informed.
- The overseas study tour led by the Regional Director provided a focal point and interest in the initiative. Stakeholders were keen to find out what ideas had arisen from the tour and what the implications of these were for Region D.
- Two showcases staged in the region generated interest and gave stakeholders the opportunity to present good ideas and practices, providing a significant opportunity to build on their knowledge and understanding and develop networks with other stakeholders.
- The visits to the region by Bernie Smith, the principal of Four Dwellings High School in Birmingham, who was a keynote speaker at the two showcases, were also a highlight. The visit helped to generate interest

in the cultural change required to ensure young people were seen as the responsibility of the entire community.

- The Regional Director's leadership has ensured that the commitment has remained a focus at the quarterly Principal's meetings, which in turn has meant that communication with schools has been consistent and strong.
- A resource was developed for School Transition Teams that documented relevant services available across the region to ensure that there remained a core level of continuity of awareness, regardless of personnel changes.

The role of communications in promoting achievement

Communication – targeted and broad-based – was identified as a critical element to the success of the RYC in Region D. A number of important decisions had to be made:

- What messages would resonate with key stakeholders?
- What was the most appropriate channel for promotion?
- Who was the most authoritative source for communications collateral – in general and for specific stakeholders?
- How would the region know that the messages are getting through and that the achievements are being acknowledged?

Initially it was planned that a newsletter would be an integral tool for promotion and communication with stakeholders. However while two newsletters were distributed, it was acknowledged that was a relatively ineffective means of communicating with stakeholders. Targeted communications to groups of stakeholders via the LLEN were seen as more meaningful and appropriate given the various stages of implementation and community involvement across the region.

To ensure that these targeted communications were effective significant time was spent developing messages that spoke to the individual motivations of specific stakeholder groups, rather than something that was more generic and less meaningful. The targeted communications also enabled feedback to be easily obtained, ensuring that the success of the communications campaign was being informally tracked.

The experience of Region D RYC highlights the effectiveness of staging organised events to provide tangible learning opportunities. It also demonstrates that strong leadership – organisationally and from a communications perspective - from the Regional Director is important. This is also true of a range of other stakeholders in the region whose attendance at regular meetings and active involvement in specific activities helped to ensure that the initiative maintained a profile in the region.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Online survey questionnaire

FIRSTLY, A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR ORGANISATION

1. What region are you predominantly based in?

Eastern Metropolitan

Western Metropolitan

Southern Metropolitan

Barwon South West

Gippsland

Grampians

Hume

Loddon Mallee

2. Which organisation do you currently work for?

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Department of Human Services

Department of Justice

Department of Planning and Community Development

Other Victorian Government department or agency

Regional Management Forum

Health organisation

Welfare organisation

Education and training organisation

Transition support agency

LLEN

Adult Community Education provider

School (public, independent, Catholic)

TAFE

Industry

Local government

Other (please specify)

INVOLVEMENT IN REGIONAL YOUTH COMMITMENT

3. In the past week, how many hours have you undertaken on work related to the Regional Youth Commitment Initiative? [Please write in number of hours]

4. How many months have you been involved with the initiative? [Please write in number of months]

5. Which of the following best describes the stage that your initiative is at?

Pre-establishment (e.g. securing funding, employing Project Officer)

Project establishment (e.g. gathering stakeholders together)

Early stages of implementation (e.g. have secured a written commitment from stakeholders)

Implementation well underway (e.g. initiative has momentum, actions on the commitment being taken)

Achieved most of what needs to be done (e.g. initiative is well established and can demonstrate actions and outcomes)

THE ROLE OF YOUTH COMMITMENTS

6. Please rank in order of priority what you believe are the objectives of the Regional Youth Commitment. [1 = the highest priority to 6 = lowest priority]

Improving the local industry and economy

Engaging young Victorians in education and training pathways to attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

Improving collaborations and connections between key stakeholders

Raising key stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the importance of improving education and training for young Victorians

Improving the provision of education and training for 15-19 year olds

Improving government service delivery

Engaging young Victorians in education and training pathways to attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

Raising key stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the importance of improving education and training for young Victorians

Improving collaborations and connections between key stakeholders

Improving government service delivery

7. Do you believe the key participants in the Regional Youth Commitment have a shared understanding of the objectives?

Yes No

8. Have the objectives of the initiative changed over time?

Yes, considerably changed

Yes, somewhat changed

Yes, slightly changed

No, have not changed at all

Not sure/ Don't know

9. How clear to you is your role and responsibility in the initiative?

Very clear

Fairly clear

Not very clear

Not at all clear

10. How important is the initiative in your geographic area (i.e. region or sub-region)?

Number 1 priority

In top 3 priorities

In top 10 priorities

Not in top 10 priorities

PERFORMANCE OF YOUTH COMMITMENTS TO DATE

11. Given the stage your initiative is at, in overall terms, how effective do you believe it has been in your geographic region?

Very effective

Fairly effective

Not very effective

Not at all effective

Too early to tell

12. Which of the following statements do you believe most accurately describes the Youth Commitment initiative that you have been personally involved in?

The initiative has been a success from the start

The initiative was off to a slow start but is gaining momentum

The initiative is struggling to gain momentum

It is too early to tell

13. Please rate how effective you believe the Regional Youth Commitment has been in relation to each of the following elements.

Generating positive publicity

Improving collaborations and connections between key stakeholders

Improving young people's awareness of the options available to support them in remaining in or re-engaging with education and training

Improving transition support for young people

Addressing skills shortages in local industry

Retaining and re-engaging 15-19 year olds in education and training towards attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

Improving the relevance of education and training to local needs

Generating a commitment to action from key stakeholders

Improving communication and collaboration between LLENs in the region

Heightening awareness of the need for a commitment to retaining or re-engaging young people in education and training

Generating community linkages and building relationships

Building regional capacity to retain/re-engage young people in education and training

Enabling better co-ordination of service delivery in your area

14. How would you rate the Regional Youth Commitment's performance in relation to each of the following elements?

Funding

Encouraging collaboration between stakeholder groups

Building commitment among stakeholders

Leadership

Assistance with translating commitment into action

Communication

Monitoring of progress and achievements

Approach to stakeholder consultation

Administration and project management

Other (please specify)

15. Please rank the elements below in order of their importance to the success of Youth Commitment in your region? [1= the most important, 11 least important]

Support from the LLEN

Leadership/ having a champion or champions

Support from central office

Funding

Building trust amongst the stakeholders

Strong policy endorsement

A collaborative approach to problem solving

Communication

Pre-existing activity in the region

Support from the Regional Office

A series of early wins and visible action

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INITIATIVE

16. How well positioned is the Youth Commitment in your region to continue beyond the initial Department of Education and Early Childhood funded phase (approximately 1 year)?

Very well prepared

Fairly well prepared

Not very well prepared

Not at all prepared

17. How possible is it to address or improve the preparedness of the Regional Youth Commitment in your region to continue beyond the initial funded phase?

Very possible

Fairly possible

Not very possible

Not at all possible

18. Why do you say that it is not very or not at all possible to address the level of preparation for the initiative to continue beyond the initial funded phase? (skip question, triggered only if Q 17 answered not very or not at all possible)

19. How likely is it that you will play an ongoing role in Youth Commitment in your region beyond the period of establishment funding?

Very possible

Fairly possible

Not very possible

Not at all possible

Don't know/ can't say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Appendix 2: Online survey summary of results

The following provides a summary of the key results of an online survey undertaken in February 2008 with stakeholders in eight of the nine regions involved in the Regional Youth Commitment initiative. The outcomes are based on a total of approximately 130 completed surveys from stakeholder representing a range of organisations.

- While most respondents (63%) perceived their region was within the implementation stage of the initiative, it was interesting to note that within the regions stakeholders held differing views about how far the program had progressed. This indicates that the achievements of the program in the geographic areas may not be widely understood by those involved.
- Related to this result, many (45%) indicated that RYC program had been off to a slow start, though seemed to be gaining momentum and smaller proportions considered the program had been as success from the start (10%) or that it was struggling to gain momentum (15%). The remaining 29% believed it was too early in the program to classify how the initiative was progressing.
- Survey respondents more commonly acknowledged that engaging young Victorians in education and training pathways to a Year 12 equivalent, improving the provision of education and training for 15 to 19 year olds and improving collaborations and connections between stakeholders as the key objectives of the program. On the whole, the clear majority of stakeholders (88%+) agreed that program participants did have a shared understanding that these were the goals of the RYC initiative.
- Improving government service delivery and improving the local industry and economy were less commonly acknowledged as what the initiative was intended to achieve.
- Stakeholders were mixed in their views as to whether or not the objectives of the RYC initiative had changed over time -3% indicated they thought the objectives had changed considerably, 23% somewhat and 22% rated changes as slight. Of the remaining, 19% considered that the objectives had not changed at all and 32% were not sure how to respond to this measure. There were no significant differences recorded across the regions based on this question.
- Most (75%) survey respondents perceived they had a clear understanding of their role within the program – 33% rating themselves as very clear and 42% as fairly clear. One quarter (25%) of stakeholders were either not very or not at all clear about they were required to do, this group more commonly found in Gippsland.
- The RYC initiative is seen as very important within the regions – 10% indicated the program was the number one priority in their area, 47% rated it as one of the top 3 priorities and 37% indicated it was one of the top 10 priorities in their region. Only a very small 6% believed it did not feature as a high priority in their region.

- Generally speaking, stakeholders acknowledged that the RYC initiative has been effective in their region given the stage it is at – 48% rating the program very or fairly effective to date. Of the remaining, 31% indicated it was too early to determine the program’s impact and 22% indicated they believed it had not been not very or not at all effective.
- The initiative was more commonly acknowledged by stakeholders as having been effective in relation to:
 - Improving communication and collaboration between LLEN in the region;
 - Heightening awareness of the need for a commitment to retain or re-engage young people in education and training;
 - Improving collaborations and connections between key stakeholders;
 - Generating a commitment to action from key stakeholders;
 - Generating community linkages and building relationships; and
 - Improving transition support for young people.
- Conversely, the program to date was less likely to be rated as very or fairly effective in relation to:
 - Addressing skills shortages in local industry Generating positive publicity;
 - Building regional capacity to retain/re-engage young people in education and training;
 - Improving the relevance of education and training to local needs;
 - Improving young people’s awareness of the options available to support them in remaining in or re-engaging with education and training;
 - Enabling better co-ordination of service delivery in your area; and
 - Retaining and re-engaging 15-19 year olds in education and training towards attainment of Year 12 or equivalent.
- In more general terms, the RYC initiative's performance was rated well by stakeholders in terms of its administration and project management, leadership, encouraging collaboration between stakeholders and communication, approach to stakeholder consultation and communication. Stakeholders were more moderate in their views of the initiative’s performance in terms of funding.
- Building trust among stakeholders, communication and support from the LLEN were the three elements ranked as most important to ensuring the success of the initiative. Support from the regional office, a collaborative approach to problem solving, leadership and funding were also generally acknowledged as having a bearing on the program's success.

- The majority (64%) of stakeholders participating in the survey indicated they believed their region was well prepared for the program to continue beyond the
- DEECD funded phase. This confidence was much stronger in the Barwon South Western region and Southern Metropolitan regions. The 37% of stakeholders who indicated their region was not very or not at all well prepared tended more so to be from Gippsland or the Eastern Metropolitan regions. These results also show that those regions in which the program has been further developed were more likely to believe their region as well prepared for transition while the reverse is true for those in the early stages.
- Most (60%) of small sample of respondents who indicated their region was not very well or not at all well prepared for the transition from being funded by
- DEECD indicated that it was possible that their region's preparedness could be improved or addressed.
- The clear majority of stakeholders indicated that it was possible that they would continue to be involved with the initiative –47% rating this as very possible and 39% as fairly possible. Only a small 5% considered it not very or not at all possible that they would continue to play an ongoing role and 9% were unsure.

Appendix 3: Discussion paper distributed to workshop attendees

Purpose of this document

This document provides participants in the *Regional Youth Commitments*⁹ (RYC) Roundtable workshops with some general information about the formative evaluation, what to expect from the workshops and how participants can contribute on the day. It also summarises some general findings obtained to date from interviews with Project Officers and an online survey of stakeholders held in early February.

About the formative evaluation of the *Regional Youth Commitments* initiative

dandolopartners has been engaged by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to conduct a *formative evaluation* of the RYC initiative. A formative evaluation is one, which occurs in the course of a program or initiative, and is generally designed to improve or increase its success.

The objectives of this evaluation are to:

- Determine the level of clarity about roles and responsibilities in the initiative
- Evaluate achievements to date
- Identify critical success factors and good practices that may be useful to share amongst the regions
- Identify opportunities for potential improvement, and
- Identify the sustainability of the commitments beyond the initial phase funded by DEECD.

It is important that stakeholders recognise that the evaluation is not intended to provide a final summation of a region's success or achievements with the RYC, and will accommodate differences across regions in the maturity of the RYC.

The formative evaluation is based on direct research into stakeholders' views, using a range of techniques including an online survey, Roundtable workshops, and follow-up telephone interviews.

Eight Roundtable workshops will be held in each of the regions participating in the RYC.

What to expect from the workshops

The workshops will run for approximately 3 hours, and will be facilitated by dandolopartners' personnel. Our facilitators have worked in the education sector previously, are experienced in running focus groups, and are very approachable.

The workshop agenda is divided into three main sections:

1. Background to your region's RYC and achievements to date
2. What has and has not worked, and how this can be capitalized upon

⁹ RYC is known by a variety of names across the regions.

3. The future of the initiative, including next steps and any barriers that need to be overcome.

Due to the different stages of implementation of the RYC in each of the 8 regions, some topics may be introduced that may not appear to be directly relevant to your region. They may nevertheless be important to the evaluation itself, and we ask that you engage as much as you can with the topics, even if the details are sketchy.

Workshops will be audio-recorded for record keeping purposes and for dandolopartners' use only.

Your involvement in the workshops

You have been invited to attend as a stakeholder in the RYC in your region. We understand that your views do not necessarily represent those of others within your organisation, or other organisations in the same category as yours.

Your active feedback, frank and honest views will make an important contribution to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of the RYC initiative. Your views will not be quoted or attributed directly to you.

The agenda for the workshop is quite tight, and facilitators will need your help in getting through all the areas we need to cover. We encourage you to be fulsome, but concise, in your comments. If the discussion gets stuck on an issue, the facilitator may suggest that the group move onto the next matter, or that the issue be followed-up at a later time.

What we have learned about the RYC to date

So far we have spoken with Project Officers in each of the regions, and have analysed the results of an online survey of stakeholders.

Prior to the workshops, we thought you might be interested in some key findings from this research, which indicates:

1. Regions are in different stages of development – with some are very early in implementation, and others having already made the transition beyond the initial 12 month DEECD funded phase.
2. In rolling out the RYC, regions have faced a range of challenges, including those related to:
 - a. Identifying key stakeholders
 - b. Convincing stakeholders of the need to act
 - c. Aligning pre-existing programs and activities with the RYC
 - d. Securing suitably qualified staff
 - e. Defining the commitment
 - f. Developing systems and protocols for referral of students at risk, and
 - g. Tracking and monitoring impacts.
3. On average, survey respondents have been involved in the RYC for almost a year, with most seeing their RYC as being still in an implementation stage. For some, the initiative has made a slow start, but is now achieving momentum – this is especially true for regions in early implementation. For others, it is too early to tell.

4. The RYC is generally perceived as one of the top priorities in the region.
5. Most respondents believe their roles and responsibilities are reasonably clear, and that stakeholders have common views on the objectives of the RYC.
6. Many respondents do not yet believe that the RYC has resulted in better retention and re-engagement rates for young people at risk, but think however that it has been effective in developing awareness, consensus and stakeholders' intention to act.
7. Respondents have highlighted building trust, leadership, LLEN involvement and a collaborative approach as important to success of the initiative. They are positive about the performance of the initiative to date in terms of administration and project management, but less so about the availability of local funding to maintain the initiative.
8. Most respondents believe that their regions are well prepared for continuation beyond the initial DEECD 12 month funded phase. Confidence is higher amongst those regions, which are more advanced in their implementation. A small number of respondents don't think they are well prepared, but believe this can be addressed.
9. The majority of respondents believe that it is possible they will continue to be involved in the initiative.

Closing remarks

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this formative evaluation. We appreciate the time you have taken from your usual responsibilities to help us identify ways in which the RYC can be made a better and more sustainable initiative – one that ultimately changes the lifetime opportunities available to young people who are either disengaged or at risk of not completing Year 12 or equivalent.

A key output of the evaluation is a final report expected in June 2008. It is intended that the project findings and specific advice on the next steps will be circulated to each region for distribution to key stakeholders.

The Project Officer for RYC or the nominated person in each region is the contact point for your Regional Youth Commitment.

Appendix 4: Roundtable Workshop Participants

Region	Participants
BSW	<p>Anne-Marie Ryan ,Smart Geelong Region LLEN</p> <p>Toni Hancock, South West LLEN</p> <p>Michael Date, Glenelg Southern Grampians LLEN</p> <p>Susan Kelly, Manager Curriculum Support and Post Compulsory, DEECD, BSW</p> <p>Allan White, Senior Education Officer, DEECD, BSW</p> <p>Arda Duck, Principal Corio Bay Senior College (Geelong)</p> <p>Peter Bollard, Later Years Coordinator, Warrnambool College</p> <p>Georgina Ryder, Regional Director ACFE (and on 2 LLEN COM Smart Geelong Region and South West)</p> <p>Alistair McCosh, RICA representative for South West and Glenelg Southern Grampians</p> <p>Richard Fry, Koorie Education Development Officer and key member of Wautherong Co-op</p> <p>Leigh Bartlett, Head of Barwon Adolescent Task Force (BAT FORCE) which also incorporates School Focus Youth Service and Colac adolescent taskforce</p> <p>Jan Golden, Executive Director Education Programs, Gordon Institute of TAFE</p> <p>Scott Ware, currently the Community Engagement Senior Project Officer DEECD, former RYCPO</p>
EMR	<p>Jon McGregor, K.Y.M. Employment services</p> <p>Anne Tacey, Healesville HS</p> <p>Marion Schnuriger, Fairhills HS</p> <p>Jenny Allen, Rowville SC</p> <p>Warren Anderson, Youth Services, Whitehorse Local Government</p> <p>Trevor Bayley, Swinburne TAFE – ‘First Stop’</p> <p>Cherie Messerlie, former EMRYC Project Officer, DEECD, EMR</p> <p>Anne Wood, VETis / VCAL Planning Officer, DEECD, EMR</p> <p>Pam Borger, Youth Transitions, DEECD, EMR</p> <p>Geoff Flett, Previous Principal of Mooroolbark College, now SEO at EMR</p> <p>Gill Meek, Inner Eastern LLEN</p> <p>Linda Snoxall, Holmesglen TAFE</p> <p>Judi Byrne, Youth Services, Local Government</p>
Gippsland	<p>Chris Lord, Department of Planning and Community Development</p> <p>John Cargill, GippsTAFE</p> <p>Loretta Hambly, Monash University</p>

Region	Participants
	<p>Mick Murphy, EO, Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN</p> <p>David Roche, South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN (Executive Officer)</p> <p>Onno van den Eynde (Vanda), Later Years Consultant, DEECD, Gippsland</p> <p>Brendan Staple, DEECD (Principal)</p> <p>Helen Reeves, Senior Policy Officer, YTD, DEECD</p>
Grampians	<p>David Wheaton, EO, Central Grampians LLEN</p> <p>Jo Devereaux, EO, Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN</p> <p>Chris Wallis, Transition Team Coordinator, Horsham College</p> <p>Kate Serrurier, EO, Grampians Pyrenees Primary Care Partnership</p> <p>Rod Homburg, Assistant Principal, Ballarat High School</p> <p>Trish Nolan, Manager, Centracare (contract holder of the Youth Transition Support Initiative)</p> <p>Gerrie Dorn, General Manager, Ballarat Group Training (holder of DEEWR Youth Pathways contract and DEECD Grampians Region Transition Support Pilot Project in Central Grampians Wimmera Regions)</p> <p>Jenny Bromley, Assistant Principal, Mount Clear College</p> <p>Carmel Hempenstall, Education Officer-Pathways and Transition, Catholic Education Officer</p> <p>Peter Leslie, Acting Manager, Child Protection and Family Services</p> <p>Barry Wright, EO Highlands LLEN</p> <p>Margaret Stewart, Youth Options Guarantee Project Officer, DEECD, Grampians</p>
Hume	<p>Merilyn Gander, Hume DEECD, Hume</p> <p>Louise Levy, formerly Project worker, Pathfinder Project Hume region, now Pathways Officer NETRACKS LLEN</p> <p>Pat Grosse, Program Development Officer Hume region ACFE</p> <p>Sheree Brown, EO, NE RYAN, DPCD</p> <p>Sue Oakley, Benalla College</p> <p>Gail Timmers, EO, NETRACKS LLEN</p> <p>Jennifer Hippisley, EO, GMLLEN</p> <p>Bill Coppinger, EO, CRLLEN</p> <p>Marg Crisp, EO, NELLEN</p>
LMR	<p>Alan Davies, Swan Hill Local government</p> <p>Gary Griffin, Connect Central</p> <p>John Geary, EO, GLLEN</p> <p>Deb Wiessenecker, Castlemiane Secondary College Principal</p> <p>Glenn Stewart, Swan Hill</p>

Region	Participants
	<p>Sandra Hamilton, Restorative Practices Project Officer, DEECD, LMR</p> <p>Lindsay Short, EO, Campaspe LLEN</p> <p>Jeri Nelson, EO, North Central LLEN</p> <p>Neville Sharpe, Youth commitment Project Officer, DEECD, LMR</p>
SMR	<p>Shannon Cheal, EO, SE LLEN</p> <p>Natalia Klarica, Transition Support Southern Youth Commitment, DEECD, SMR</p> <p>Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN and LCP</p> <p>Linda Snoxal, Youth Programs, Holmesglen TAFE</p> <p>Angela Stathopoulos, Prahran House, Adult and Community Education</p> <p>Robyn Downie, Regional Director Council of Adult, Community and Further Education</p> <p>Donald Gibbons, Youth Commitment Officer, DEECD, SMR</p> <p>Bob Stephens, Assistant Regional Director, DEECD, SMR</p> <p>Fiona Hodges, Manager, Community Wellbeing Cardinia Shire</p> <p>Terry Paxino, VETiS Planning Officer, DEECD SMR</p> <p>Janne Dempster, School Development Officer – Later Years, DEECD, SMR</p> <p>Wayne Perkins, Principal, Sandringham College</p> <p>Fiona Waugh, Project Officer BGK LLEN</p> <p>Peter Hanley, Senior Education Officer, DEECD SMR</p>
WMR	<p>Brett New, Assistant Regional Director, DEECD, WMR</p> <p>Nellie Kostiw, Manager, Teaching and Learning, DEECD, WMR</p> <p>Naomi Corlett, Post Compulsory Years Consultant, DEECD, WMR</p> <p>Steve, Lyon, Senior Education Officer, DEECD, WMR</p> <p>Sue Conquest, Senior Education Officer, DEECD, WMR</p> <p>Sue Fowler, CEO, Moonee Valley/Maribyrnong LLEN</p> <p>Terry Kennedy, CEO Brimbank/Melton LLEN</p> <p>Doug Smith, Project Officer, Western Youth Futures, DEECD, WMR</p> <p>Eric Keenan, Project Officer, Western Youth Futures, DEECD, WMR</p> <p>Colleen Bergin, EO, Western Local Community Partnership</p> <p>Peter Blunden, Principal, Kurunjang Secondary College</p> <p>Tim Blunt, Principal, Sunshine College</p> <p>Angelique Den Brinker, Principal, The Grange, P-12</p> <p>David Smillie, Assistant Principal, The Grange, P-12</p>

Appendix 5: Interviewees

Tony Ball, City of Melton

Richard Fry, Koorie Education Development Officer, Wathaurong Education Centre

Eliza Hall, Manager, The SHAAC, Mt Clear College

Jennifer Hippisley, CEO, Goulburn Mallee LLEN

Michael Iaccarino, former chair WYF reference group, EO, Melbourne North West Consultative Committee

Brian Kearney, Head of Campus, SW TAFE Hamilton

Adele Kenneally, Citizen Services Manager, Glenelg Shire

Christine King, Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Corio Bay Senior College

Eric McLeod, Assistant Regional Director, Grampians Region, DEECD

Bretton New, Assistant Regional Director, Western Metropolitan Region, DEECD

Jeri Nelson, CEO, North Central LLEN

Trish Nolan, Centacare, Ballarat

Jacquie O'Brien, CEO, Gateway LLEN

Claire Rasmussen, Head Student Programs, University of Ballarat TAFE division

Michonne van Rees, Regional Director, Gippsland Region, DEECD

Helen Reeves, DEECD Gippsland

Robert Stephens, Assistant Regional Director, Southern Metropolitan Region, DEECD

Margaret Stewart, AGQTP Professional Learning Leader & Youth Options Guarantee Project Officer, Grampians Region, DEECD

Scott Ware, Community Engagement Senior Project Officer, former RYC Project Officer Barwon South Western, DEECD

Barry Wright, EO, Highlands LLEN

Appendix 6: 7S framework

Table 22: Core elements the 7S framework: definition and description of importance

Element	What is it?	Why is it important?
Strategy	Coherent set of actions aimed at achieving stated objectives	Embodies an approach to a project or initiative and distinguishes it from others Links actions with objectives
Structure	The components of an organisation or initiative which demarcate who reports to whom and how tasks are divided up and integrated	Makes accountability for key decisions clear Gives staff the tools they need to get the job done Helps people to focus on the important and reduces distraction Puts the right people in control
Skills	Capabilities possessed by the organisation/ initiative as a whole (i.e. not those of specific individuals)	Ensure that people have the skills and capabilities required to achieve high level goals
Staff	People involved in management, administration, communications etc	Ensures the right people are on the job Is an important determinant of future success
Systems	Processes or procedures through which things get done from day to day	Important tools for commanding attention, influencing behaviour and indicating how things really work in an organisation or project
Style	The way people behave collectively, especially with respect to use of time, attention and symbolic actions	Influences levels and nature of stakeholders' involvement, motivation, understanding and commitment
Shared values	Ideas about what is right and desirable and which are typical of a group or common amongst its members	If well understood, shared values make it possible to achieve goals

Appendix 7: About the status reports

The detailed status reports are largely based on stakeholder feedback from the roundtable workshops. Each report was circulated to the RYC project officer for review and comment prior to its incorporation into this report.

Appendix 16: Formative Evaluation Project Reference Group

Eric McLeod	Manager	Regions	Grampians
John Cargill	Campus Manager	TAFE	Gippsland
Georgina Ryder	Director	ACFE	BSW
Scott Ware	Project Officer RYC	Regions	BSW
Fiona Purcell	Executive Officer, Outer Eastern LLEN	LLEN	EMR
Greg Hancock	Principal, Lilydale Heights SC	Schools	EMR
John Spierings	Research Strategist Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF)		Melbourne
Jeremy Brewer	Senior Policy Officer	YTD	Melbourne
Hector Bugeja	Manager	YTD	Melbourne
George McLean	General Manager	YTD	Melbourne