Local Learning and Employment Networks
A Victorian Government Initiative

May 2007
Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) are a key initiative of the Victorian Government. They were established during 2001 and 2002 to bring together the expertise and experience of local education providers, industry, community organisations, individuals and government agencies to support Victoria’s young people to complete Year 12 or its equivalent.

Since their inception, LLENs have made a considerable contribution to young people’s transition from school to further training, education and employment, through the development of collaborative partnerships and networks. They also play a key role in linking up education and training services for disadvantaged young people.

The Government’s long-term action plan to tackle disadvantage and increase opportunities for all Victorians, *A Fairer Victoria*, specifically identifies LLENs and their partnerships as vital in addressing skills needs and developing new opportunities for young people who are at risk of disengaging from education and training.

Retaining and re-engaging young people in education and training are critical to ensuring positive personal, social and economic outcomes for the State of Victoria. Victoria is currently performing relatively better than the national average in terms of Year 12 completion (85 per cent); however, progress needs to be made in order to meet the target of 90 per cent of young people in Victoria completing Year 12 or its equivalent by 2010, which is outlined in *Growing Victoria Together: A Vision for Victoria to 2010 and Beyond*.

LLENs were modelled on successful programs in OECD countries. International studies have demonstrated that successful social networks require an establishment phase of five to seven years. All levels of the Department should consider how to take advantage of the capacity of the LLENs to draw together those agencies and services that support young people.

I trust that you will find this paper a useful resource for understanding the purpose of the LLEN initiative and the integral role LLENs have in the Department’s objective of supporting young people’s progress from compulsory schooling to further education, training and full-time employment.

Dahle Suggett  
Deputy Secretary  
Office for Education Policy and Innovation
# Contents

Foreword i

1. Executive summary 1

2. Introduction 2
   2.1 Purpose of LLENs 2
   2.2 Coverage of LLENs 4
   2.3 How LLENs operate 5

3. LLEN progress 7
   3.1 LLEN reviews – key findings 7
   3.2 Characteristics of LLEN good practice 7
   3.3 Enhanced department/LLEN engagement 9

4. LLEN outcomes 10

5. References 12

Appendix: Case Studies 13
1. Executive summary

The statewide network of 31 Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) has a crucial role in continuing progress towards the Victorian Government’s Year 12 or equivalent completion targets. LLENs were established in 2001 and 2002 with the aim of allowing schools to work better at the local level with other education and training organisations, industry and community agencies to expand the range and quality of services provided.

Research provides evidence of the links between completion of Year 12 or equivalent with positive personal, social and economic outcomes for individuals and the community. Those most at risk require the greatest intervention from a range of community and government services.

The core role of LLENs is the creation and further development of sustainable relationships and partnerships, and brokering of initiatives between local education providers, industry and community, to improve the education, training and employment outcomes of young people, particularly those most at risk.

The LLEN initiative puts the focus on the needs of young people and emphasises cooperation between different providers and agencies to meet these needs.

This paper includes details of the purpose, operation and achievements of the LLEN initiative.

As valued social network organisations, LLENs act to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to support young people’s transition through school to further education, training or full-time employment. Focused and flexible, the LLEN initiative will continue to contribute to improving outcomes for Victoria’s young people.
2. Introduction

Over a period of several years, the Victorian Government has placed a strong focus on improving participation and outcomes of young people in post-compulsory education and training. This focus recognises the importance of successful youth transitions to education and work, for the benefit of the individual young person and for the overall benefit to the Victorian society and economy.

There is clear evidence that young people who complete at least Year 12 at school, or an equivalent qualification, face better futures than those who do not. In 2000, acting on this evidence, the Government announced as a key target that by 2010, 90 per cent of young people in Victoria will complete Year 12 or its equivalent.

Significant reforms have been introduced to attain this goal. Changes, drawing on recommendations from the Government commissioned Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria (the Kirby review), have been progressively implemented since 2000. Early moves included the reconfiguration of the education and training system with the introduction of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the Victorian Qualifications Authority and the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC); the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL); and the establishment, from 2001, of Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs).

In order to make continued progress towards meeting the Year 12 or equivalent completion target, the Government is currently pursuing a five-pronged strategy, encompassing both the government and non-government education and training sectors:

- Expansion of qualifications and subjects (offering a range of choices to young people)
- Improved delivery arrangements (especially in relation to leadership, learning and teaching, and access)
- Improved student transition support (for example the introduction of Youth Transition Support Workers in the most disadvantaged areas)
- Strengthened accountability and monitoring for education and training providers
- Strengthened role for networks (especially LLENs).

2.1 Purpose of LLENs

In 2000, announcing the introduction of LLENs, the Premier stated that they ‘will allow schools to work better with other education and training organisations, industry and other organisations at the local level. These Local Learning and Employment Networks will be funded to work together and to expand the range and quality of services provided.’

The Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment further elaborated, adding that LLENs would:
• ‘Plan the delivery of programs for young people with an expectation that networks should increase the range and the quality of programs by working cooperatively together, and by using the extra funds that the Government will provide. In particular there will be an expectation that the networks will improve and expand programs for young people who are most at risk of dropping out and having poor educational outcomes.

• Build links with industry and other organisations in order to improve and better coordinate employment opportunities and expand experiences for young people.

• Advise the Learning and Employment Skills Commission [the VLESC] on the outcomes and destinations of young people, and on the implications for education, training and employment policy in the State.’

The LLEN initiative was modelled on approaches that had proven successful in several OECD nations such as Denmark, the UK and Sweden. LLENs put the focus on the needs of young people and emphasise cooperation between different providers and agencies rather than competition and division. They are designed to bring together schools, TAFE institutes, Adult Community Education (ACE) organisations, local government, youth agencies, non-government schools and employers to work together for young people.

The ministerial review recommending their establishment envisaged them as being able to contribute on a range of fronts:

• Expanding the range, quality and flexibility of programs available to young people

• Supporting a coordinated approach to delivery of work placement, school-based apprenticeships, and participation of employers in workplace programs

• Building linkages between school programs and potential destinations in employment and further education and training

• Sponsoring local in-service education and training for teachers, trainers and other stakeholders

• Including local and other levels of government, and other agencies in supporting young people, and facilitating cooperative provision of services

• Assisting in building industry and community responsibility for the futures of young people

• Establishing a better basis for accountability for outcomes of young people.

A growing body of research around social partnerships supports the viability of this vision for LLENs.

As reported by Billet, Clemans and Seddon (2005):

‘The data shows that social partnerships develop and are sustained because participants engage in partnership work. Effective partnership work embraces and harnesses the contributions of local partners and external agencies, their interactions and the changes they make in the collective work of realising shared goals. The processes of working together allow:

• communities to identify and represent their needs and to secure quality partners and partnership arrangements that will enable them to achieve their objectives

• government and non-government agencies to understand and respond to local needs, to utilise local resources and to enhance capacity for local governance.’
2.2 Coverage of LLENs

A statewide network of 31 LLENs was introduced across Victoria in 2001 and 2002 (see figures 1 and 2). LLENs usually cover two to four local government areas and provide a framework for local stakeholders to work together to improve the education, training and employment outcomes of young people.


Figure 1. LLENs in Victoria

Figure 2. LLENs in Metropolitan Melbourne
2.3 How LLENs operate

Each LLEN is a grouping or network of local organisations and individuals interested and involved in post-compulsory education and training. Membership of a LLEN is open to any individual or organisation with an interest in post-compulsory education, training and employment in the area covered by the LLEN. The initiative supports local commitment to, and ownership of, education.

In developing the LLEN initiative, emphasis has been placed on local governance to ensure strong local ownership of the initiative and the outcomes sought. To this end, all LLENs are incorporated associations under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981.

The generic rules of incorporation of LLENs give the framework for their operation including the definition of the membership categories that will be represented on their committees of management. These categories ensure broad cross-sector stakeholder engagement and involvement.

The membership categories are as follows:

1. Schools: government and non-government
2. TAFE institutes and universities with TAFE divisions
3. Adult Community Education organisations
4. Other education and training organisations including private registered training organisations, universities and group training companies
5. Unions, peak union organisations and regional union organisations
6. Employers/peak employer organisations/ regional employer organisations and employment agencies
7. Local government
8. Other community agencies and organisations: Commonwealth and state government departments, Adult Community and Further Education Regional Councils, Regional Youth Councils, Area Consultative Committees, etc.
9. Koorie organisations, peak Koorie agencies and regional Koorie organisations
10. Community members
11. Cooptees: Nominated by the committee. Cooptees must be a community member or a person associated with an organisational member.

LLENs are to ensure their committees of management have at least one member drawn from categories 1 to 10.

Each of the 31 LLENs has a three-year contract (2006 to 2008), which is managed by the Department of Education. The agreement provides for the annual negotiation of targets and performance measures.

LLENs do not have statutory or mandated authority. They rely on the value of their local planning and the quality of the partnerships they have facilitated to engage stakeholders and effect improvements to the education and training outcomes of young people.
Local Learning and Employment Networks: A Victorian Government Initiative

The evolving role of LLENs

The core role of LLENs is the creation and development of sustainable relationships, partnerships and brokerage of initiatives with and across local education providers, industry and community, with the aim of improving the education, training and employment outcomes of young people.

The way LLENs achieve their aims to support young people’s transitions has been refined since their establishment. Their initial work included providing grants to facilitate establishment of initiatives to bring about change, and, at times, providing education services in order to fill gaps in local transition support and services. In the longer term, however, service provision potentially undermines the LLENs’ key strength as an ‘honest broker’ and developer of others’ capacities.

At this stage of their evolution, LLEN activities centre on:

- Facilitating and supporting a range of initiatives, and developing partnerships and collaboration with and across stakeholders to provide better pathways and support for young people
- Undertaking local strategic planning
- Providing local advice on statewide policy and program issues
- Serving as an active platform for joining up government initiatives with local education and training systems.

The focus of LLENs is now clearly on adding value to the public and private investment in education.

**Figure 3: The Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN’s Top Jobs Network addresses regional skills shortages. In 2006, 80 additional young people were employed, with 52 in locally identified skills shortage areas.**

**Figure 4: The Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN, in partnership with schools and other agencies, developed the Inspiring Young Women program. More than 100 young women have participated in the program.**
3. LLEN progress

3.1 LLEN reviews – key findings

The LLEN initiative has been subject to a number of reviews.¹

The reviews affirm the value of the initiative, both in terms of policy and economics. The LLENs are now an integral component of education and training provision in Victoria. The achievements of the LLENs, including engagement with industry and community partners, and the potential of the model, are significant. Further, the reviews found that the initiative has contributed to effecting local change and improving outcomes of young people, particularly those most disadvantaged.

The reviews also enabled the development of a framework for the continued enhancement of the initiative, which includes:

- Continued development of good governance within LLENs
- Incorporation of stakeholder satisfaction surveys within the operation of LLENs
- Documenting and sharing of good practice.

3.2 Characteristics of LLEN good practice

LLEN Chairs meet regularly, as do Executive Officers, to share thoughts on how best to address challenges and further improve the effectiveness of the LLENs. Separately, the Chairs and Executive Officers concluded the importance of identifying and adopting good practice as the basis to progress the LLEN initiative, consistent with recommendations from the LLEN reviews undertaken by the VLESC.

A VLESC/LLEN Good Practice Steering Committee was established and identified the following five characteristics of good practice:

1. Successful stakeholder engagement
2. Collaborative partnerships
3. Sustainability
4. Changing culture and behaviour of stakeholders
5. Improved outcomes for young people.

These characteristics are interrelated. Their power lies in their integration around each LLEN’s strategic vision, mission and goals.

¹ Department of Education and Training (2003), Internal performance against goals and targets.
While the specific direction and priorities of each LLEN will be focused on its local context and local needs, these five characteristics will provide both a platform for good practice and a focus for reflection on LLEN operations.

The LLEN initiative aims to bring about cultural and behavioural changes leading to improved outcomes for young people. Good governance will enhance planning towards good practice, assisting LLENs to:

- Chart and plan their work
- Evaluate the effectiveness of that work
- Generate and support ongoing dialogue about the purpose, role and work of the LLEN.

A Good Practice Framework has been developed to enable LLENs to accomplish these activities. It reflects discussions at the VLESC/LLEN Good Practice Symposium in 2006, which was convened to promote a continuing conversation among and between LLENs about continuous improvement in practice. The framework is underpinned by several key principles that can be expressed as a series of commitments in the interests of young people, and has been adopted by LLENs.

**Key principles**

- A commitment to the use of demographic data, school retention data, unemployment data and other relevant evidence to identify and analyse needs and to develop strategies to meet those needs
- A commitment to the development of a strategic vision, mission and goals resulting from the evidence-based analysis of needs
- A commitment to the integration of LLEN planning, processes, initiatives and activities within the framework provided by the strategic vision, mission and goals
- A commitment to the engagement of key stakeholders as partners in LLEN planning and in the development of the vision, mission and goals
- A commitment to action research and other methodologies encouraging the continuous assessment of needs and changes in LLEN priorities
- A commitment to rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness and outcomes of LLEN projects and work
- A commitment to sustainable improvement in outcomes for young people.
3.3 Enhanced department/LLEN engagement

In the first stages of the initiative, the focus of LLENs was to establish operations and to demonstrate their local ownership and management. This was important because the Department had limited expertise and experience in engaging and partnering with a statewide network of independently incorporated associations.

The LLENs continue to develop and mature. The Department has built a stronger understanding and appreciation of their worth and capacity, resulting in a productive partnership.

The Department recognises that the strategic stakeholder partnerships brokered by the LLENs substantially enhance and add value to the work and outcomes that can be achieved by stakeholders, including government and non-government schools, and TAFE and ACE providers.

An example of this maturing engagement is the partnerships between Department of Education Regions and LLENs in the establishment of Regional Youth Commitments. These Regional Youth Commitments are putting in place coordinated arrangements with all providers of education and training, as well as the agencies involved in career and transition support, to improve education and training outcomes for young people at risk of not completing Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. LLENs provide the Regions with a platform for the partnerships between existing and new stakeholders, which underpin the commitments.

Figure 5: Using video conferencing, four Local Learning and Employment Networks progress their Regional Youth Commitment with the Grampians Region.
4. **LLEN outcomes**

**Young people**

LLENs have collectively (through collaboration with partners) achieved outcomes above the agreed targets for 2006. These outcomes include:

- 290 new partnerships facilitated by the LLENs, which have provided assistance to 28,000 young people
- Re-engagement in the order of 2,600 young people who were disengaged from education and training
- Engagement of 672 organisations from a broad cross-section of the community in the planning for, and provision of, career and transition support for young people.

**Membership**

The enthusiasm for the LLEN initiative is reflected by the size of its membership across the state:

- 6,500 individuals and organisations participate
- 500 members participate on LLEN committees of management
- 31 members agree to Chair LLEN committees of management
- Industry accounts for more than 13 per cent of membership (more than 3,250 enterprises have participated in education and training through programs or initiatives in which the LLEN was a partner)
- Around 50 per cent of Chairs are from industry.

---

**Figure 6:** In 2006, Goulburn Murray LLLEN facilitated the re-engagement of 62 CALD refugee young people in education and training.

**Figure 7:** In 2006, Murray Mallee LLLEN brokered the Schools Community Water Renewal Project, which re-engaged 48 young people, with the support of 21 organisations.
Local Learning and Employment Networks: A Victorian Government Initiative

Where it started and where to now

‘The networks are the beginnings of a new way of working in education, training and employment. They are a new way of working across the areas of government, and a new way for government to work with non-government organisations (including schools) and community agencies. They make the point - that what is important is what is provided for young people, rather than who provides it, and that in this new century it will be incumbent upon all of us to accept a greater degree of collective responsibility for outcomes in education, training and employment.’ (Premier of Victoria, The Hon. Steve Bracks, 2000)

Victoria’s Year 12 or equivalent completion rate is currently 85 per cent. This is a significant achievement, particularly in comparison to other Australian states and territories. However, there is much more work to be done as there are still many young people not making a successful transition to training, further education and employment.

The National Reform Agenda, established in 2006, recognises the importance of youth transitions for positive individual, social and economic outcomes. Given this, and the objectives of the Government, LLENs are now well placed, having matured over the past five to six years as valued social network organisations, to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to support young people’s successful transitions.

Quick case study

The East Gippsland LLEN has brokered the Changing Lanes initiative, an off-campus VCAL program in Bairnsdale. This initiative re-engages at-risk disengaged young people. The program has a high number of young Koorie participants.

See Appendix for more information.

Figure 8: In 2006, the Goulburn Murray LLEN worked with its partners to re-engage 66 indigenous young people in the Shepparton area in educational pathways.

Figure 9: The North East LLEN facilitated the Young Mums program to re-engage 25 teen parents in 2006. The initiative is now sustained by the community partners.
5. References


Department of Education and Training (2003), Internal performance against goals and targets.


*Figure 10: Brimbank Melton LLEN Committee of Management meets to develop its strategy.*
Appendix: Case Studies

Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) Mapping Tool – Identifying Students at Risk

In 2005, the Brimbank Melton LLEN commenced a trial of the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) Mapping Tool to identify students who are at risk of leaving school early. The tool provides a set of processes, using the data contained in the CASES21 system, for identifying students at risk of leaving school early, in order to plan and evaluate interventions to support students to remain engaged in education and training.

The MIPS Mapping Tool, appropriately used, can provide schools with a relatively simple means, based on accurate data, of identifying students at risk of leaving school early. Following evaluation, the tool was launched in Victorian government secondary schools early in 2007.

The MIPs Mapping Tool has been developed in a collaboration involving the Brimbank Melton LLEN, the Post Compulsory Division (now Youth Transitions Division) and CASES21 Support. The trial involved the Brimbank Melton LLEN, Caroline Springs College, Deer Park Secondary College, Deer Park Primary School, Kurunjang Secondary College and Sunshine Secondary College.

Hope program

The Brimbank Melton LLEN has facilitated the Hope Program, which operates in seven schools in its area. The program targets young people in Years 9 and 10 at school who are identified as being the most at risk of disengagement and develops strategies and arrangements using community agencies and individuals to support each at-risk young person to remain in education and training over several years.

The strategies include mentoring, specialist support and advice from both within and external to the school. Over 2004-06, retention in education and training for the 440 participating young people was close to 100 per cent.

Changing lanes

The East Gippsland LLEN has brokered the Changing Lanes initiative, an off-campus VCAL program in Bairnsdale. This initiative re-engages at-risk disengaged young people. The program has a high number of young Koorie participants.

The partners to the initiative include Bairnsdale Secondary College, Victoria Police, Rotary Club of Bairnsdale, Gippsland Lakes Community Health and BACE Inc (ACE provider).

In 2006, 55 at-risk young people enrolled in the program, and similar enrolments are expected in 2007.

Victoria Police has reported a significant decrease in petty crime since the program has been operating.
Automotive pathways program

The Hume Whittlesea LLEN brokers an automotive pathways program, known as Poll Position, which connects young people with learning through a tailor-made automotive program. A partnership including Kangan Batman TAFE, Holden and Ford motor companies, Victoria Police, The Smith Family, Hume City Council and other agencies and local schools provides mentoring, work-related skills development and applied learning on engine components and other aspects of owning a car. Of the 89 young people who have undertaken Poll Position, 95 per cent have been retained or have been re-engaged in education and training.

Top jobs network

Top Jobs Network, a Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN members’ initiative, addresses regional skill shortages by linking young people to full-time ongoing work, usually including quality training. The initiative is aimed particularly at moving young people from casual and part-time work into quality employment. An additional 80 young people are employed as a result of this initiative, with 52 in skills shortage areas.

Top Jobs Network has secured funding through the Department for Victorian Communities’ Community Regional Industry Skills Program.

Transport, Distribution and Logistics (TDL) VCAL

The Wyn Bay LLEN supports the transport, distribution and logistics (TDL) sector (the largest industry in western Melbourne) through the facilitation of a taskforce, which links this industry with education and training. The taskforce members include the Victorian Transport Association, TOLL, Victoria University and key government departments (Departments of Education, Industry, Innovation and Regional Development, and Victorian Communities).

A key initiative of the taskforce has been the development of a community VCAL with special emphasis on TDL for at-risk young people aged 15 to 16 years. The project, coordinated by the Westgate Community Initiatives Group (WCIG), involves a partnership with Grange P–12 College and the Western Metropolitan Regional of the Department of Education.

In 2007, 20 places are available for at-risk young people, with 10 placements already filled.