

Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network celebrates 20th Anniversary

20
YEARS
ANNIVERSARY

Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network (NMLLEN) celebrated its 20th anniversary this week. A cake cutting ceremony and morning tea was held at NMLLEN's office on Thursday, May 20, 2021. Several representatives from the Department of Education and Training (DET), industry, education/training providers and community organisations across the region were present on this occasion.

Northern Mallee LLEN is one of the 31 LLENs across Victoria that were established in 2001. Their aim was and still is, to identify gaps in education and training, provide advice on local and statewide policy issues at both the strategic and operational level and broker cross sector partnerships to better support young people.

NMLLEN partners with industry, TAFE/RTOs and schools to provide industry visits, work placements, information on School Based Apprenticeships /Traineeships and workshops to connect young people with training and employment pathways.

"We are very proud to reach 20 years of successful operation at NMLLEN. I would like to thank our past and present board members, the Department of Education and Training, Mildura Rural City Council, Victorian Skills Commissioner, VSC Mallee Task Force, Sunraysia's Careers Network, SuniTAFE, Mildura Regional Trade Training Centers, FLO Connect, Headspace and Mildura Regional Development, industry, schools, training providers and the many other people who have been part of this journey in the last 20 years," said Rodney Martin, Executive Officer, NMLLEN.

"We take this opportunity to thank everyone over the past 20 years for joining with us in our endeavors to support education, training, and employment for the young people in our region. We can all be very proud of what has been achieved over the last 20 years," added Anne Mansell, Chair, NMLLEN.

Increasing demand for skilled workforce in the Mallee Region:

In 2017, **Victoria's Skills Commissioner Neil Coulson**, undertook a major consultation with industry and employers from the Mallee Regional Skills Taskforce to identify future skills needs and employment opportunities across the Mallee region. NMLLEN supported the Skills Commissioner to provide data, advice, and support for the consultation. The taskforce projected a future workforce demand of between 2,900 and 4,400 new workers from 2017 to 2020 across the Mallee.

A 'Pulse Check' organised by Regional Development Victoria in September 2020 indicated that employers can expect continued employment with the potential for between 1,000 – 2,500 jobs to

be created over the next three years until 2023. An additional 2,000 workers will be required to replace expected retirements.

LLENs across the state are crucial in generating awareness of these opportunities and assisting young people to navigate the pathways through school and training in an effort to obtain the skills that will prepare them for these employment opportunities. NMLLEN plays a vital role in developing partnerships that strengthen VET delivered to secondary students and linkages to the world of work through placements.



Neil Coulson (left) and Ron Broadhead (right) with other dignitaries at the launch of VSC Regional Skills Demand Profile: The Mallee (2017)

NMLLEN creates opportunities for local students to gain practical experience within industry undertaking Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) placements:

An important element of VET delivered to secondary students is **Structured Workplace Learning (SWL)**. SWL provides students with an opportunity to apply their vocational training in an industry setting. NMLLEN is one of 31 LLENs across Victoria to support the development of SWL Placements for senior secondary school students.

The Department of Education and Training established the **School Employer Engagement State-wide Portal** in 2017. This portal provides students and teachers with a single, easy to navigate, information and referral point for structured workplace learning opportunities offered by a range of employers. The SWL program gives the employers the opportunity to identify potential future employees. NMLLEN conducts industry visits for students to raise their awareness of employment opportunities. Over 14,000 positions have been accessed by students from the School Employer Engagement State-wide Portal since its inception.



Peter Devilee (left) with Ian Westhead (right) at the launch of SWL State-wide Portal 2016

School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT) allows students studying at school to participate in an apprenticeship or traineeship at the same time. Students work part time, earn income, and study to keep their options open until the end of year 12. The SBAT program allows employers to secure committed employees who they can train and mentor to establish good work practices. It also assists employers to address skill shortages within their industry.

Vocational Preparation and Transitions Program (VPTP):

In 2020, NMLLEN had to reassess how to engage with industry and education due to COVID 19. The purpose of the Vocational Preparation and Transitions Program (VPTP) was to deliver a range of vocational education and training presentations either face to face or via virtual platforms to students. Over 1320 students have engaged in the Vocational Preparation Transitions Program presentations over 61 events in the last two years.



Grahame Blaby and Novalli Hudson at CPM Building Contractors (2020)

NMLLEN strengthens support for disengaging and disengaged youth in the region:

The Mallee Navigator Program commenced in September 2016 as a pilot program in partnership with, Northern Mallee LLEN, Murray Mallee LLEN, Mildura Rural City Council and Red Cliffs Secondary College - FLO Connect. The aim of Navigator Program is to re-engage young people between the ages of 12 and 17 who have less than 30% attendance at school back into education or training. Through intensive wrap around case management support, schools refer students to the DET Area Navigator Coordinator. Eligible young people are then referred to NMLLEN/MRCC and MMLLEN for intake and intensive case management. The Mallee Navigator program has received over 400 referrals since its commencement.



Ron Broadhead (middle) with Karen Modoo (left) from Dept. of Education & Training and other members from Navigator (2016)

Flexible Learning Options in Schools (FLOIs):

The 2006 and 2011 census showed there were 823 (13.1%) and 950 (14.5%) young people aged 15-24 not in education, training, or employment, respectively. Flexible Learning Options in schools or (FLOIs) were introduced to keep young people engaged with their education. The FLOIs Programs across the Northern Mallee have provided tailored education options for some of our more vulnerable young people to stay connected to their secondary education.

FLO Connect:

FLO Connect was established in February 2014 as an **educational reengagement program** for students disengaged from school. It is situated in Mildura and supported by the Victorian Department of Education and Training in conjunction with Mildura Rural City Council and Red Cliffs Secondary College.

On Track Connect:

The NMLLEN conducts the On Track Connect program on behalf of the Department of Education and Training. The Year 12 graduates and early school leavers who were unsuccessful in securing a place in higher education, training and/ or employment are referred to their local LLEN for additional individual follow up. NMLLEN provides young people with advice and support to link with local agencies to assist them with further education, training, and employment pathway planning.

STEM in Schools Project addresses growing demand for skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths:

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is a key priority of the Victorian and Federal Governments. STEM encompasses a range of disciplines and skills that are in high demand in our rapidly changing world. In partnership with SuniTAFE and local secondary schools, NMLLEN engages with schools to coordinate the STEM4Sunraysia event with SuniTAFE and industry representatives. In 2018 and 2019, STEM4Sunraysia events were a resounding success with over 150 year 9 students engaging in the STEM4Sunraysia program.



School Students at Monash University for the Stem4Sunraysia (2018)



Chris Hobart, Prof. John Polese, Fiona Harley, Peter Devilee and Ron Broadhead at the AGM 2016



Geoff Dea, Dr. John Halsey and Fiona Harley at the AGM 2019



Mayor Jason Modica, Cr Glenn Milne, Bill Coppinger (guest speaker), and Cr Mark Eckel at the AGM 2017

Other Community Partnerships and Programs:

NMLLEN supports **Sunraysia Careers Network (SCN)** to provide secondary students with up-to-date career guidance and to promote workplace learning opportunities through Work Experience, Structured Workplace Learning and School-based Apprenticeships.

Sunraysia Careers Network comprises Careers Teachers, Registered Training Organisations, Group Training Companies, Australian Apprenticeship Support Networks, Universities and SuniTAFE.



Sunraysia Career's Network (SCN) members at Zilzie wines for an industry visit

Sunraysia Careers Network also facilitates the VET Delivered to Secondary Students, Sunraysia Excellence Awards each year recognising the outstanding achievements of students undertaking vocational education training subjects while still attending secondary school studies. NMLLEN has been an ongoing sponsor of the awards and encourages all secondary students to consider vocational education and training as a genuine career pathway.



Anne Mansell (Right) with Kate Whyte (left), runner up of the Sunraysia Career's Network (SCN) VETDSS Awards 2019



Rodney Martin, Executive Officer, NMLLEN with Gemma Melton, winner of the SuniTAFE VETDSS Awards 2020

Mental Health:

Since its official opening in 2015, headspace Mildura has been providing early intervention mental health services to people aged 12-25. NMLLEN is proud to be an active partner in advocating, promoting, and assisting headspace, Mildura to deliver this important service in the region.

Learn Locals:

NMLLEN collaborated in partnership with the district's Learn Local organisations (MADEC, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, Zoe Support, Red Cliffs Community Resource Centre and East End Community House) to jointly develop, promote and deliver a range of Pre-Accredited courses that provides entry pathways to training and employment. NMLLEN and the Learn Locals developed a 2020 Course Guide as a collaborative project that combines the expertise of each of the organisations.

Journey to Work:

In 2015 16 Chaffey Secondary College students studying English as an Additional Language (EAL) were able to spend three days on a "Journey to Work" program arranged by NMLLEN. Students visited workplaces to hear from employers about local career opportunities, the services they provide and the role they play in our local economy. The visits were made possible through funding from the **Victorian Multicultural Commission - Strengthening Multicultural Communities** with an aim to increase the knowledge of employment opportunities for students and their families some of whom were new arrivals in Australia.

50 in 5 SBATs:

Launched in 2011, the 50 in 5 initiative was designed to increase employer knowledge and understanding of School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) and to encourage the employment of **School-Based Apprentices or Trainees** into their business. The project was coordinated by NMLLEN, with support from ANI, MADEC, SMGT and SuniTAFE.



Chris Mitchell, former Workplace Learning Coordinator at the 50 in 5 SBAT launch- 2011

Our sincere appreciation:

NMLLEN expresses its most sincere thanks to all the past and present organisations that have formed partnerships with NMLLEN to increase constructive pathway for our young people, leading to employment. NMLLEN has received great support, guidance and leadership from past and present board members, executive officers, and staff to deliver services across the community networks, with employers, training and education providers, Mildura Rural City Council and the Department of Education and Training.

Ron Broadhead, Former Executive Officer (2008- 2020) and Former board member (2001-2007)

Ron was associated with the NMLLEN for 20 years. He was a volunteer committee member in 2001 before commencing in the Executive Officer's position in 2008. Ron provided strong leadership in supporting both board members and staff to achieve some outstanding results for our community, brokering partnerships with education and industry. Ron devoted enormous amounts of time, energy, and dedication, striving to achieve better outcomes for young people in our community.



Ron Broadhead with winner of the SuniTAFE VET Student of the Year Awards 2019, Jodine Closter

Special thanks to the following NMLLEN past Board members for their efforts over the last 20 years:

Heather Hewitt (deceased), Chair NMLLEN (2001-2005)
Gordon Searle, (deceased) Chair (2006) and Deputy Chair (2001-2005)

Gary Simpson, Chair (2007-2008)
Fiona Harley, Former Chair, NMLLEN (2009-2018)
Peter Byrne, Deputy Chair, NMLLEN (2007-2015)
Chris Hobart, Secretary (2012—2018)
Gordon Jennings, Committee Member (2001-2006)
Pat Thorburn, Committee Member (2004-2008)
Sandra Stewart, Committee Member (2005-2015)

Current Board Members:

Anne Mansell, Chair, NMLLEN (2019 to present)
Geoff Dea- Deputy Chair (2017- present), NMLLEN Committee Member (2016)
Peter Devilee, Treasurer (2011- present)
Melissa Wade, Secretary (2019 – present)
Rod Martin, Executive Officer (2021)

Current Committee of Management:

- Belinda Hudak
- Cr Cyndi Power
- Peter O'Donnell
- Janet Hicks
- Greg Kluske
- Graeme Forrester
- Bethany Simpson
- Mark Morgan
- Deb Neal
- Trudi Chant
- Karen Levey
- Joelle Brown

Advancement of VETDSS in schools through Regional Trade Training Centres:

The Mildura Regional Trade Training Centre (MRTTC) is a partnership with NMLLEN and 12 consortium schools established in 2013 for students to access vocational education training courses and increase Pre-VET and VET pathways to address national and local skills shortages in traditional trades and emerging industries. The Deakin and Riverside Trade Training Centres (located at Mildura Senior College and St. Joseph's College, Mildura Mercy Campus) are the two major facilities delivering vocational education training delivered to secondary students (VETDSS) locally. MRTTC has led to an expansion of VET training in schools, improved Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates and is addressing local skill shortages in traditional trades and emerging industries.



Chris Mitchell, Allison Vodic, Peter Devilee, Paula Robinson, Ron Broadhead at the launch of Deakin Trade Training Centre -2014