

Youth Expo aims to steer career paths

THIS year's Youth Expo was held at the Mildura Central Shopping Centre last week, bringing together a large number of local organisations and educational institutions who participated in the careers advice event.

The Youth Expo showcases career opportunities, registered training providers, upcoming training courses, sport and recreation activities as well as volunteering opportunities.

Facilitated by the Mildura Rural City Council, the Youth Expo is a multi-agency event that aims to improve young people's wellbeing by increasing their awareness and use of agencies and services that are available in our region.

Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network (NMLLEN) also played a pivotal role in the organisation of the event.

NMLLEN is a not-for-profit organisation that works closely with schools, students, and the industry to identify gaps in education and training, provide advice on local and state-wide policy issues at both the strategic and operational level and broker cross sector partnerships to better support young people.

Funded by the State Government, Northern Mallee LLEN is one of the 31 LLENs across Victoria that were established in 2001 with the objective of improving career pathways for young people.

NMLLEN Project manager Natika Mitselburg said that Northern Mallee Leaders had arranged for presentations from a variety of organisations to be held during the Expo.

"We go into schools and help the schools and their students connect with employers," Ms Mitselburg said.

"We assist the students to understand their career options and help them find a pathway into a career that interests them and we try to meet their needs in that regard."

"NMLLEN also provides students with job readiness advice such as what is expected of them in an interview, how they should present themselves and general guidance on a number of fronts."

"We also let them know that where they might start isn't where they have to end and that they will have a number of options going forward."

"The beginning is only the beginning and they may well choose another career pathway later on, given there are so many opportunities out there."

"For example we had Lower Murray Water give a presentation today and there are so many opportunities with that one organisation. Be it administration, engineering, electrical and mechanical jobs - a wide variety of areas in which you can forge a career."

"And so that is what this Expo is



GOOD ADVICE: La Trobe University Student Ambassador, Michael Carty speaks with SuniTAFE student Louise Walls at the Expo and BELOW: NMLLEN Structured Workplace Learning Coordinator Dale Harvey with NMLLEN Project manager Natika Mitselburg at last week's Youth Expo at Centro.

all about. We want to open student's minds to the huge range of opportunities that are available to them in our region."

Trade based jobs are in high demand and students can undertake VCAL (The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) studies in a wide range of fields at secondary school and then go onto do an apprenticeship of further expand their learning

and qualifications at SuniTAFE.

The VCAL curriculum aims to provide the skills, knowledge and attributes to enable students to make informed choices about employment and educational pathways.

"Many schools offer opportunities to do VET (Vocational Education and Training) subjects - it's massive."

"It opens the doors and whether they want to go to university or to do

a trade the VET subjects can open so many doors for those students," Ms Mitselburg said.

"And during their schooling they can undertake on-the-job work experience which gives them an insight into what that industry is like and if they are suited to it and that can help them choose a pathway or try something else."

"We really encourage employers



to give students that opportunity to spend a week in their workplace to experience what that industry is like and if we can get more students into their industry it is a bonus for that business in the long run. And it is also about being able to keep kids local and have them fill the jobs of today and into the future.

"I think it is also really important for parents of the students to learn what opportunities are out there for their children. A student may not be academically minded at school but that doesn't mean they can't shine in a VET subject and lead to them being the head of a big organisation one day the sky is the limit."

"And so teaching students and parents that there are stepping stone stones to an amazing career pathway and knowing what they are is important to understand."

NMLLEN Structured Workplace Learning Coordinator Dale Harvey said that the State Government contracts them to undertake their career pathway guidance work in Mallee.

"We are contracted by the Department of Education to work with schools in the Northern Mallee region," Mr Harvey said.

"We have 15 participating secondary schools and our territory extends as far as Murrayville."

"The organisations present at the Expo are all doing an excellent job in providing an understanding of the career options available for young people in our area."

"There are so many good businesses and organisations in this region and the career pathways within them are quite extensive and forever growing."

SuniTAFE student Louise Walls 17, is currently undertaking the VCAL course specialising in community services and she went to the Expo to seek advice on furthering her career opportunities.

"I kind of know what I want to do but I don't really know where I want to go in the future and so I'm here at the Expo to see what options might be available to me," she said.

La Trobe University Student Ambassador, Michael Carty was on hand to speak with Louise and many other young students who attend the Youth Expo.

"We have had a lot of younger students coming to us already to see what option may be available to them at La Trobe and what pathway to take to enable them to go to uni once they have finished the studies they are undertaking now," Mr Carty said.

"With La Trobe it's all about different pathways not just after Year 12 and going on to do a Bachelor, there are many other different things that students can do and these days they don't have to leave Mildura to pursue those tertiary courses."

- JOHN DOOLEY

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