



# Annual Report 2024



Education and Training

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## About Us

**NMLLEN** actively supports 15 schools across the LGA, including Robinvale, by fostering community collaboration and providing opportunities for young people to successfully transition into the workforce.

### **Our Mission**

Facilitating strategic partnerships with stakeholder groups, to improve outcomes in education, training and employment for young people

### **Our Vision**

Career pathways leading to education, training and employment.

### **Our Values**

Integrity: Respectful, responsive & reliable

Innovative: Creative thinking identifies opportunities

Accountability: Responsive & independent

Education: Support youth access for participation in industry focused training

**NMLLEN** focuses on improving education, training, and employment outcomes for young people. We achieve this by partnering with local businesses, schools, and community organisations, offering tailored work placements, career guidance, and pathways to the workforce.

## **STRATEGIC FOCUS OUR PRIORITIES**

### **BRIDGE THE GAP AND INSPIRE**

Through pathways planning and supported involvement in education, training and employment

### **BUILDING AND ENCHANCE SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS**

Place based approach for collective impact

### **BUILD AND STRENGTHEN OUR FINANCING SOURCES**

Ensure sustainability to increase resources

### **ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

To be recognised as a professional proactive and valued place based organisation

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## Chair & Executive Officer's Report

We are proud to present the **NMLLEN Annual Report for 2024**, a year in which we continued to strengthen our commitment to connecting secondary-aged students with meaningful, real-world learning opportunities. As part of our ongoing partnership with the Department of Education Victoria, NMLLEN has successfully administered the School to Work Program across the Northern Mallee region.

In 2024, NMLLEN maintained its momentum by fostering strong partnerships with local industries and educational institutions to create work-based learning experiences. These experiences not only aligned with students' needs but also addressed the local workforce's demands. This collaborative approach remains central to our vision of empowering students to seamlessly transition into the workforce.

One of our key achievements this year was the facilitation of **169** locally secured workplace learning opportunities consumed. This included **67** Work Experience placements and **102** Structured Workplace Learning placements. These opportunities gave students a practical understanding of the work environment and provided a valuable opportunity to develop skills that will serve them in their future careers.

NMLLEN also continued to deliver engaging and informative school-to-work events that reached an extensive audience. In 2024, we engaged with **1943** students, **261** school staff, **47** parents, and **276** industry professionals through a range of presentations and workshops. Topics included school-to-work engagement, vocational education pathways, job readiness, local industry trends, and mock interviews. These events aimed to provide students with the knowledge and tools needed to successfully navigate their career pathways, particularly in sectors that are critical to the region's economy, such as **Community Services, Allied Health, STEM, Agriculture, and Engineering**.

Through our industry partnerships and targeted career events, we have been able to provide students with career immersion experiences. For instance, the support we provided for students studying Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance led to successful workplace placements across various industries, highlighting the importance of place-based career pathways in meeting local workforce needs.

NMLLEN has also continued to manage the **VET Cluster Transport Program**, which this year supported **68** students to access vocational education and training courses. This funding enabled students to participate in high-quality, accredited training programs that will support them in securing future employment opportunities.

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Our contribution to a number of significant regional initiatives has been vital in addressing workforce development challenges. Key events included:

- **Skilling the Mallee School Industry Roundtable:** A collaboration between industry leaders, school representatives, and the Jobs Skills Council to identify solutions for workforce development.
- **Rural Allied Health Training Plan Forum:** A forum that discussed strategies for attracting, educating, and retaining allied health professionals in the region.
- **Aligning Health & Care Education in Northern Victoria Project – Industry Roundtable:** Focused on ensuring that graduates remain in the region and contribute to the local workforce by collaborating with tertiary education providers and industry stakeholders.
- **Securing the Next Generation in Farming and Food Careers:** In collaboration with University of Melbourne, NMLLEN supported research aimed at improving the retention of young people in the agri-food sector. This project also involved NMLLEN assisting University of Melbourne in reaching secondary school students.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the tireless work and dedication of our team. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to **Rod Martin**, our Executive Officer until June 2024, for his outstanding leadership and commitment to the organization. Special thanks to **Dale Harvey**, our School to Work Coordinator, **Peta Maas**, our Administration Manager, and our two project officers, **Monica Trehan** and **Natika Mittelberg**. Together, their collective efforts ensured the successful delivery of our programs and the development of vital industry connections that directly benefit our students.

As we look forward to 2025, we remain committed to our mission of supporting the region's students in building the skills and experience they need to thrive in their chosen careers.

**On behalf of the NMLLEN Board, we thank you for your continued support and look forward to furthering our impact in the community.**

**Anne Mansell**  
Chair



**Nat Mouvet**  
Executive Officer

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# School to Work Program



**Dale Harvey**  
Coordinator

NMLLEN is funded by the Victorian State Government to run the School to Work program. We team up with local employers, industry experts, and schools to give students better access to work-based learning opportunities.

Our focus is on local industry needs ensure that students gain the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the region's workforce demands.

## **Opportunities offered by the School to Work program:**

- Work experience
- Structured workplace learning (SWL)
- School-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SBATs)
- Workplace visits and industry tours
- Life skills programs and work-readiness activities

## **How these opportunities help students:**

- Show how their education connects to career paths
- Explain what employers expect
- Develop employability skills
- Make informed career decisions
- Stay engaged and complete secondary education

Some work-based learning is part of vocational education and training (VET) programs, which can be included in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) or Victorian Pathways Certificate.

Government schools get SBAT support from the Head Start program. NMLLEN works with Head Start to support work-based learning.

Students and school staff can search for work-based learning opportunities using the School to Work Portal. Employers from various industries collaborate with NMLLEN to post these opportunities on the portal.

### VET Trade Training Centres

Mildura Senior College (Deakin Trade Training Centre)  
St. Joseph's College (Riverside Trade Training Centre)  
Red Cliffs Secondary College

### Department of Education

Jobs Skills Pathway Team  
Head Start  
VET Coordinators

### Registered Training Organisation

SuniTAFE

### Career Non for Profit Partners

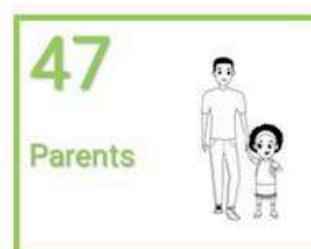
Sunraysia Careers Network  
Australian Centre for Career Education (CEAV)

### Tertiary Educators

Deakin University  
University of Melbourne  
Federation University  
La Trobe University

## 161 Industry Partners

Agriculture & Environment—Automotive—Building & Construction—Business Services -  
Creative Industries—Community & Early Childhood Ed—Digital Media & Technologies—  
Engineering—Health—Hospitality—Manufacturing—Retail—Sports & Recreation—Transport &  
Logistics



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## 2024 Highlights

### **The Northern Mallee Horticulture Immersion Program**

The NMHI Program for 2024, led by Chaffey Secondary College, offers Year 9 students a valuable insight into the horticulture industry. The program successfully partnered with several secondary schools and incorporated industry tours and farm visits as part of the School to Work Program, thanks to NMLLEN's support.

This extensive program not only enhances students' knowledge of the horticulture industry but also equips them for future educational and career opportunities in related fields.

A notable highlight was the provision of a John Deere Tractor from Haeusler's, which has assisted in maintaining the Chaffey Secondary College Farm and supported a variety of educational activities for NMHI Program participants.

The program has enabled a solid foundation for student engagement in the horticulture industry and associated educational courses.

### **Get VET Presentations**

Throughout 2024, NMLLEN, in partnership with the Skills and Jobs Centre and SuniTAFE, delivered Get VET presentations to Year 9 students across the region. These sessions, engaged 335 students and 24 staff, providing essential information for subject selection for Year 10 and insights into Vocational Education and Training Delivered to Secondary Students programs.

### **Job Readiness/Mock Interviews**

Students participated in mock interviews with industry guest interviewers from the Skills and Jobs Centre, SuniTAFE and NMLLEN staff. This initiative provided students with valuable experience in job applications and interviews, focusing on developing key skills for future employment.

### **Vic Vice Virtual Reality Goggles**

Northern Mallee LLEN introduced VIC VICE Virtual Reality sessions to secondary schools throughout the region. Students from Robinvale, St. Joseph's College Mildura, Mildura Senior College, and Mildura Specialist School participated in immersive simulations, exploring various career paths and gaining practical insights into real-world work environments. These sessions sparked discussions about future opportunities, leaving students inspired and motivated to pursue their passions.

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### **STEM Clean Energy Event**

The STEM Idols – Clean Energy event hosted by Northern Mallee LLEN brought together over 200 attendees, including 140 Year 9 students, industry representatives, and school staff. The event aimed to build interest in the future workforce in high-demand STEM areas, particularly in Clean Energy career pathways.

### **Department of Education VET Transport Project**

The Transport Fund Project successfully supported increased participation and choice in VET subjects for 68 students across the Northern Mallee by offering schools tailored travel solutions. The project was highly successful and was offered once more in 2025.

### **OnTrack Connect Program**

On Track Connect is a state wide program delivered locally by each LLEN to supports school leavers within six months of finishing school. Each year, NMLLEN contacts young people from the area and arms them with the much needed support to get them back on track towards their education and/or employment goals. This important assistance is given to the young person for up to three months. Using the NMLLEN's community relationships, young school leavers are connected to support services, training and employment opportunities. If a young persons situation is more complex, one on one support is provided to transition them into individually tailored programs and pathways.



Natika Mitselburg  
Project Officer  
On Track  
Coordinator



Monica Trehan  
Marketing &  
Project Officer  
STEM Clean Energy  
Event Coordinator



Peta Maas  
Administration  
&  
Support Officer



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## **Northern Mallee LLEN Case Study: Northern Mallee Horticulture Immersion Program 2024**

### **Introduction**

Northern Mallee LLEN with program partners successfully completed Group 1 participants in the Northern Mallee Horticulture Immersion Program 2024 (NMHI Program) over 17-weeks, in Semester 1 (Terms 1 and 2). Modelled on the NMHI Project 2023 funded by the Secondary Schools Agriculture Fund (SSAF) the 2024 version was extended from 9 weeks of delivery to 17 weeks. This allowed for the program to have a greater impact with regards to the purpose of the program.

A feature of the program was the diverse range of industry immersion experiences and workplace tours to increase student exposure to the variety of work in agriculture and related areas with an emphasis on the Horticulture Industry and its various sectors in the Northern Mallee Region. The NMHI Program supported connections to local industry and an understanding of local career pathways and new industry technologies.

The NMHI Program has an extensive collaboration framework with 26 program partners including Industry, Associations, Government Bodies, Registered Training Organisation, University and Suppliers. The NMHI Program is reviewed after each program is delivered with new program partners considered and added for industry excursion, incursion to Chaffey SC Farm or program support as an information service for employment, education and training with an emphasis on study and career pathways.

NMHI Program enrolled 13 students for Semester 1, from five participating Senior Secondary Schools, Chaffey Secondary College (Lead School) and partnering schools Merbein P-10 College, Mildura Specialist School, Red Cliffs Secondary College and Irymple Secondary College. The enrolments included Male: 5 (38%) and Female: 8 (62%).

Chaffey Secondary College Farm was home to the NMHI Program, providing a hothouse, nursery, research plot, planter boxes, a larger commercial growing area and four rows of established grape varieties. The 'Hut' provided a comfortable classroom for participants. Industry partners provided in kind supplies to the program including woody tree varieties and farming tools and equipment.

### **Daily Format (week to week):**

- Undertake weekly hands-on activities including industry lead activities that encourage and consolidate connections made during horticulture industry visits.
- Develop an awareness of local jobs and cutting-edge digital technologies used in the horticulture industry which supports further understandings of projects undertaken.
- Attend industry immersion experiences and worksite visits to expose students to various horticulture industry sectors and career pathways.
- Industry sector research, career pathways, quiz and student reflection/evaluation rubric.

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Northern Mallee LLEN expected outcomes of the NMHI Program are to increase the number of secondary students entering further education, training, and/or employment in the Horticulture Industry over time.

### **Program Study Outcomes Focus**

To expose students to study pathway outcomes for future enrolments that lead to Horticulture and related sector-based occupations. They include:

- Increase VDSS enrolments in Horticulture and other industry related qualifications in Years 10, 11 and 12.
- Increase VCE Agriculture and Horticulture Studies enrolments and other industry related subjects in Years 11 and 12.
- Increase enrolments in Agriculture and Science related studies in Year 10.

The NMHI Program will enter 2025 offering a 17-week program in Semester 1 (Terms 1 and 2) as well as Semester 2 (Terms 3 and 4) to Year 9 students at partnering schools. Additionally Northern Mallee LLEN will assist past project/program graduates with an opportunity to connect with Industry Partners for work placement arrangements as a career pathway area of interest in our School to Work Program.



**NMHI Program 2024 Group 1 Participants, Haeusler's Group Tractor Demonstration at Chaffey SC Farm.**

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## **Northern Mallee LLEN Case Study: STEM Idols – Clean Energy Even 2024t**

The Northern Mallee LLEN hosted the STEM Idols – Clean Energy event, attended by over 200 participants, including 140 Year 9 students, industry representatives, and school staff. The event aimed to inspire students by showcasing careers in the growing clean energy sector, aligned with national and state sustainability goals. The Australian and Victorian Governments' commitment to net-zero emissions and renewable energy growth presents exciting career pathways in STEM fields such as engineering, electrical, and laboratory skills.

### **Event Highlights and Engagement**

The event was emceed by Leonie Walsh, Victoria's Lead Scientist and Women in STEMM Ambassador, whose advocacy for STEM careers inspired students. Participating schools included St. Joseph's College, Trinity Lutheran College, and others, with students traveling over two hours from remote areas, demonstrating the strong regional interest in clean energy careers.

The event featured hands-on activities and industry insights. Agriculture Victoria's Get into Digi.Ag workshop introduced students to digital agriculture technologies such as coding soil moisture sensors, while RayGen Resources provided virtual tours of their solar farm, offering a look into renewable energy production. SuniTAFE and Mildura Rural City Council showcased electric vehicle displays, while ALTSA and Lower Murray Water led workshops on lab skills and environmental science.

### **Guest Speakers and Industry Insights**

Keynote speakers included Rebecca Wells, CEO of Mallee Regional Innovation Centre, and Indigo Jagger from RayGen, who shared career insights and inspired students to explore clean energy sectors. The speakers highlighted the transformative role of renewable energy and technology in agriculture, water management, and sustainable practices.

### **Feedback and Impact**

Teachers noted the event's ability to connect STEM career pathways with practical applications. Over 30% of students expressed interest in pursuing STEM careers, particularly in engineering and lab skills. Educators indicated they would integrate event insights into their curricula, with some requesting stronger industry connections and more structured activity schedules. Industry partners also provided valuable feedback, suggesting future opportunities for deeper student engagement through hands-on experiences.

### **Industry Collaboration**

The event was supported by key industry partners, including RayGen, SuniTAFE, and Lower Murray Water, with plans to create more work-based learning opportunities for students. An industry feedback session in November focused on exploring how to maintain engagement and provide ongoing learning opportunities in clean energy.

The STEM Idols – Clean Energy event successfully connected students to career pathways in clean energy, providing them with the knowledge and skills to contribute to Australia's sustainability goals. The collaboration between educational institutions and industry demonstrated the value of hands-on, real-world STEM education, highlighting the importance of continued partnership in shaping the workforce of the future.

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### Comments from the teaching staff:

"Quite comprehensive with a number of areas for exploration and innovation for exploring STEM careers. Being from a rural setting, these types of opportunities help open the minds of students to make connections between their segmented learning environment and how that relates to the wider world."

– **James Paterson, Werrimull P-12 School**

We are looking to increase curriculum exposure for science into Agriculture and Horticulture. This was a good initial first look at potential areas to include in units. It would be great to see strong connections made for the students of the benefits for them to enter the industry in a science/STEM capacity."

– **Jo Biggins, Robinvale College**

"I would like to get some of the guest speakers and industries to meet with our younger students as I feel their knowledge of STEM both generally and in the community is lacking.

– **Sam Alexander, St. Joseph's College**

"We are going to order some tensiometers."

– **Carlie Kee, Irymple Secondary College**

### Comments from the students:

"I'd just like to say thanks for giving us an opportunity to experience new things!"

– **Lesieli Masima, Robinvale College**

"I think it was a great workshop and I had a great day out."

– **Klara Hatt, Robinvale College**

### Comments from Industry:

"Thank you for inviting us to this event. We learned a lot ourselves by participating in this event. We never had to have an audience of Year 9 students before. We always reached out to engineering graduates, so it was a learning for us how to pitch our company to Year 9 students." – **Vanessa Murphy, Chief People Officer from RayGen**

"While we demonstrated the experiments, in the future, it would be great if students could do some hands-on activities such as wearing lab coats in a pop-up lab and do some experiments themselves". – **Ray Harris, General Manager, AL TSA labs**

"We can look at a Mini Expo that could translate STEM into a career and the respective disciplines. For example- within the Engineering field of STEM, Architects conduct a seminar." – **Leigh Krake, Program Manager, Lower Murray Water**



**Students observing chemical titration experiments at the AL TSA labs interactive display**

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# Committee of Management

**NMLLEN thanks the new, retiring and continuing Committee of Management members for their contributions in 2024**

The following are the returning and new Committee Members elected at the 2024 AGM

## **Chairperson**

Anne Mansell

## **Deputy Chairperson**

Charmaine Callis

## **Treasurer**

Brett Millington

## **Secretary**

Peter O'Donnell

## **Committee Members**

Greg Kluske

Belinda Hudak

Cr Troy Bailey

Stuart Mehnsch

Rod Martin EO (Feb 2021-July 2024)

Nat Mouvet EO (Aug 2024 ongoing)

## **Retiring Members**

Peter Devilee

Geoff Dea

Karen Levey

## **NMLLEN Executive Committee**



Chair  
Anne Mansell



Deputy Chair  
Charmaine Callis



Secretary  
Peter O'Donnell



Treasurer  
Brett Millington



Executive Officer  
Nat Mouvet

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# Financial Report Summary



**NNMLLEN Annual General Meeting  
Wednesday, March 26, 2025**

## **2024 Treasurer's Report**

I am pleased to report that Northern Mallee LLEN continues to operate within its budget and remain financially healthy.

### **Income and Expenditure**

For the year 2024, our total income was \$663,650, which is \$838,956 lower than in 2023. This decrease is primarily due to the cessation of income from the Secondary Schools Agriculture Funding and the delivery of the Navigator program. As part of the cessation of delivering the Navigator program, \$326,330 was returned to the Department of Education in September 2024.

In terms of Grants in Advance for the School to Work Program, Transport Fund, and VET Cluster Coordination, all expenditure remains within budget and timelines.

Our total expenditure for the year was \$676,324, significantly lower than the \$1,497,049 spent in 2023. The year 2024 focused on consolidating the School to Work program, which impacted the scope of project work.

Despite the significantly reduced income and our budgeted deficit for the 2024 we managed to achieve a lower deficit than was anticipated of only \$12,674.

### **Balance Sheet**

As of December 31, 2024, Northern Mallee LLEN's balance sheet shows current assets of \$664,436, compared to \$991,190 at the end of 2023. Total assets stand at \$664,436, with total liabilities of \$228,565, including the Grants in Advance liability.

For more detailed explanations, I encourage members to read the Notes to the Financial Statements for the year ended December 31 2024 in the Annual Report. If anyone has any questions regarding the 2024 financial report, I would be very happy to discuss them at any time.

The Board considered the Financial Statements, including the Independent Auditor's Report, for the year ended December 31, 2024, at its March 2025 meeting and recommends its approval by members.

## Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.

Income and Expenditure Statement  
for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Income</b>			
Government Grants		516,777	1,440,001
Interest Income		15,980	13,117
Other Project Funding	9	71,665	40,592
Refunds & Reimbursements		59,228	8,896
Rental		-	-
		<b>663,650</b>	<b>1,502,606</b>
<b>Less Expenditure</b>			
Accounting		10,178	9,832
Advertising & Promotion		12,112	3,058
Audit Fees		3,000	2,800
Bank Fees & Government Duties		365	343
Catering Expenses		1,424	608
Cleaning		4,249	4,346
Computer Software		727	1,920
Consultancy		11,910	7,156
Depreciation		-	313
Electricity		2,353	2,101
Employee Benefits		(22,354)	10,301
Equipment		25,627	323
Fringe Benefits Tax		8,404	7,089
Insurance		4,433	5,184
Information Technology Support		5,310	3,651
Loss on Disposal of Fixed Assets		-	-
Motor Vehicle Lease Rental		19,145	18,618
Motor Vehicle Fuel		5,586	7,332
Printing, Postage & Stationery		5,716	5,989
Professional Development		941	7,923
Project Costs		109,166	950,247
Rates		5,387	4,941
Rent - Office		32,019	32,423
Repairs & Maintenance		511	52
Sponsorship & Donations		3,200	1,200
Staff Amenities & Gifts		1,960	439
Subscriptions & Affiliations		6,842	9,320
Telephone		4,808	5,680
Travel, Accommodation & Meals		1,559	1,936
Wages, Salaries & Superannuation		404,593	387,176
Website Expenses		1,440	1,535
Workcover		5,713	3,213
		<b>676,324</b>	<b>1,497,049</b>
<b>Net Surplus / (Deficit)</b>		<b>(12,674)</b>	<b>5,557</b>