

DRAFT
LODDON MURRAY NETWORK FOR VOCATIONAL AND ENTERPRISE
LEARNING

Rationale:

For a significant period of time industry in our region, and indeed across regional Victoria, has been experiencing critical levels of skill shortages as a direct result of a reduced number of young people entering many of our local industries and the massive expansion of industry presently occurring in the Loddon Murray region (see attachment 1 Regional Economic Development). Local companies have reported significant, long term difficulties in recruiting young people in certain skill areas. These skill shortages are now threatening the regions long term economic development with the availability of a suitably qualified workforce the number one constraint to growth of business in the Loddon Murray Region.

We believe there is a role for a more coordinated partnership between schools, TAFE, private RTO's, business, industry, government and the community to:

- respond to industry concerns about skill shortages through the development of active partnerships.
- facilitate the development of skills and knowledge of practical use to students to maximize their employment potential.
- establish a linked network of facilities to provide these skills and training within the Loddon Murray region.
- maximisation of both State and Federal initiatives around skill development, career awareness and skills migration.

For many years, industry, secondary schools and TAFE have tended to work in isolation from each other although this situation is beginning to be addressed at the local level, but with limited resources.

The state of the labour market and government policies favouring school retention, have promoted this. In addition, the traditional approach to vocational training in a range of disciplines has focused on the specific hand skills for a particular discipline, the 'hammers and spanners' approach. Many young people have not been attracted to this kind of career option.

A new and innovative approach is required. An approach that will broaden the narrow perception of technology education to include: communication, working in teams, numeracy, literacy and problem solving. One that will provide greater opportunities for real on-the-job training and involvement by industry in course design and implementation and that will facilitate the systematic participation of non-traditional players in education ie industry and community organisations.

Local Leadership:

The increased ability to establish an industry orientated education curriculum that provide a training culture within the region will lead to increased management skills thus reinforcing and expanding the intellectual capacity and leadership potential of the Loddon Murray region.

The region has generally low levels of higher education qualifications compared to the state average. There is a generally low level of formal qualifications held across the region. The LLEN data of 2004 indicated that in the Murray Mallee LLEN area, 37.1% of residents aged 15 and over have some type of qualification, compared with 46.3% in Victoria as a whole. The most common qualification is a certificate, having been attained by 15 per cent of the population.

Indigenous Study Opportunities

With approximately 2,800 Koorie residents across the Murray Valley, and comprising 4% of the Swan Hill area population, the region has one of the largest indigenous communities within Victoria.

For the Swan Hill Rural City, the area of greatest concentration of the Koorie population the attendance at education for indigenous children between ages 5 and 14 is on average 10% lower than with the non - indigenous community. The gap widens dramatically for those still in education after 14 years of age.

		% Attending Education
Indigenous	Males age 5 - 14	83%
	Females age 5 - 14	88%
Non Indigenous	Males age 5 - 14	94%
	Females age 5 - 14	95%
Indigenous	Males age 15 - 19	29%
	Females age 15 - 19	59%

It is envisaged that an enterprise approach to a training culture will increase the participation rate of young Koorie people thus increasing a creative and skilled workforce in the region.

OBJECTIVES:

This strategy of engagement and partnership with local education and training providers, industry, business and allied community groups will seek to through the Loddon Murray Vocational Enterprise Learning Network:

1. Provide a means for education and industry to respond to each other's needs and concerns on the basis of a partnership founded on mutual respect and common interests.
2. Ensure the flow of skilled and motivated work force into local skill shortage sectors.
3. Ensure that local young people who decide on employment in these sectors do so as a first option based on real information, having clearly developed employable skills and are very much aware of how their careers might develop.
4. Underpin long term regional skills needs and economic development of the Loddon Murray Region.
5. Develop a close partnership with TAFE, private RTO'S and senior secondary schools so to guarantee no duplication of resources or effort.
6. Create a sustainable and seamless school to work and training process.
7. Broaden the employment opportunities to retain people in the region.
8. Broaden the industry base of the region and provide incentive for new and emerging businesses to locate in the Loddon Murray region.
9. Broaden the business and management skill base within the region.
10. Provide incentive for the development and facilitation of regional transportation strategy to overcome isolation and access issues.

RESPONDING TO GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES:

This Loddon Murray Network for Vocational and Enterprise Learning would respond to many of the Victorian Governments initiatives that have been announced during 2005. The Centre would be responding to the “Moving Forward” statement that was announced in November by Premier Steve Bracks and Treasurer John Brumby. The centre would directly link with the following actions of this policy;

Action 3: Attracting more people to live, work and invest in provincial Victoria

Action 4: Managing growth in regional communities

Action 5: Community Enterprises in small country towns

Action 8: Building a skilled work force.

- Skilling up disadvantaged workers.
- New training opportunities in areas of high regional demand
- Boosting leadership skills

Action 11: Promoting sustainable development and better land management

Action 12: Creating new bus transport connections

The Loddon Murray Network for Vocational and Enterprise Learning would also;

Link to the Victorian Government’s “Next Generation Food Strategy” by:

- establishing an industry oriented education curriculum,
- promoting the importance of a training culture and management skills within the region,
- identifying skill and training needs and negotiating appropriate delivery,
- improving occupational health and safety performance in the region.

Be responding to Local Government needs in areas such as:

- developing new strategies to stop the drift of young people out of the region or to encourage them back once they have completed their education and training,
- working with communities in local provision of post-secondary education and broadening availability of ongoing local careers rather than part-time or seasonal jobs,
- ensuring people are actively engaged in community issues and that training in areas such as entrepreneurship and leadership is made available, and provision for the delivery of training in business development and managerial skills,
- technologies and entrepreneurship to ensure that the region is able to provide sustainable employment opportunities and to participate in the global economy,

- development of a new industry to broaden the economic base of the region,
- expansion of the business management skills base of the region,
- providing increased business and employment opportunity to retain local youth,
- promoting alternatives for supplementary business/income opportunities for existing agriculture enterprises,
- providing increased regional promotion opportunities.

Be value-adding to Catchment Management Authority's Land and Water Management Strategy in the following key result areas:

- the Loddon Murray community acknowledging the importance of connection to the region,
- maintained and enhanced community well-being,
- skilled, young, diverse people attracted and retained in our community,
- training program developed for community members to ensure their long-term, effective, participation at public forums,
- schools actively engaged and involved in delivering land and water management education programs;
- increase in the stock of human capital via the integration of people sharing their knowledge with the community,
- increased social capital through networking between students, schools, businesses, industries and organisations sharing a vision and working to achieve the outcomes, and
- ability to utilise the schools-community educational projects to act upon local concerns, address needs and work towards long term solutions to solve issues.
- creating an increased connection and sense of ownership between the community and the regions natural resources, ie waterways.

Link to the Victorian Governments' "Fairer Victoria Statement" in areas such as:

- building a new partnership with Indigenous Victorians
- flexible, joined-up approaches and services to improve the continuity of care,
- building capacity in disadvantaged communities and building stronger communities,
- changing the way government works with communities
- developing better ways of working together at a regional and local level
- increasing sustainable employment opportunities for Victorians,
- address emerging labour and skills shortages,
- improving quality, planning and managing for better service quality and, strengthening prevention and early intervention options.

PROJECT BRIEF

BUSINESS CASE:

The proposed study into the business case for the Loddon Murray Network for Vocational and Enterprise Learning would highlight the link between the stakeholders (young people, families, community organisations, education institutions, government agencies, local government, industry and local businesses).

The Loddon Murray Enterprise Learning strategy would aggregate the regional training needs across the 3 Local Government Authorities and investigate the industry training gaps and opportunities across the region, which could be supported within the Enterprise Learning Network concept.

The study would develop an Enterprise Learning model and provide the mechanisms for sustainable operation of such a model. Areas to be included in the brief include funding sources and resources required to implement the model.

Based on community and industry consultations that have already occurred in the region the study would include, but not limited to, the possible development of an aquaculture centre (see attachment 2) and also a hospitality business based along similar lines to the restaurant training model presently operating successfully in Hastings, on Western Port Bay called the Pelican Pantry (see attachment 3). Key aspects of the study would include the relevant skill needs, training opportunities and requirements of the following industries, but not necessarily confined to;

- **Commercial Cookery,**
- **Horticulture,**
- **Baking**
- **Conservation and Land management,**
- **Aquaculture**
- **Automotive**
- **Building**

Other key elements of the study would be to;

- Investigate the training gaps within business and industry across the region.
- Investigate emerging business and industry opportunities, establishing priorities.
- Investigate training opportunities to support emerging industry.
- Carry out an audit of training infrastructure in the Loddon Murray region.
- Provide a governance model for the establishment and running of the Loddon Murray Network for Vocational and Enterprise Learning,
- Develop transport and communication strategies that would ensure stakeholder access and ownership.
- Provide a comprehensive business plan that would allow for a network implementation and long term sustainability, including a detailed costing of any additional infrastructure requirements in order to establish the Network.
- Investigate the opportunities for training at tertiary level in the areas listed above.

The local contribution for this study would be \$25,000.

ATTACHMENT 1:

Regional and Economic Development

This project has been developed as a response to broad community concern with the lack of training and up-skilling opportunities in the Loddon Murray Region and a desire from industry and business in the region to have a skilled, flexible and creative workforce.

The current economic expansion of the region, based on the major and corporate investment in irrigated agriculture has highlighted the growing need to attract skilled staff and to provide opportunity for local youth to undertake careers in this growing local industry and in the support services.

The clear economic driver of the region is agriculture, with the areas of agriculture, forestry and fishing engaging over 31% of all employment in the 2001 census.

The region is developing a surprising level of economic diversity, both in the split between dry land agriculture and irrigated horticultural activity and in activities such as manufacturing, the service industries and tourism. Other areas of note include transport, construction retail and wholesale trade and property & business services.

Further, the manufacturing industry, particularly in the areas of engineering, wineries, tank production and abattoirs is a particularly strong aspect of the regional economy, engaging 7% of all those in employment.

According to current census figures, 41,789 people reside within the 100km radius of Swan Hill. While 10,000 of these live in Swan Hill and 5,000 in Kerang, the balance are principally spread along the length of the Murray Valley both on farm and in numerous small towns. There is a small number within the dryland region, away from the Murray River, in smaller townships and on farm.

The Swan Hill Rural City has produced a paper outlining the 14 major projects under planning or development within the municipality. Ranging from ethanol plants to large corporate expansion of the almond and olive industries, it is estimated the investment in these 14 ventures alone will be \$410million. (Refer Appendix 1).

The Loddon Shire has a new \$40 million olive oil processing plant at Boort which is creating in excess of 40 new jobs with another 90 people to be employed in the olive groves. The Olivecorp project is the biggest of its type in Australia with the plant expected to process more than 50,000 tonnes of olives a year.

The Shire of Gannawarra similarly report an estimated investment of \$155million into their agricultural and manufacturing industries over the next 5 years.

As a consequence the region has experienced a relatively low unemployment rate of 4-5% for the past couple of years. The dilemma has been in attracting an adequate number of workers to support the developments underway.

The shortage of unskilled and semi-skilled labour is presently being addressed in some part by the importing of transient workers, use of specialist contract firms from

outside the district or through State Government initiatives such as the Skilled Migration program. It is felt, however by business and industry leaders in the region that the community itself could play a bigger part in addressing the skill shortage crisis in Regional Victoria.

Swan Hill and Kerang are provided vocational opportunities through TAFE and other providers, but principally as an adjunct to the main campuses in Mildura and Bendigo. While there are some training opportunities available within the region, the Loddon Murray Community Alliance would like to explore innovative ways to increase the access and participation in skills development that is currently being delivered in the region and for future business and industry needs through an enterprise learning approach.

ATTACHMENT 2:

The Loddon Murray Centre for Enterprise Learning – Aquaculture

An innovative education and training program providing regional specific vocational training in natural resources management and other predicted industry growth areas. The Applied Learning Centre could be implemented in stages at sites across the region in the 3 Local Government Areas that constitute the geographical boundaries of the Loddon Murray Community Alliance to cater for young people, predominantly in post-compulsory education years and would provide a conduit to higher education, training and employment pathways within the region.

The Aquaculture Centre stage one, proposed to be located at the Sunraysia TAFE Farm Project, approximately 6km outside Swan Hill, will initially consist of a facility where selected fish species will be grown out for the regional hospitality industry and for seeding of the regional waterways

The proposed site incorporates existing education facilities and is directly serviced by irrigation and potable water supplies. An education program will be developed around a range of the elements of design, construction and management of the facility and will provide the springboard for diversification of the project.

Ongoing development and diversification of the Centre and the market sectors it enters will be part of the future learning opportunities. The Centre will ultimately be run on a commercial basis with the students working with the local hospitality industry and Department of Primary Industry and the Swan Hill Anglers Club to select and produce fish for a variety of identified purposes.

Future growth will see the Aquaculture Centre develop an Integrated Agri-Aquaculture Systems model where for example irrigation water used for the aquaculture may then be used to grow other farm-based crops or horticulture activities. This will allow for greater diversification and economy of scale for the Centre to be run on a viable commercial basis within three years.

Oversight and advice on the proposals for development and fields of activity of the Centre will be by a community and industry based Aquaculture Advisory Board. The regional industry representative group will use the product and the Centre as the basis for a regional identity and food marketing campaign.

The Aquaculture Centre will provide enterprise learning in the field of aquaculture and its allied disciplines and will include the nationally accredited Seafood Training Package through ANTA, education curriculum development, skills development in business enterprise as well as providing for the generic employment competencies now identified by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and by employers as being of equal value as specific vocational skills.

Within the initial three-year period the Loddon Murray Centre for Enterprise Learning - Aquaculture will have developed a regionally relevant, commercially sustainable business; expanded the regional knowledge of an additional industry opportunity; expanded the business development and management skills base of the region and provided increased employment and business opportunities for the youth of the region.

The project will have attained the following objectives:

- provide authentic learning opportunities for people to reach maximum potential in relation to future education, training and employment in their local communities,**
- develop local area innovative pathways to educate and engage people and communities in sustainable natural resources management and regional development,**
- value-add to existing regional school-based vocational training programs in improving student outcomes and providing articulated pathways to higher education and training,**
- engage volunteers in all aspects of the Aquaculture Centre implementation thereby increasing the diversity of our communities and building citizenship,**
- develop stronger networks of community and business leaders to support the engagement of people with an emphasis on youth in sustainable employment,**
- provide a positive approach to conservation, farming and future economic growth,**
- foster an environment for people to be creative and entrepreneurial through enterprise skills development projects in partnerships with local community organisations, build a sense of regional community through consistent collaborative approaches by Alliance partners in the delivery of programs for engaging young people.**

ATTACHMENT 3:

Loddon Murray Centre for Enterprise Learning-Hospitality

AIMS OF THE CENTRE

• Community development initiative to provide education and training opportunities in hospitality in flexible delivery to improve the skills of participants and to provide employment outcomes for:

- Young people**
- Mature aged and disabled job seekers**
- Women returning to work**
- Sole parents**
- Indigenous community**

The centre could also deliver Certificate 3 and 4 courses in Commercial Cookery as well as offering Diploma courses in Hospitality. This cannot be presently done in the Loddon Murray region.