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# NCW Victoria

National Council of Women Victoria Inc.  
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## Goulburn Valley Branch

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20<sup>th</sup> April 2006

The Executive Officer  
Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee  
Level 8, 35 Spring Street  
MELBOURNE VIC., 3000

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed a submission to the Parliament of Victoria's Inquiry into Retaining Young People in Rural towns and Communities which has been prepared by one of our members, Mrs Pat Moran. It covers a number of concerns from our community in this matter. Would you please pass this submission on to the Chair of the Inquiry, Ben Hardman MP

We look forward to feed-back on the outcomes from the inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Anne R. Russell

Hon. Secretary Goulburn Valley Branch of NCWV Inc..

**The Executive Officer  
Rural and Regional Services and Development Committee  
Level 8, 35 Spring Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000**

### **Inquiry into retaining young people in rural towns and communities**

Greater Shepparton's population is approximately 60,000 people and the regional population 160,000. Several smaller, yet industrious towns abound the City, which is home to about 30,000 people. The growing population is diverse with the largest population of Indigenous people in regional Victoria, approximately 40 percent of non-English speaking background and a large refugee settlement of Arabic culture. More recently a number of families with young children and youth have sought refuge from Sudan and the Congo. Unfortunately Greater Shepparton was ranked in 2001 as the 9<sup>th</sup> most disadvantaged Local Government area in Victoria. The impact on all ages is therefore hard-felt.

Our school retention rates have improved due to the great work of the State government's local Goulburn Murray Learning and Employment Network (GMLLEN). Information from the Executive Officer, Jennifer Hippisley on 15th April 2006 quote -

'In Goulburn Murray LLEN - 1999 - 69.7% completed Yr 12 or its equivalent  
2003 - 73.6% completed Yr 12 or its equivalent  
compared with data that throughout Victoria where the figures were,  
1999 - 82.9% and in 2004 - 85.2%.'

These figures indicate an improvement in student retention but the rate of completion in this particular region is noticeably different from the overall picture in Victoria. Other valuable statistics are available through GMLLEN. However, newer courses have been developed which have given more choices to those young people who otherwise could not keep up with the work expected, and lost interest. Goulburn Ovens TAFE has had a major impact in providing such courses. Recent news about the revival of technical and trade courses, and the changes proposed to the apprenticeship field auger well for this community. North Shepparton Technical College removal was a severe loss to the education of many of our young people. Many former students are engaged in businesses of their own in this area.

At the moment there is financial hardship facing those who have managed to obtain apprenticeships – the purchase of essential tools being one of those. There is a critical shortage of skilled tradespeople, which urgently needs addressing. On May 5<sup>th</sup> 2006 there is an opportunity for secondary students to attend the World Skills and Try a Trade event in Melbourne. Transport costs are of concern and the Local Member is seeking subsidies for the large number indicating an interest. Viable courses are urgently needed for both professional academic and technical applicants.

In 2005 Melbourne University ceased its Division one nursing degree course opportunity. Latrobe University has taken up the degree course and was overwhelmed with interest from intending applicants. As with other areas there is a severe shortage of medical staff, and we are pleased that the Course recommenced in 2006 with 30 new students placed. More HECS places need to be applied to better suit the need to retain potential academics in Greater Shepparton.

There are many reasons why young people have to leave country towns seeking education and work. It is well known that it costs \$20,000 to re-settle a young person living away from home. Many of these young people have been employed after school hours to save and contribute to the cost – a hardship for many in this low socio-economic area. Many miss out because of this, when the only opportunity is to study away and to date are burdened by financial constraints.

Important to the retention of young people is the provision of an early opportunity to participate within sports, music and the arts; and the need to encourage a healthy lifestyle. The cost of participating in sports such as soccer, football, tennis and the cost of purchasing musical equipment is not available to many young people. This may be something for government to consider subsidising in partnership with sponsors in business or community organisations. Health and life education is sparse in the curriculum resulting in dreadful outcomes at an early age for a large number of our youth. Youth suicide, as is recorded in the regions, is totally unacceptable. Mental health resources are scarce and it is to be hoped that the government proposed funding will go to the right people – youth and their carers. Early intervention is a better alternative and may stem this in the future.

Also with the number of young people now living in single parent households the value of mentoring should be recognised as an essential voluntary role through community/neighbourhood houses and the schools as well. Youth needs to feel valued and have a sense of belonging and purpose within the wider community. The re-introduction of Social Studies to the school curriculum would be of significant value. Respect is another value, which seems to have slipped in the secondary school education system. Primary schools are doing a great job – this needs re-iteration.

Serious consideration should be given to the employment of youth workers in Local Government. There have been some gains in the well-being of our local youth in the past two years. Much more needs to be done.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to this Study, we look forward to seeing a difference in the future.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "per Anne K Russell".

Mrs Pat Moran

Member Goulburn Valley Branch of NCWV Inc..