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**GIPPSLAND EAST LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK**

“Working with the Victorian Learning & Employment Skills Commission”

&

“Servicing the Shires of East Gippsland and Wellington”

RECEIVED  
28/4/06

RRSDC  
Mr Ben Hardman MP  
Chairman  
Level 8, 35 Spring Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000

27 April 2006

Dear Mr Hardman

**Re: Parliamentary Inquiry – Retaining Young People In Rural Towns & Communities**

Please find enclosed the submission from the Gippsland East LLEN for the Parliamentary Inquiry – Retaining Young People In Rural Towns & Communities.

Thank you and kind regards

Linda Wilkinson  
Executive Officer

**SUBMISSION TO THE RURAL AND REGIONAL SERVICES AND  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – INQUIRY INTO RETAINING YOUNG  
PEOPLE IN RURAL TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES**

From  
**The Committee of Management, Gippsland East Local Learning and  
Employment Network**

A working party of the Gippsland East LLEN Committee met to discuss issues that are pertinent to the Terms of Reference.

**1. Identifying and examining the factors that influence young people in deciding to remain in or leave the rural communities in which they reside.**

**Independence** – many young people feel the need to launch themselves as an independent young person, and the move to Melbourne is regarded as something of a rite of passage to achieve this level of independence. In many instances friends influence their decision to move, and groups of friends may choose to move together.

There is some anecdotal evidence that indicates that young people who stay in town are perceived as failures.

**Opportunities** – Opportunities in rural and regional areas are limited. This applies to employment, training and education, transport and recreation/social opportunities. In some instances this may be perceived rather than real, and recent activities conducted by the LLEN have attempted to inform young people, parents and teachers of the opportunities that exist in their town and region. There are definitely limited training opportunities for those living outside larger centres with main TAFE campuses. Even those living somewhere like Orbost or Yarram have to re-locate for training or employment.

Local employers, contractors, and local government import workers from elsewhere, thus limiting opportunities for local young people.

In Gippsland East 32% of exiting year 12 students go on to University. This means that 68% look for other opportunities either within the region, or beyond. The LLEN is looking at ways to enumerate the numbers that leave and/or return or stay. The 2006 Census compared with the 2001 Census data may give us a figure of those who have moved since the last census.

Young people are high volume consumers, and they perceive Melbourne as the opportunity to acquire and consume. There is a perception of the limited access to good shops, cafes etc in the country.

**Transport** – Limited or no transport is a major influence on young people choosing or needing to leave the country. In a recent survey of young

people it has indicated that the major transport related influences on post-school decisions are:

- 81 % would need a car to access post-school opportunities
  - 73% may need to re-locate
  - 61% would like to be able to continue to study and remain at home
  - 72% would like to find a job close to home
  - 68% would need to access public transport to access opportunities
- This indicates that not all young people wish to leave home, or the country, but many are forced to by the inability to access opportunities. The most regularly used transport by young people in the region whilst they are still at school is the car – with friends and relatives.

For those without access to public transport or a car, the city is a much easier place to get around. If you have to re-locate to access jobs or training, young people probably feel that they may as well move to Melbourne rather than another country centre.

**Housing** – there is a shortage of affordable housing stock and rental properties that would allow young people to move out of home and gain independence, but not leave the region.

## **2. Identifying and examining the factors that influence young people in deciding whether or not to return to the rural communities in which they have previously resided following the completion of study, travel or other fixed term activities in other places.**

There is anecdotal evidence that indicates that young people return after 10-15 years away. This is often a sea-change move with a young family, or the need to be close to ageing parents.

Many of those who have stayed in the region are tradespeople who have gone on to develop their own businesses.

The major industry areas of the region, hospitality, tourism, retail and service industries usually attract older people – some who have been originally from the local areas and return as well-trained, more mature workers that are in demand.

Some young people face a sense of failure if they return to the country, particularly those who do not complete a course of study, or their chosen pathway.

Some return because of homesickness or an inability to support themselves in the city.

There are limited job opportunities for those young people in their 20s because of wage costs, they are beyond the opportunity to access traineeships/apprenticeships (perceived rather than real).

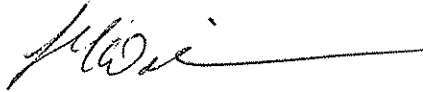
There appears to be limited social networks for young professionals in the regions.

### **3. Developing strategies and recommendations on steps that might be taken to increase the number of young people who decide to remain in or return to rural towns and communities.**

The Committee consider that the following strategies may be considered:

- That access to the Independent Youth Allowance be automatic in rural areas.
- That education and training providers develop a greater range of flexible delivery for distant areas. This would require TAFE and RTOs to increase flexibility.
- That promotion of regional skill shortage areas, with the support of employers, be undertaken. It may require employers to be more pro-active in this area. Some industry areas are concerned about ageing workforces and skill shortages, but are reluctant to look at strategies to redress this. One industry area that has been pro-active is the Civil Contractors Federation, which has been working actively with local training providers, employers and other agencies to establish some appropriate strategies to address the local skill shortage.
- Increase the number of pre-apprenticeship programs that address skill shortage areas. Expand funding sources to cover all RTOs, not just TAFE, and supply funding for up-to-date capital equipment for all RTOs.
- Redress the current mismatch between training and available jobs.
- Improve infrastructure eg. Transport, recreation, training opportunities and accommodation. Whilst we appreciate the tyranny of distance and small populations, creative methods of delivery, usage etc could be developed. Eg. The Let's GET Connected Transport Project partnerships that have improved access to school buses for post-school students.
- Support for apprentices to access training in Melbourne, whilst working in the country. Currently the apprentice or their employer has to cover travel and accommodation costs whilst in training.
- Some skill shortage areas (eg glazing where local employers have had to recruit from overseas) are small scale industries where demand for local training would be limited. These small scale industries may need extra support to ensure that they employ locally.
- An obligation for government departments, government agencies, and government funded agencies to employ a set percentage of local young apprentices/trainees each year as a condition of their funding agreements, Performance criteria assessments, Accountability frameworks, MOUs etc. eg. These employers should be required to employ 5% of their total workforce as young trainees or apprentices as a matter of course.

- Promotion of existing and predicted opportunities in the country to young people, parents, teachers etc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Linda Wilkinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Signed by: Linda Wilkinson, Executive Officer on behalf of  
Gippsland East Local Learning and Employment Committee of Management

26 April 2006

