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## Parliamentary inquiry into careers education

**Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) Submission  
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## Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and careers education

Victoria has a unique network of thirty-one Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) that create strategic partnerships in local areas to:

- » increase the number of young Victorians who complete Year 12 or equivalent to ensure they and society generate the benefits of education in a high skilled economy
- » create transition pathways for vulnerable young people aged 15 -24 years and ensure they get the skills, competencies, resilience, job search career management strategies, and work experience they need to succeed in work and life (Pope 2017).

In local partnerships we design initiatives, and test and re-test for what works in different contexts.

Evidence from our network supports the findings from studies internationally that show relatively small interventions in careers education in schools help young people:

- » engage in, and achieve at, school
- » transition to employment or further education
- » be more likely to be employed and earning a higher wage after school.

Interventions can help young people capitalise on information and opportunities, aspire to higher status occupations, and have better confidence and self-esteem (OECD 2003, Stokes et al 2003; Patton & Creed 2007; Callanan et al 2009; Sikora & Saha 2011; DEEWR 2012; NCC 2013; ILO 2016).

Evidence from our projects also shows innovation across the education and training system, would improve outcomes for young people, particularly by addressing the:

- » absence of careers support in schools
- » absence of accurate labour market information in communities
- » difficulty young people now face gaining work experience while in school, and
- » weakening and devaluing of, and endemic skills mismatch in, vocational education.

In establishing its government *Regions* and *Areas* within them, the Victorian Government has already resourced the infrastructure in which LLENs can deliver on these four priority areas. Further investment in LLENs, to add a specific careers education focus, and to universalize the related parts of its work, could radically transform the delivery of careers education in schools across Victoria.



While ours and other inventions have been found to work, information from our network shows Victoria's careers education is piecemeal, and is not meeting the needs of a large group of students.

## The challenge

### Young people are entering a changing world of work

Work is changing. Technology is transforming the types of work available, and creating increasingly flexible in work. Over the coming decades, technology will automate around 40% of all jobs in Australia, including 60% in regional areas, and 70% of entry level jobs (FYA 2015). New and interesting higher skilled industries and occupations are being created – more than half our current preschool students will work in jobs that don't exist yet (WEF 2016). Education and training systems need to respond to these changes to ensure young people are prepared.

Disruption is having a dramatic effect on the youth labour market. Casual and part time work have increased three-fold, and increasingly young people have “portfolio incomes” – pieced together from a range of sources (FYA 2015). Transition from school to work has become more difficult and it is now taking young Australians an average of 4.7 years to move from full time education to fulltime work – up from 1 year for their parents (in 1985) (Pope & Mutch 2015; FYA 2014). The majority of young people (52% in 2012) now ‘churn’ through periods of study, unemployment or time spent out of the labour force after education (Fry & Boulton 2013). This is pushing back other milestones like becoming independent, buying a house, and starting their own families.

While the labour market has been recovering from the GFC, youth unemployment remains at a structural high, and employment of 15 to 19-year-olds is falling (AFR 2017). Youth unemployment is more than double the overall rate at 12.2% and around a third (30%) of young people want more work but can't find it (i.e. are un- or under- employed) (Pope & Mutch 2015; BSL 2016). Some groups of young people are already experiencing unemployment rates over 25%, including in some Indigenous populations, rural and regional areas, lower socioeconomic status areas, and for young people with a disability (Pope & Mutch 2015; BSL 2016).

The concern about the current collapse of the youth labour market, is that it raises the risk that a significant number of young people are now missing the most crucial period in their lives for developing a base of experience that is imperative to secure a successful career (AFR 2017).

### School is not preparing all young people for the changed world of work

Despite the magnitude of change, many young people are not leaving school prepared (FYA 2014).

One in five young Victorians (20%) did not complete year 12 in 2016 (VCAA 2017), a significant problem in the new high skilled economy.

An even larger proportion of young Victorians are leaving school without skills. The 2015 *Programme for International Student Assessment* data showed over one third of 15-year-old students did not meet national proficiency standards for: reading (37%); maths (42%); and scientific literacy (37%) (ACER 2017).

The earlier 2012 survey also found Australian 15-year-olds did not meet national proficiency standards for other transferable skills that will be useful across jobs in the modern economy: financial literacy (30%); problem solving (35%); and digital literacy (35%) (Pope & Mutch 2015). Rates are higher for disadvantaged cohorts, including double for Indigenous Australians (Pope & Mutch 2015; ACER 2017). Australia's proficiency scores have been declining significantly over time, sending it down the OECD country's rankings, making our young people less competitive globally (ACER 2017).

These data show Australia's school system does not have the features of the high-performance countries whose education systems have adapted to economic change through a high-level vision and commitment for their education system that gives it coherence, a devolution to local areas for content, a strong focus on diagnostic teaching that ensures every student learns, and a commitment to high equity alongside high performance (OECD 2015). These systems have acknowledged that knowledge, skills and competencies are essential for young people to compete in the labour market and are transitioning their systems to ensure young people get them (FOE 2015).

### Careers education: work experience and work information are critical

A lack of the right skills is an issue faced by all age groups in the new economy, and is part of a broader debate needed to be had about change. While the wrong skills disadvantages everyone, the International Labour Office argues the reasons young people are *specifically* disadvantaged in labour markets, is because they lack job seeking and career management insights, work experience and networks with the world of work (ILO in Mann 2012a).

In relation to these three areas:

1. **Job seeking and career management insights:** Studies have shown there is a mismatch between career aspirations, projected labour demand, and the jobs young people eventually get (NCVER 2012; Mann et al 2013). Young people with uncertain or unrealistic career aspirations at age sixteen have been shown to be two to three times more likely to be disengaged from work or study by eighteen (Yates et al 2010).

While in school, young people need opportunities to develop the skills that will help them plan, develop and implement career goals:

- » **the ability to self-assess** personal values, strengths, limitations, interests and aspirations
- » **the ability to tell coherent career stories** about 'where I am going' and 'how I might get there'
- » **job-seeking abilities** to know how to find and follow up on job opportunities, apply for jobs, make career enhancing decisions, select life-long learning, and access and use career services and information (Moreland 2005; MCEECDYA 2010).

2. **Work experience:** A lack of work experience limits young people's opportunities to understand the world of work. One study has found young adults who could not recall any employer contact activities at school were five times more likely not to be engaged in employment, education or training and earned 16% less than peers who could recall four or more activities (Mann 2012b).



Work exposure and work experience:

- » **provides experience/information** that improves career decision-making and creates realistic expectations of work
- » **broadens the networks** that can connect people to opportunities, and
- » **boosts motivation to engage in school** by demonstrating the relevance of education to employment (Mann 2012a).

3. **Networks:** Networks are important sources of information and referral for exploring career ideas and finding, and moving around, work (Pope 2011). Networks made through formal education or volunteering have been shown to be particularly important for connecting people to career paths and better paid and more stable labour markets (Granovetter 1983; Chapple 2002; Finneran & Kelly 2003; Ioannides & Loury 2004 in Pope 2011). Programs that include work experience have been found to be valuable in broadening and developing the work-related networks of young people (Mann 2012b).

Networks:

- » **provide information** about occupations, industries, training opportunities and job vacancies
- » **provide referees**
- » **combat feelings of social isolation and low self-esteem** that can come with job search
- » **compensate for less experience and qualifications**
- » **attach people to jobs of longer tenure** (Granovetter 1983, Chapple 2002, Finneran & Kelly 2003 and Ioannides & Loury 2004 in Pope 2011).

## The solution

### Careers education is broken, but LLEN's partnerships show how innovation could fix it

In Australia, the careers education in schools that could help young people overcome their disadvantage, is piecemeal and young people have long expressed to government their worry about transition into the labour market, the need for more information about options and pathways, and more opportunities to gain experience (DEEWR 2013; Victorian Multicultural Commission 2015; Victorian Government Youth Consultation 2016). In one recent survey of young Australians half were not optimistic about future job prospects (50%), thought education had not prepared them for working life (49%), and thought their job prospects were worse than for their parents (70%) (Infosys 2016).

LLENs were set up because evidence has shown local partnerships developing local integrated responses are effective in addressing disengagement and poor school-to-work transition across different cohorts and localities (Dandolo 2014). The LLEN partnership approach:

- » **identifies the diverse groups at risk.** While official statistics crudely indicate they are more likely to be male and of low socio-economic status, local knowledge shows they include a variety of different



groups in different settings: young mothers; young carers; those living in out of home care; young offenders; Indigenous young people; homeless young people; immigrant and refugee youth; young people with disabilities; and those experiencing mental health issues, etc (KPMG 2009).

- » **builds partnerships to create local solutions for successful engagement in school.** Successful engagement requires a local view of the complex factors impacting on young people and the school system. It is critical the development of early school-to-work transition interventions happens early in school, because a comprehensive systematic review by the International Labour Office has shown post-school labor market programs are not successful (ILO 2016). They do not compensate for knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in the education system (ILO 2016).
- » **draws support from the whole community including industry, community organisations and families.** Transition risks to young people cannot be addressed by schools alone. The resources to solve them lie in other parts of the community, but silos often prevent these resources getting to young people.

From our network's experience we can identify an urgent need for four interventions in the area of careers education in schools: careers support in schools; accurate information about the labour market; the integration of work readiness and real-world experiences across the school curriculum; and effective pathways for all young people. In each of these areas LLENs have developed interventions that have worked that could be universalised by the Victorian Government to improve careers education. Examples are provided for each of the four areas.

## 1. Careers support in schools

Careers advice in schools has been shown to build aspiration and help students learn to investigate options, which makes a difference to transition and outcomes. Feedback from our local networks describes a minimal level of career guidance in most schools across Victoria, with careers support not prioritized as a pivotal role. Many students go through school without ever speaking to someone about careers, let alone experiencing a work placement or part time job. Around half (52%) of career advisors are part-time and have less than \$3 per student to spend on career education (Clarke 2015). Careers teachers report they do not have enough time to spend with students (77%), employers/industry (68%), other career professionals (64%), or staff (62%) (CICA 2014). There is little professional development and support is often relegated to classroom teachers who have little understanding of skills shortages, experience of modern workplaces, or knowledge about the issues young people face.

Improvement in this area could be achieved through **increased oversight, vision and funding for Victorian Government's Managed Individual Pathways program (MIPs)**, which provides funding for careers specialists in schools to help students develop pathways plans. LLEN networks report this program currently does not have high-level status in schools and is not done well enough across all schools. Careers planning programs could be extended to create careers support with dedicated well trained and resourced specialist staff, who are provided ongoing professional development that



ensure they are up-to-date with labour market information, and, exposed to methods to connect students to work, such as networking with industry, co-design with students and industry.

### LLEN example. Using Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) to help rural young people transition to work or further education

North Central LLEN, formed a partnership between nine local rural schools to join their Victorian Government MIPs funding together to hire two external careers specialist workers. These workers help every student in the region from Year 10 develop a “pathways plan”.

The workers help students explore what they are interested in, learn about/experience related careers, select subjects, find out-of-school activities (for example, driving lessons or volunteering), and talk to parents. Close to the end of school the workers run higher education information nights with universities coming to the area, provide information on scholarships, hold parent information nights, and find accommodation for students going to open days. They also help prepare applications, CVs and job interviews to help young people transition up to 24 months after school.

Young people like having an “external” trusted advisor, and the support appears to be working. The area had some of the biggest improvements in transition outcomes of all areas across Victoria between the 2006 and 2011 Censuses.

Improving MIPs could see careers support in schools achieved across all Victorian communities.

Read the MIPS partnership showcase here: <http://www.ncllen.org.au/documents.html>

## 2. Accurate information about the labour market

LLEN networks report accessible labour market information for schools and communities is weak or non-existent in most Victorian communities. Surveys of young people have shown most young people rely on their parents or websites for information, but these sources might not understand the change happening in the economy and therefore the real opportunities (Year 13 survey unpublished data). The lack of labour market information has led to an endemic skills mismatch (FOE 2015), and a situation where 60% of young post-secondary students are enrolled to study in fields where at least two thirds of the jobs will be affected by automation (FYA 2015a).

Improvement in this area could be achieved through **funding for the creation of a labour market information tool for all areas across Victoria.**

### LLEN example. A one-stop-shop of labour market information for young people and schools in Geelong

Geelong's VET, VCE, post school education and training programs have been shown to be mismatched to its radically transforming economy. To address this Geelong Region LLEN built a *Dream Real* partnership of everyone in the youth transition ecosystem: employers and industry, education and training, health and wellbeing providers, employment providers, local councils, community groups and government agencies.

The partnership built *Geelong Careers*, an online one-stop shop app (linked to social media) that helps young people make informed career and pathway decisions by connecting them to labour market information about trending industries, the pathways to them, careers resources, opportunities for real life exposure to the world of work, and a live jobs feed.

*Geelong Careers* has 4000 job seeker members, 35% of whom are under the age of 30. It has between 400-1000 jobs on any given day and gets around 33181 page views per month. All secondary schools are trained to use the site and all use it in some way with their students.

There is enormous potential to efficiently scale this work to all Victorian communities, which would assist stakeholders across schools, job networks, parents and community sector organisations.

Visit Geelong Careers here: <http://www.geelongcareers.org.au/>

### 3. The integration of work readiness and real-world experiences across the school curriculum

Work readiness and real-world experience need to be built into curriculum from primary school, culminating in work experience generated by the community to give older young people experience, acknowledging that more and more students do not experience work through part time jobs. There is a huge array of activities that can be conceived. These activities need to be provided in the ways young people like to learn: through immersion and with peers. They also need to be localized to create networks with local industries and opportunities. Innovative examples show that these opportunities are motivating for students and help them stay engaged in school. The most successful initiatives have found ways to engage students, parents, industry and community in co-construction of curriculum. Examples from the LLEN partnerships range from, youth industry ambassadors that do talks in schools, partnering with universities to use facilities for experiences like use of microscopes, a short course curriculum in VCAL for job readiness, a program engaging employer mentors to help young people through the job application process (job search, cover letter, resume, mock interview), through to community investment in providing young people anything they need to prepare for work, and the Victorian Government Structured Workplace Learning portal for formal work placements.



Improvement in this area could be achieved through **one-off funding for the LLENs to create a portal of their initiatives for others to share and build on.**

### LLEN example. Building career aspiration in primary school students

A primary school study found grade 6 students, many from homes of intergenerational disadvantage, had no career aspiration or hope for participation in work. The findings shocked those at a business breakfast, who could not believe such young people had already given up on their futures.

The Goldfields LLEN subsequently brokered a partnership between local councils, over 40 businesses, and tertiary education providers to develop a *Passions and Pathways* curriculum that builds students understanding of the world of work through work place visits, talks by Young Industry Ambassadors, hands on workplace projects, TAFE or University workshops in university facilities (for example, using microscopes) and expos.

Students really enjoy the program and report it increases their understanding of the importance of staying in school. This shows how work exposure can help keep young people in school.

Read more at: <http://www.llen.org.au/portfolio/goldfields-llen-passions-and-pathways/> and <http://passionsandpathways.org.au/>

### LLEN example. 100 ways in 100 days campaign to get young people work experience through the community

A lack of work experience significantly disadvantages young people in labour markets, and this compounds disadvantage for rural young people, who already have worse school outcomes.

Central Ranges LLEN devised a *100 ways in 100 days* campaign to generate work experience for students. The campaign created a website and video inviting the community to offer work experience opportunities to young people.

The offers demonstrate the depth of experience and assistance a community can provide beyond traditional placements. Offers ranged from come and try days, shadowing the local MP, resume writing, haircuts for job interviews, training in digital marketing methods, to full apprenticeships. The campaign created 158 opportunities, helping 513 young people.

7000 views of the video have helped expand the community's understanding of what young people need for future work. The campaign has been extended to permanently create opportunities for the region's young people.

This campaign could be scaled to all Victorian communities.

Visit 100 ways here <http://www.100ways.com.au/>

#### 4. Effective pathways for all young people

Around the globe there has been a call around for education and training systems to adapt and anticipate changes in labour markets and address the endemic skills mismatch that is occurring (FOE 2015). Technical and vocational education is a solution that can help disadvantaged young people transition to work but it is under-resourced and has failed to create the synergies with industry that would mainstream STEM (FOE 2015). This has been shown to particularly be the case in countries resisting moves towards low carbon emission economies who tend not to be capitalizing on skills in new technologies (FOE 2015). In Victoria, our networks report there is still an emphasis on university pathways and vocational education and training is under resourced, under-valued, and in need an overhaul. For young people in regional areas there may be significant cost and transport barriers to connecting to a pathway of interest. Our networks particularly report the need for new partnerships with our fastest growing sectors to create pathways through to school and training.

Improvement in this area could be achieved through a commitment to vocational education as an important pathway for a significant proportion of the population in a disrupted work environment, and **a review to modernize of vocational pathways and create a comprehensive vocational education strategy.**

##### LLEN example. English language for newly arrived refugee secondary students

Outer East LLEN identified a need for a program for newly arrived refugee secondary students keen to undertake VCE or VCAL but lacking the language skills. Secondary schools were not offering language programs and young people would not attend adult courses with parents, grandparents and extended families.

The LLEN established a partnership that developed a VCAL program to be delivered at Box Hill Institute. The new option was discussed with parents, many of whom were resistant to a TAFE education pathway, and career “tasters” were built in to help keep young people engaged. A number of students enrolled, and now an additional language intensive VCAL program has been established at one school. There is no longer a gap in provision for these students.

##### LLEN example. Early workforce development program into key industries

Geelong Region LLEN has created an early workforce development program in community services and health – their largest and fastest growing employing sector. The program works to inform students, parents and school staff about skills, pathways and jobs in the sector. From year 10 it promotes professional and semiprofessional jobs and offers “tasters”, VET certificate I and II subjects, school based apprenticeships. Student numbers have increased from 28 in 2011 to 277 in 2016 with 80% of participants indicating they wish to work in the sector. Currently the program lacks the financial resources to track student outcomes longitudinally.



## Conclusion

Careers education is vital for young people moving into a dramatically changing world of work. Relatively small interventions have been shown to improve their outcomes over their lifetime.

The LLEN in Victoria are an important site of local testing and retesting for what works in ensuring engagement in school and transition to work. We have identified four areas for immediate intervention:

- » To address the absence of careers support in schools, **increase oversight, vision and funding for Victorian Government's Managed Individual Pathways program (MIPs)**, which provides funding for careers specialists in schools to help students develop pathways plans
- » To address the absence of accurate labour market information in communities, **fund the creation of a labour market information tool for all areas across Victoria**
- » To address the difficulty young people now face gaining work experience while in school, **provide one-off funding for the LLENs to create a portal of their initiatives for others to share and build on**, and
- » to address the weakening and devaluing of, and endemic skills mismatch in, vocational education, **undertake a review to modernize vocational pathways and create a comprehensive vocational education strategy.**

We can demonstrate that innovative interventions in these areas work. Some are specific to population groups and contexts, but others could be universalized to all Victorian communities with additional investment. LLEN provides the tested prototypes for these activities.

In establishing its government *Regions* and *Areas* within them, the Victorian Government has already resourced the infrastructure in which LLENs can deliver on these four priority areas. Further investment in LLENs, to add a specific careers education focus, and to universalize the related parts of its work, could radically transform the delivery of careers education in schools across Victoria.

In Australia careers education is broken and the costs of ill prepared young people are enormous. A recent study showed the lifetime economic costs of early school leaving, are around \$12.6 billion (Lamb et al 2015). For young people the costs of youth unemployment can be declining mental health, self-esteem and standard of living, that endure across their life-time (Muir & Powell 2012; WHO 2012; WHO 2014; Nichols et al. 2013). The social costs have been estimated at \$616,200 over the adult years (25 - 64), or an annual cost of \$15,400 per person, in lower earnings across their working life, but also with substantial economic impacts of crime and marginal tax burden. Aggregated across a cohort of students aged 19 in any given year, the social loss is around \$23.2 billion (Lamb et al 2015).

This is a significant issue going forward as the number of secondary school students (aged 12 to 18) in Australia is about to increase by 50% in the next twenty years and double by 2064 (Australian Bureau of Statistics population projections).



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