Higher Education is recognised as providing a person with greater vocational choices and higher income levels than those who don’t complete tertiary education. In Wellington Shire school leavers are less likely to undertake Higher Education than those in or near Metropolitan areas. This can leave them at a disadvantage to their metropolitan counterparts.

In this Appendix we would like to:

- Report on what the young people of Wellington have told us in surveys.
- Highlight a number of reasons why we believe Wellington students have a lower level of participation in Higher Education and suggest strategies to address this inequity.
- Outline some consequences of the lower participation rates.
- Include a case study from a real Wellington Shire family.
What the young people have told us:

Recent surveys of over 700 young people in secondary school have been conducted in Wellington and East Gippsland as part of the Transport Connections Project. The question was asked; When considering post-secondary choices what would impact on your decision/choice most? Responses indicate that over half of participants considered ‘owning a car’ as having ‘high impact’. Results are shown in Table 1, in order of Mean ranks. Given the limited public transport in the region, the dependence on a car to attend TAFE, University, apprenticeship/traineeship or employment within the region this is not surprising. For the majority of the region’s young people, the need to own a car or the need to relocate to access opportunities is ranked highly.

Table 1: Impact on post secondary decisions/choices-Mean ranks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact on Decision</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owning a car</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocating for work or study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding a job closer to home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting to work/study using public transport</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying while staying at home</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another longitudinal study starkly illustrates the impact that leaving home and the cost of study has on students from Wellington and East Gippsland.

Table 2 Reasons why Year 12 completers chose not to study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Have to leave home</th>
<th>Not ready</th>
<th>Cost of Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GE</td>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>GE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n/a Question not asked, GE – Gippsland East, source GELLEN 2007/2008

Those living in Gippsland East cite moving away from home as a far more important reason not to pursue higher education than their Victorian counterparts – 54.5% to 23.6% in 2007. The cost of study also rated quite highly. Not only is a greater factor for Gippsland East residents than the rest of Victoria but as a concern it has been growing, from 31.7% in 2003 to 52.4% in 2007. Anecdotally students report that the cost of running a car has increased with recent sharp increases in petrol prices. Many attempt car pooling but that requires finding students in the area with similar study timetables.
Reasons why Wellington Students don’t participate

Reason # 1 Income levels

Participation in higher education is expensive. Those from regional/rural areas face the added costs of travel and/or relocation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that keeping a country student in higher education in the city could cost more than $20,000 per year.

Rural areas such as Wellington Shire have lower household income than metropolitan areas. The 2006 census listed the median household income for residents of Wellington Shire at $773 per week compared to $1079 for the residents of Melbourne – a difference of over $15,000 per year.

The combination of lower incomes and higher costs presents a significant impediment to Wellington students participating in higher education.

Many Wellington young people need to move away from home to study and are living independently. Current Centrelink requirements still classify these students as dependent meaning they may receive only partial Youth Allowance.

To encourage more Country students into higher education these cost inequities need to be addressed.

Strategies

- Better access to scholarships that make a significant contribution to living costs
- Reassessing the way Youth Allowance is paid, recognising financial independence in Youth Allowance
- Providing an Allowance/grant/lump sum payment to assist regional students in relocating and/or off setting the costs of travel
Reason #2 Existing education levels

The residents of Wellington tend to be less educated than those in metropolitan areas, as the two graphs below based on 2006 census data indicate.

- **Percentage of residents aged 15 years and over who have completed Year 12**
  - Wellington Shire: 27%
  - Melbourne: 49%
  - Victoria: 44%

- **Percentage of residents aged 15 years and over with a Bachelor Degree**
  - Wellington Shire: 6.5%
  - Melbourne: 14.3%
  - Victoria: 12.6%

Source: 2006 Census

This tendency may be attributed to a number of reasons; however it indicates an environment where education may be undervalued.

**Strategies**

- Greater emphasis in schools on the benefits of Higher Education
- Creation of a culture that values Higher Education
Reason # 3 Limited options

The range of higher education opportunities in Wellington is very limited, particularly Universities. Limited courses and resources at these places as well as a lower status (as reflected by lower required ENTER scores) tend to be a limiting factor for many considering study. While many students and lecturers note the benefits of studying at regional campuses –less crowded, peaceful setting, greater access to lecturers—many also express frustration at distances needed to be travelled, limited course availability, difficulty in accessing some required resources.

The graph below indicates the percentage of residents in Wellington undertaking higher education is low.

While this graph does not show people who have left Wellington to undertake further education (in fact these will be swelling the Melbourne figures) it does illustrate the difficulty of remaining in Wellington and participating in higher education.

Strategies

- Quality Higher Educational facilities need to be encouraged and developed in Wellington
Reason # 4 Transport and Distance

Young people in Gippsland wishing to study are faced with limitations of transport and vast distances. For example current transport services in Sale do not coordinate with educational institutions and or operate at peak times. Outside of Sale, access to public transport is even more limited or non existent.

Attendance at Universities for many students in the Gippsland area involves moving from their home town to access a University - the nearest university campus is Monash University, which is located out of the area at Churchill. Table 3 shows the infrastructure and resources of the region.

Table 3: Infrastructure and Resources by Gippsland Secondary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Distance (km) from the next nearest town (5000+)</th>
<th>TAFE / TAFE Outreach</th>
<th>Nearest TAFE (km)</th>
<th>Nearest University (km)</th>
<th>Total Students Yr 9-12</th>
<th>Public Trnsprt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sale Secondary Schools</td>
<td>Traralgon (60)</td>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1039</td>
<td>Note 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maffra Secondary</td>
<td>Sale (30)</td>
<td>Heyfield</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>Note 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarram Secondary</td>
<td>Sale (80)</td>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Note 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: These schools have access to the V/Line bus along the Princes Highway from Melbourne to Narooma daily.
Note 2: This school has access to a bus to Sale.
Note 3: This school has access to a bus to Traralgon and a V/Line bus to Melbourne.

Strategies

- More regular and affordable public transport connecting smaller communities to regional centres
- Increase in the frequency of rail services East of Traralgon would make accessing metropolitan based higher education a more attractive option.
Consequences of lower levels of participation in Higher Education

Lack of Creativity & Knowledge
An annual survey ranks each municipality in Australia based on its contribution to high-tech output and analyses the composition of the workforce in these regions. The following data highlights how Wellington Shire places in terms of innovation and creativity to other regional centres, which has been argued as the basis for attracting high tech industries, research and development and advanced business services.

The data shows that Wellington is ranked very poorly in creativity which impacts on its attraction for advanced business services and high tech industries compared to other Local Government Areas in Australia. Lower levels of education and a lack of higher education facilities within Wellington potentially contribute to this less than ideal scenario.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Creativity Score, 1996</th>
<th>LGA Rank out of 632, 1996</th>
<th>Creativity Score, 2001</th>
<th>LGA Rank out of 632, 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Gippsland</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrobe</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne, city</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Average</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High levels of Migration of 20 to 24 year olds

The lack of quality education options in Wellington contributes to the drain of young people. Those who leave between the ages of 20 and 24 tend not to return to Wellington in the short term. This trend leaves Wellington short of people in their child bearing years, thus contributing to our ageing and static population problems.

In 2006, from 2544 people aged 20 to 24 people who had lived in Wellington 5 years ago, 1426 were still in Wellington, 1118 had moved elsewhere – 570 of those to Melbourne.

In addition to the demographic issues that ensue a lack of younger people, and in particular professional young people contributes to the skills shortage which is starting to impact on the larger employers in Wellington.
Appendix – a case study from a real Wellington Shire family

Our daughter wanted ever since she was 10 years old to be a nurse and nothing was going to stop her. So, we went to all the appropriate universities, ACU Melbourne, Latrobe Melbourne, Deakin Geelong, Monash Gippsland and Clayton and did all the open days. We were faced with accommodation, financial support, transport (car), university fees and books etc, costs of regular off-site placements whilst learning, incurring more accommodation costs, as well as the separation issues associated with a kid who has lived at home in a country town all her life and maybe wasn't that "worldly".

Then we went to the open day at RMIT University at West Sale. An inconspicuous campus with about 100 students sitting out in the middle of the paddock all by itself at an aerodrome in the middle of nowhere.

Courses are delivered by teleconference, the yearly intake is about 30, the enter score was so low because no one wants to come to Sale….

Mnnnnn…..what a decision…..

Degree at dinky campus up the bush in an unpopular place, or all the expense of Melbourne…???

Is the degree at RMIT Sale better or worse or more recognised than a degree from even Monash Gippsland…???

Well, it all came down to money. My wife at 51 years of age went back to the workforce, was retrained and went back to work to afford to keep the student going. At the same time our son had to start secondary school and as a consequence of many issues, the only secondary school that suited locally was Gippsland Grammar, with its associated $10k fees. A bit of a family conference, a few tears, lots of anguish decided that in order to follow the kids dream, the only feasible option that we could afford was RMIT University Sale. This would save accommodation costs, save fuel and transport costs, phone, food and entertainment etc etc. Also, our daughter had a casual job at Target in Sale which she could retain and contribute to her own education. If she moved to Melbourne, this would have disappeared.

So first university preference was RMIT Sale who required an enter score of only 60. Thankfully the student had an enter score of 89 and was an immediate start up acceptance. That at least got her in to a nursing course, but the quality of such, the reputation of such was still to be seen. Unfortunately the reputation of regional campuses seems to suffer a bit. If it isn’t big and shiny and in Melbourne, there must be something wrong with it!! In RMIT Sale’s case, the reputation is tainted somewhat by being seen in most people’s eyes as being a part of the nearby TAFE College.

So, in 2005, she started university at RMIT Sale.
What a surprise……the course was of course identical in every way to every other nursing course offered in Victoria (it has to be), was well organised, had a student to tutor ratio of "one to 10" and coached, guided, assisted, helped and nurtured all the students through the course over three years. There were organised study groups, individual coaching, remedial studies outside curriculum in mathematics, biology etc provided by various local schoolteachers, and in fact the course was far superior to the same content offered in Melbourne. In Melbourne the course was several hundred students all doing their own thing with just the basic exposure to lecture/practical, up here there was voluntary work, additional practicum, field trips etc etc...

The students have all been well received in local and Melbourne hospitals and now our daughter is employed full time as a nurse at the Gippsland Health Service where she will work for a year of two before heading overseas.

Her dream has been realised, she has achieved a nursing degree with distinctions and her career has started.

Both her mother and I are of the view that this would not have been as easy in Melbourne or elsewhere. Somehow we would have just dealt with it, however the advantage of attending university locally enabled us to keep the family together, afford a quality education for the student, afford to enrol and keep the brother in his most suited secondary school, enabled father and mother to have a life, enabled student to retain employment and provide partial support for herself and also continue to mature as a person whilst living at home, with all life’s checks and balances that come with it.

Financially, we provided our daughter with $80.00 per week for the three years of her course and she also earned income from Target as part of her job. Possible annual cost to us over an above normal family home running costs approx $5000 per annum.

If she was in Melbourne accommodation $6000, food $7500, transport $2500, incidentals $3000 total $20,000 estimate.

Over three years: RMIT Sale $15,000, Melbourne University est. $60,000

There is no choice……

Footnote:
A lot of our daughter’s friends have left Sale to do degrees that are not offered locally. Psychology, Natural Medicine, Teaching, Engineering etc. Their stories are many and different. In discussions they regularly defer to the difficulties associated with financing their degree courses. In most cases they have two or three jobs (one girl works at Gloria Jeans Coffee, Telstra Dome and Melbourne Events) to supplement income to enable her to afford to live. She devotes so much time to working that she struggles a little bit with her course, but a social consequence that goes unnoticed is the disconnection with home. Quite simply, with work and study, the time to hop on a train, travel home for a weekend to see family is not a priority. It just can’t be managed as there is always study commitments to be met or offers of work that need to be balanced…