Inquiry into Geographic Difference in the Rate in which Victorian Students participate in Higher Education

The Frankston Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. is a community-based organisation with the predominant purpose of fostering post-compulsory education, training and employment within the community and better adapting post-compulsory education and training to community needs.

The FMPLLEN has been collecting data on transitions to higher education by Year 12 completers over the past 6 years and has shared this data with our regional partners including Peninsula Education Precinct and Frankston Learning City network.

In response to the key research questions:

Young people from the Frankston Mornington Peninsula region are less likely to apply for University.

Young people in this region apply for university entrance at a lower level than their metropolitan counterparts – a level similar to their counterparts in regional Victoria.

According to On Track 2007 data, 32.6% of 2006 school leavers were at University, compared with a State figure of 47.4%. In 2003, 29.4% of 2002 Year 12 completers in Frankston and Mornington Peninsula region were enrolled at University, compared with a Victorian figure of 41.6% of Year 12 completers.

In comparison to the above, and using the On Track figures for Bass Coast South Gippsland, Baw Baw La Trobe and East Gippsland LLEN regions, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula figures sit within one to three percentage points of these areas on “University enrolled” data.

Of the LLEN’s with which we share boundaries, Bayside Glen Eira Kingston has an enrolment rate in excess of 50% and South East LLEN has an enrolment rate of just over 40% of Year 12 completers.

Frankston Mornington Peninsula region students are less likely to receive or accept University offers

Deferral rates in Frankston and Mornington Peninsula are higher (12.2%) than Victoria (8.9%) but do not account for the difference in overall offers.

In 2007, 22.3% of Frankston Mornington Peninsula Year 12 completers received no offer of a tertiary place compared to 21.6% state wide.

Frankston Mornington Peninsula students leave school earlier

Early school leaving remains an issue for FMPLLEN particularly when combined with the high labour market participation of youth including participation in part time and casual work. Professor Richard Teese’s research indicates labour market participation by FMPLLEN young people is the highest in the State and is supported by a local economy where retail and hospitality provide the key employment opportunities.
Frankston Mornington Peninsula students choose different subjects or courses at school

There has been significant growth in Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, including Community Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, offering an additional option for those students seeking more direct pathways to employment represented by a 45% increase in the take up of these programs from 2006 to 2007.

Vocational Education and Training in Schools continues to grow at a slower rate (2% increase) and apprenticeships and traineeships remain at or just below 2006 levels.

Students from Frankston and Mornington Peninsula choose different post-school pathways....

Students from Frankston and Mornington Peninsula take up apprenticeships and traineeships at a higher level than students in Victoria- 6.6% are in apprenticeships compared to 4.5% for Victoria and 4.2% are in traineeships compared to 3.6% for Victoria.

Students from Frankston and Mornington Peninsula are also more likely to enter full time work than their Victorian counterparts – 7.8% compared to 5.9% for Victoria and there are significant differences in the rates of participation in part time work. Part time work is a destination for 13.2% of Frankston and Mornington Peninsula Year 12 completers, compared to 7.7% for Victoria.

3.4% of Year 12 completers for Frankston Mornington Peninsula were looking for work compared to a Victorian figure of 2.9%.

Frankston Mornington Peninsula students have fewer University campuses/courses available in their area

Frankston and Mornington Peninsula residents have access to the Peninsula Campus of Monash University which has a limited range of courses on offer. Monash University provides a shuttle service to its Clayton Campus which opens access to this campus and to Monash’s core services.

Students in Frankston City who have access to the rail line have a far broader range of options, although travel costs are high and a journey to Melbourne will take approximately one hour.

Access to Frankston from the Mornington Peninsula adds to the travel time and requires a combination of transport modes. Students from Rosebud need to travel in excess of 1.5 hours to reach Melbourne.

While Monash University, Peninsula Campus, has developed some key strategies for lifting students’ aspirations for tertiary studies, the issue of high ENTER scores for positions at Monash remains.

The area is not serviced by those Universities with lower ENTER scores so attendance at the main campuses of these Universities requires the student to relocate.

Chisholm Institute of TAFE, Frankston Campus offers a broad range of TAFE courses but some specialist courses are only available at the Dandenong campus. Rosebud Campus has a limited range of courses available and because it is required to operate on a metropolitan TAFE model rather than a regional TAFE model, it does not have the flexibility to run courses with smaller groups of students.
Frankston and Mornington Peninsula students are affected by social and other factors

Transport remains a critical issue for young people, particularly those on the Mornington Peninsula. Transport routes are often indirect and unreasonably long journeys result. Current work through the Transport Connections strategy with Mornington Peninsula Shire is having some impact in this area together with local initiatives such as the VET bus which links the Peninsula Vocational Education and Training cluster of schools. However, it is not an issue that can be solved with internal changes only. Train services from Frankston are regular but local connecting services are not and proposed changes may not be viable because of small numbers using connecting services. Evening rail travel is seen as unsafe and not as an option for young people travelling to and from city campuses. Travel on public transport after 7.30 pm is not available for Peninsula young people.

The costs and amount of travel to access courses outside the local area was a major disincentive for 2006 Year 12 completers, as was leaving home. Of the students surveyed in On Track, close to 40% indicated the costs and the amount of travel were prohibitive. Over 30% indicated that the issue of leaving home was a key reason for not continuing in education and to access the low ENTER score universities a student would need to relocate.

The cost of study in terms of being able to support yourself and the impact costs would have on the family were also key reasons for not continuing in education with close to 40% of students indicating they would have difficulty supporting themselves and close to 30% indicating it would create too much financial pressure for their families. These costs include course related fees, transport, accommodation and living costs.

The current cost and supply of accommodation through the private rental market makes relocation/leaving home virtually impossible for those students who cannot access student accommodation.

Over 57% of families in Frankston are in the lowest and medium lowest household quartile income groups according to ABS statistics and Mornington Peninsula is characterised by disadvantaged pockets in particular geographic locations, most of which have poor public transport arrangements linking them to Frankston or Melbourne.

What effect does going to University (or not) have on young people from Frankston and Mornington Peninsula

We would be argue that any post school qualification – an apprenticeship, a Certificate IV vocational program or a degree course offers much the same outcome for a young person in terms of improving their capacity to engage in long term employment over their life time.

On the other hand, part time and casual work, particularly for students who do not complete Year 12, does not guarantee the outcome of long term employment and the industries in which most part time and casual work is available, are not the industries which offer good prospects in terms of future full time employment.
What could be done to address any barriers to higher education participation for students from Frankston and Mornington Peninsula?

1. **As a first step, we need to fund research to be able to understand the factors that contribute to forming the aspiration to higher education in young people**

   For example, the population of Frankston and Mornington Peninsula is predominantly from British heritage with small numbers from central European heritage and very small pockets of newly arrived people from Sudan and the Middle East. The question has been raised, does this population mix result in a different attitude among parents to the value of higher education and does this drive the exodus from school directly to employment, even when only part time employment is available?

   The Indigenous population, on the other hand, is diverse and made up of people from across Australia with substantially different cultural backgrounds and without the central connecting points of the extended family or the meeting place of the local Co-Op.

   Given the low levels of school completion, how do we provide culturally sensitive and relevant support to Indigenous families to improve school participation?

2. **At the same time, it would assist parents if they were better informed about the outcomes for young people in part time and casual work post-school, particularly the outcomes for early school leavers and the lack of opportunities for them to re-engage in education and training**

   FMPLLEN is currently working with a small group of early school leavers in part time and casual work with a view to developing the processes to keep these young people connected with the education, employment and training system.

   Currently, these young people are a group who is severely disadvantaged by virtue of the fact that they are employed, albeit under-employed. Their part time employment is generally tenuous and unlikely to continue past age 18. At the same time, it makes them ineligible for a range of services.

   The opportunities for re-engaging them in education need to be supported by incentives for services to work with this group at a point in their lives when they are experiencing the success which accompanies a first adult job. Instead, they need to be unemployed to benefit from services.

3. **We need to imbed in curriculum the current activities which are familiarising young people with Higher Education while they are still at school**

   The Monash University “Schools Access Monash” strategy needs to be extended to all Frankston and Mornington Peninsula schools with a view to building the aspirations of young people and encouraging their teachers to explore University and further education options with students.

   Similar activities around trades and vocational pathways occur on an ad hoc basis. These need to be developed as a regular part of curriculum.
4. It is essential that there is affordable transport and accommodation for students who have to travel or relocate for tertiary education

Under the Fairer Victoria strategy, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula were deemed to be part of Metropolitan Melbourne. This designation needs to be rethought in relation to transport costs for tertiary students from our area and in terms of their need to relocate for a range of tertiary education opportunities.

5. We need to develop distance learning centres or hubs in partnerships between two or more low ENTER score tertiary organisations and existing education providers

One interpretation of the evidence on participation in Higher Education is that young people do not want to have to leave this community and their parents do not want them to leave.

Distance learning could be a more attractive option for younger students if they could regularly attend a central, minimally staffed point for parts of their course and then attend the main campus on a small number of occasions in a year.

A number of organisations pooling resources could achieve this where it might be unviable as an option for a stand-alone provider.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this enquiry and I am happy to provide further information if required.

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