PRESENTATION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO GEOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES IN THE RATE IN WHICH VICTORIAN STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

OUYEN, TUESDAY JUNE 3 2008

Presented by: George Stone (Interim Executive Officer), and Gary Simpson (Chair)
Table of Contents

1. Introduction to the Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network.

2. University courses conducted in Mildura.

3. Scholarships.

4. Transport issues associated with further study.


6. Recommended Outcomes from the Committee’s Inquiry.

1. Introduction to the Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network

*The NMLLEN:*

The NMLLEN is one of 31 LLENs across Victoria were established by the Victorian Government to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people aged 15 to 19 years. The LLENs are a means of bringing together local expertise and experience by creating partnerships between education and training institutions, industry, government, local services and the wider community to create pathways from school to further education, training and employment.

*MISSION STATEMENT:*

*A community network improving the opportunities and outcomes in education, training and employment for all young people in the Northern Mallee.*

*The Northern Mallee LLEN works with the Victorian Skills Commission to achieve its mission by:*

- Establishing a membership of individuals and organisations which reflects the diversity of our local communities.
- Planning for the provision and support of post-compulsory education, training and employment focusing on the needs of individuals.
- Linking education and training providers with industry
- Mapping the existing network of learning and employment opportunities for young people in the Northern Mallee and identifying and addressing the gaps in programs, services and infrastructure across the region.
- Supporting and facilitating strategic initiatives to improve learning and employment opportunities for young people
- Advising the Victorian Skills Commission on the needs of young people in the Northern Mallee region.
- Facilitating effective communication between education and training providers, employers and other local service providers.
- Working in partnership with all cultural groups including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to improve their education, training and employment outcomes.

The NMLLEN has a charter to operate in the area covered by the Mildura Rural City Council, including Ouyen, Marrnurville, Werrimull and the Sunraysia Irrigation District of Mildura, Red Cliffs, Merbein and Irymple, and the town of Robinvale in the Swan Hill Rural City Council.
2. University courses conducted in Mildura

There are a number of complete and part undergraduate degree programs conducted by Latrobe University in Mildura. Monash University also conduct a complete degree program in Nursing at the Mildura Base Hospital. Numerous distance education programs are also available to students in the district; however this mode of study may not suit young adults who have recently completed secondary education.

The programs conducted at the Latrobe Campus at Mildura are:

**Faculty of Health Sciences**
- Bachelor of Nursing
- Bachelor of Nursing (Div 2)
- Bachelor of Social Work
- Bachelor of Social Work (Hons)

**Faculty of Law and Management**
- Bachelor of Commerce
- Bachelor of Business
- Graduate Diploma in Accounting

**Faculty of Education**
- Bachelor of Education
- Graduate Diploma in Education (Not conducted in 2008)

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**
- Bachelor of Arts (Humanities)
- Bachelor of Visual Arts Graphic Design (Hons)
- Bachelor of Visual Arts (Hons)
- Bachelor of Visual Arts
- Bachelor of Graphic Design

Students wishing to study any other programs have to leave the district, or study as an external student. The need to leave the district raises the social, financial, family, aspirational and geographic impediments that are highlighted in the On Track Connect data presented as part of this submission. The competition for positions in city-based universities and larger region centres can be daunting to students from the North West region of Victoria. Gaps in meeting local student demand in Science, Health Science, Information Technology and Engineering have been identified by local school careers coordinators. There is strong local support for Latrobe University Mildura and the TAFE Institute; the local campuses of Latrobe University and Sunraysia Institute of TAFE were by far the most popular destinations for Mildura Senior College students in 2008.

Students from outlying areas (e.g. Robinvale, Ouyen and Murrayville) in the North West of Victoria, who wish to study at a regional campus such as Latrobe Mildura, face similar challenges to relocating to a metropolitan or other regional university. The cost of living away from home, including the need for personal transport due to a lack of effective public transport in Mildura, is likely to limit further participation in higher education. The
social and family issues of relocation may not be as severe when moving to Mildura, but the overall cost may be similar. Many students from this region move interstate to places such as Adelaide due to the wide choice of programs, potentially cheaper accommodation than Melbourne, less competition for places, a regional bonus adjustment to their university entrance score and relative closeness to home compared to Melbourne. In 2008 more students from Mildura Senior College accepted university places in Adelaide than Melbourne.

There are many gaps in the local delivery of higher education in the region, however Latrobe University has invested substantial resources in the campus in Mildura and the university has continued to expand and diversify the program delivery as resources and demand for programs dictate. Evidence of this commitment is the recent expansion in the Bachelor in Education, new enrollees in this program can now complete at the Mildura campus.

Comments from Mildura Senior College Careers Coordinator on these issues are: “the popularity of Latrobe Mildura has grown significantly and it is now attracting some of our best students. There are significant financial advantages for families if students attend a local campus. Mildura Senior College has a good relationship with the Latrobe Mildura campus and hosts all universities for the Tertiary Information Service Briefings. There is an opportunity for Latrobe Mildura to work very closely with our year 12 students both in subject content and planning future study. Scholarships are the only way many of our students can access further study. Many of our students appreciate the small classes and personal approach offered by Latrobe at Mildura. Parents are a key factor in lifting the aspirations of our students. Very low numbers of parents have undertaken tertiary study. Our community is also isolated which reduces the competitiveness of our students”.

3. Scholarships (comments from Mildura Senior College Careers Coordinator)

Many students will apply for Commonwealth Fees and Accommodation Scholarships and are looking now for scholarships attached to their career area e.g. Dentistry, Medicine and Engineering for example. Lots of girls have been given the Rural Nursing Scholarship entry form and will apply. The school advertises any type of scholarship that comes into the school e.g. Pharmacy Scholarships etc. Students and their parents are encouraged to apply for university scholarships offered at the universities that they wish to apply for. South Australia has a link to scholarships at the end of their SATAC application form this year – to make the process a little more user friendly and encourage parents to go to the particular scholarship website.

4. Transport issues associated with further study

This evidence is collated from surveys conducted in the Transport Connections Project Mildura 2008.

- Many students who wish to continue to University have to stay in accommodation in Melbourne/Adelaide because the courses are not available to them in Mildura.
Students cannot commute from the capital cities to Mildura due to the expense (air) or time (road). There are difficulties in traveling to and from the Latrobe Mildura campus because the local bus services do not align with the class times.

- At present, both parties (Mildura Bus Lines and the education institutions) are unwilling to change their time tables. The bus runs past the campus but students have to arrive extremely early and leave extremely late in order to catch a bus.
- Regular buses are available from Robinvale, Merbein and surrounding suburbs of Mildura into the city.
- There are no regular buses that students can catch from Ouyen (or to Ouyen). Some school leavers and students are driving without licences so that they are able to make commitments for work or study.

5. Northern Mallee LLEN Region On Track Data 2007

On Track is an important Victorian Government initiative designed to ensure that Year 10 to 12 government and non-government school students are on a pathway to further education, training or employment after leaving school. The Victorian Government launched On Track in 2003.

On Track will survey students in years 10, 11 and 12 who left schools in 2006. The survey is designed to provide information on post school destinations and identify young people not in education training or full-time employment. This data will provide a better understanding of outcomes from education as well as assisting the Government to improve pathways planning both centrally and at the local level.

On Track Connect, as part of On Track, aims to assist young people who have left school and are not studying or in full time work through connecting them with an appropriate pathway.

Respondents to the 2007 Northern Mallee LLEN Region On Track Survey

Year 12 Completers - 473 young people completed year 12 (or its equivalent) in 2006 from schools in the Northern Mallee LLEN area. Of the 473 completers, 228 were interviewed in April 2007 re their post school education and training destinations.

Early Leavers - 153 young people left school before completed year 12 (or its equivalent) in 2006 from schools in the Northern Mallee LLEN area. Of the 153 early leavers, 54 were interviewed in April 2007 re their post school education and training destinations.

2007 Year 12 Completers destinations:

- University - Regional university enrolments for the Northern Mallee LLEN region are substantially lower for this region at 39% in comparison to a Victorian State average of 47.40%.
• TAFE/VET - enrolments for the Northern Mallee LLEN region are half the amount of enrolments at 9.70% in comparison to those for the State of Victoria which are 19%.

• Apprenticeships and Traineeships - are higher in the Northern Mallee LLEN region with 14% of year 12 completers partaking in such courses, which compares with 8.10% for year 12 completers in Victoria.

• Deferrals from University - in the Northern Mallee LLEN region are significantly higher with 18.40% of year 12 completers opting for this option, as opposed to 8.9% for Victoria.

This indicates that there are many factors contributing to a young person who has completed year 12 when it comes to their choice to defer their course. There is a much higher rate of University and TAFE enrollments in Victoria when compared with the Northern Mallee region. This could be linked to the financial cost of university which in region areas is increasingly more for young people and their families. More young people are employed in full time work in the Northern Mallee LLEN region. This could be attributed to the need for young people to reach financial independence to enable them to embark on further study. It seems important to note the higher rates of apprenticeships and traineeships as a positive.

2007 Year 12 Completers reasons for not carrying on with further study:

• Aspirations – of young people in the Northern Mallee LLEN region who completed year 12 differ from those in Victoria with 19% of young people indicating that they never intended to carry on with further study as opposed to 25% of Victorians. However a higher percentage of young people in Victoria where not ready to carry on with further study with 65% of them indicating this, only 51% in the Northern Mallee region noted this as a reason.

• Financial – A higher proportion of young people who completed year 12 in the Northern Mallee LLEN region indicated financial reasons as contributing factor in their decision to not carry on with further study, when compared with the figure for Victoria. Double the number of young people indicated that awaiting youth allowance was a contributing factor for not continuing on with further study. Others found it hard to support themselves, felt there was financial pressure on their family, found the cost of studying too much to manage and the thought of developing a HECS debt enough reasons to not continue on with further education.

• Travel – is recognized as an off putting reality for many young people from the Northern Mallee LLEN region when considering undertaking further education, as they consider relocating or increasing travel in order to reach appropriate education facilities. With more students indicating that the cost of travel and too much travel as factors that influences their decision to not continue on with further education.

• Social and financial – over double the amount of young people in the Northern Mallee region indicated that having to leave home in order to continue on with their education was a factor which influenced their decision.

• Post Secondary Program Availability – over double the amount of young people listed the reason that they didn’t continue on with further study being that their preferred course was not offered locally. Having to consider relocating in order to study raises other issues such as the cost of travel, financial costs of relocating, awaiting youth allowance and needing to leave home. All factors which could influence the decision to not continue with their educations.
2007 Early School Leavers (left school before completing year 12 or its equivalent)
reasons for not carrying on with further study:

**Aspirations** – More young people in the Northern Mallee region indicated that their reason for not continuing on with further education can be linked to their lack of intention to study or their not being ready to do more study when compared with the Victorian average. This indicates a low level of intention to even consider further education specific to this region.

**Financial** – double the amount of young people in the Northern Mallee LLEN region indicated that awaiting youth allowance stopped them from continuing on with further study, a greater number than the Victorian average also identified it being financially hard to support themselves, the financial pressure studying would place on their family and the cost of study as major reasons why they choose not to continue on with further study.

**Travel** – the cost of travel and the actual travel where not seen a key reasons for young people not continuing on with further study. This could be attributed to their lower level of consideration and desire for further education.

**Social and Aspirations** - the Northern Mallee LLEN region indicated a higher percentage of early leavers felt that they weren’t sure if they could cope with further study, in comparison with a slightly lower number of Victorian young people who felt this way. Another key factor in this decision to not continue with further study is that young people weren’t offered the course they desired.

**Social and Financial** – reasons such as having to leave home was although lower for the Northern Mallee LLEN region inconsequential as students had already decided to not continue on with further study.

**Local program** – desired course was not offered locally was seen as a key issue, although lower for the Northern Mallee LLEN region inconsequential as students had already decided to not continue on with further study.

2007 Early School Leavers (left school before completing year 12 or its equivalent)
destinations:

**Current Employment** – a greater number of young people in the Northern Mallee region gain employment, for both full time and part time work.

**Employment and Training** – there is the same rate of uptake in apprenticeships for the Northern Mallee LLEN region compared to the Victorian State average.

**VET Study** - there is the same rate of uptake in VET for the Northern Mallee LLEN region compared to the Victorian State average.

There are many factors contributing to the choices of young people who are early leavers from school however from the On Track data for 2007 it would seem that the employment, apprenticeship and VET rates for the Northern Mallee LLEN region are higher or in line with the Victorian average and therefore positive.
6. **Recommended Outcomes from the Committee’s Inquiry**

The Committee should report to parliament that:

1. there is a lower participation rate in higher education by students from the North West area of Victoria compared to the rest of Victoria.

2. there is a need to identify the key barriers preventing increased participation of regional students in higher education.

3. there is a need for targeted assistance and support programs to reduce the barriers faced by secondary students wishing to engage in higher education, both within and outside the region.

4. a review is required into the current availability and format of information for potential higher education students on topics such as scholarships, transport arrangements, financial assistance, mentoring programs and other initiatives which help in the transition to higher education.

5. further policy development and implementation is required to address the issues causing the lower participation rate in higher education in regional Victoria.

6. there is a need for additional undergraduate degree level courses in the North West region of the state.

7. additional financial support targeted to remote and rural students, especially for additional accommodation, transport and relocation costs is required.

**Appendix 1. Northern Mallee LLEN region On Track Data 2007 (overleaf).**
Northern Mallee LLEN Region On Track Data 2007

2007 Year 12 Completers destinations:

- **University** - Regional university enrolments for the Northern Mallee LLEN region are substantially lower for this region at 39% in comparison to a Victorian State average of 47.40%.
- **TAFE/VET** - enrolments for the Northern Mallee LLEN region are half the amount of enrollments at 9.70% in comparison to those for the State of Victoria which are 19%.
- **Apprenticeships and Traineeships** - are higher in the Northern Mallee LLEN region with 14% of year 12 completers partaking in such courses, which compares with 8.10% for year 12 completers in Victoria.
- **Deferrals from University** - in the Northern Mallee LLEN region are significantly higher with 18.40% of year 12 completers opting for this option, as opposed to 8.9% for Victoria.

This indicates that there are many factors contributing to a young person who has completed year 12 when it comes to their choice to defer their course. There is a much higher rate of University and TAFE enrollments in Victoria when compared with the Northern Mallee region. This could be linked to the financial cost of University which in region areas is increasingly more for young people and their families. More young people are employed in full time work in the Northern Mallee LLEN region. This could be attributed to the need for young people to reach financial independence to enable them to embark on further study. It seems important to note the higher rates of apprenticeships and traineeships as a positive.

2007 Year 12 Completers reasons for not carrying on with further study:

- **Aspirations** – of young people in the Northern Mallee LLEN region who completed year 12 differ from those in Victoria with 19% of young people indicating that they never intended to carry on with further study as opposed to 25% of Victorians. However a higher percentage of young people in Victoria where not ready to carry on with further study with 65% of them indicating this, only 51% in the Northern Mallee region noted this as a reason.
- **Financial** – A higher proportion of young people who completed year 12 in the Northern Mallee LLEN region indicated financial reasons as contributing factor in their decision to not carry on with further study, when compared with the figure for Victoria. Double the number of young people indicated that awaiting youth allowance was a contributing factor for not continuing on with further study. Others found it hard to support themselves, felt there was financial pressure on their family, found the cost of studying too much to manage and the thought of developing a HECS debt enough reasons to not continue on with further education.
- **Travel** – is recognized as an off putting reality for many young people from the Northern Mallee LLEN region when considering undertaking further education, as they consider relocating or increasing travel in order to reach appropriate education facilities. With more students indicating that the cost of travel and too much travel as factors that influences their decision to not continue on with further education.
• **Social and financial** – over double the amount of young people in the Northern Mallee region indicated that having to leave home in order to continue on with their education was a factor which influenced their decision.

• **Post Secondary Program Availability** – over double the amount of young people listed the reason that they didn’t continue on with further study being that their preferred course was not offered locally. Having to consider relocating in order to study raises other issues such as the cost of travel, financial costs of relocating, awaiting youth allowance and needing to leave home. All factors which could influence the decision to not continue with their educations.

2007 Early School Leavers (left school before completing year 12 or its equivalent)

**reasons for not carrying on with further study:**

Aspirations – More young people in the Northern Mallee region indicated that their reason for not continuing on with further education can be linked to their lack of intention to study or their not being ready to do more study when compared with the Victorian average. Indicating an low level of intention to even consider further education specific to this region.

Financial – double the amount of young people in the Northern Mallee LLEN region indicated that awaiting youth allowance stopped them from continuing on with further study, a greater number than the Victorian average also identified it being financially hard to support themselves, the financial pressure studying would place on their family and the cost of study as major reasons why they choose not to continue on with further study.

Travel – the cost of travel and the actual travel where not seen a key reasons for young people not continuing on with further study. This could be attributed to their lower level of consideration and desire for further education.

Social and Aspirations - the Northern Mallee LLEN region indicated a higher percentage of early leavers felt that they weren’t sure if they could cope with further study, in comparison with a slightly lower number of Victorian young people who felt this way. Another key factor in this decision to not continue with further study is that young people weren’t offered the course they desired.

Social and Financial – reasons such as having to leave home was although lower for the Northern Mallee LLEN region inconsequential as students had already decided to not continue on with further study.

Local program – desired course was not offered locally was seen as a key issue, although lower for the Northern Mallee LLEN region inconsequential as students had already decided to not continue on with further study.

2007 Early School Leavers (left school before completing year 12 or its equivalent)

**destinations:**

Current Employment – a greater number of young people in the Northern Mallee region gain employment, for both full time and part time work.

Employment and Training – there is the same rate of uptake in apprenticeships for the Northern Mallee LLEN region compared to the Victorian State average.

VET Study - there is the same rate of uptake in VET for the Northern Mallee LLEN region compared to the Victorian State average.
There are many factors contributing to the choices of young people who are early leavers from school however from the On Track data for 2007 it would seem that the employment, apprenticeship and VET rates for the Northern Mallee LLEN region are higher or in line with the Victorian average and therefore positive.

Respondents to the 2007 On Track survey

**Year 12 Completers** 473 young people completed year 12 (or its equivalent) in 2006 from schools in the Northern Mallee LLEN area. Of the 473 completers, 228 were interviewed in April 2007 re their post school education and training destinations.

**Early Leavers** 153 young people left school before completed year 12 (or its equivalent) in 2006 from schools in the Northern Mallee LLEN area. Of the 153 early leavers, 54 were interviewed in April 2007 re their post school education and training destinations.

**Conclusion: Specific Outcomes Recommended from the Inquiry**

1. Acknowledgement that there is a lower participation in higher education by students from the North West area of Victoria compared to the rest of Victoria.
2. Identification of key the barriers to increasing the participation rate of regional students in higher education in the report to parliament.
3. A recommendation to parliament that there is a need for targeted assistance and support programs that reduce the barriers faced by secondary students wishing to engage in Higher Education, both within and out of the region.
4. A recommendation that a review be undertaken of the availability and format of current information available to potential university students on issues such as scholarships, transport arrangements, financial assistance, mentoring programs and other initiatives which help students in the transition to higher education.
5. A recommendation for action from the government and government agencies to address the issues identified in the inquiry.
6. A recommendation for policy development and implementation to address the issues causing the lower participation rate in higher education.
7. A recommendation for the introduction of more degree level courses based on demand by students from this region.
8. A recommendation more financial support targeted to remote and rural students especially for accommodation and relocation costs.
### Destinations of Yr 12 Completers - Northern Mallee LLEN Region comparison 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Northern Mallee LLEN Region</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University enrolled</td>
<td>39.00%</td>
<td>47.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE/VET enrolled</td>
<td>9.70%</td>
<td>19.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeships/Traineeships</td>
<td>14.00%</td>
<td>8.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>5.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed part time</td>
<td>7.00%</td>
<td>7.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for work</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deferrals</td>
<td>18.40%</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2007 Yr 12 Completers - destinations comparison between Northern Mallee LLEN region and Victoria

![Bar chart comparing destinations between Northern Mallee LLEN region and Victoria]
Year 12 Completers 'reasons for not studying' - Northern Mallee LLEN Region comparison 2007

Reasons
1 Never intended to study
2 Not ready
3 Awaiting youth allowance
4 Hard to support self
5 Finical pressure on family
6 Cost of study
7 Not worth building a HECS debt
8 Only offered fee paying place
9 Cost of travel
10 Too much travel
11 No offer
12 Not sure of coping
13 Have to leave home
14 Preferred course not offered locally

2007 Yr 12 Completers reasons for not studying comparison between Northern Mallee LLEN region & the State of Victoria
Early Leavers 'reasons for not studying' - Northern Mallee LLEN Region comparison 2007

Reasons
1. Never intended to study
2. Not ready
3. Awaiting youth allowance
4. Hard to support self
5. Financial pressure on family
6. Cost of study
7. Not worth building a HECS debt
8. Only offered fee paying place
9. Cost of travel
10. Too much travel
11. No offer
12. Not sure of coping
13. Have to leave home
14. Preferred course not offered locally

2007 Early Leavers reasons for not studying comparison Northern Mallee LLEN region & Victoria

NMLLEN Region On Track 2007 Data Analysis
### Early Leavers 'destinations' - Northern Mallee Region comparison 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destinations</th>
<th>Northern Mallee LLEN Region</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking for work</td>
<td>7.40%</td>
<td>15.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time work</td>
<td>20.40%</td>
<td>14.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time work</td>
<td>18.50%</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>7.40%</td>
<td>7.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>29.60%</td>
<td>30.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>16.70%</td>
<td>15.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Destinations of 2007 Early Leavers in Northern Mallee LLEN region & Victoria

![Bar chart showing destinations comparison between Northern Mallee LLEN region and Victoria](chart.png)