UYCH response to the Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education.

Action

To provide comment to the Parliamentary Enquiry into Geographical Difference in the Rate in which Students Participate in Higher Education.

Background

Upper Yarra Community House Upper Yarra Community House (UYCH) provides a wide range of vocational educational training and community support to people living in the Upper Yarra Valley. A key focus for the organisation is to provide an innovative and professional approach to addressing community needs especially in the area of Youth Services. An alternative educational setting is provided for many of the Yarra Valley’s most disadvantage youth in terms of broad social and economic inequality and marginalisation. Many of the students are disengaged from mainstream education and are at risk of early school leaving. Amongst this group, particularly as a result of their broader circumstances, they face significant barriers to learning and often have major personal issues. This is compounded by the fact that Upper Yarra is a geographically isolated area in that it is well outside the suburbs of Melbourne and therefore lacks satisfactory public transport and has poor employment prospects.

Information about the programs and services UYCH offers to young people, as well as recent UYCH youth programs outcomes data is at Attachment A.

Key Points/Issues

- Positive results have been achieved by applying a localised ‘youth friendly’ flexible educational model and structure for UYCH students who are disengaged from mainstream education.
  - UYCH’s Young Mums and OONAH program are examples of offering localised culturally specific learning environments that recognises the needs of its learners in a holistic fashion.

- Strong local partnerships with all educational providers assist in support educational outcomes for young people.
  - In considering completion rates for VCE, VCAL and VET, all educational providers need to work in partnership to ensure that a greater proportion of young people remain in education and training thus supporting the government’s agenda around educational outcomes and social inclusion.
While UYCH has a strong commitment towards supporting our students into their chosen career pathway to ensure that they can achieve their economic and social independence, alternative educational providers do not offer the full suite of options/opportunities available to those young people who are in mainstream education, in particular access to VCE and university entrance. However, alternative educational providers can offer choice, flexibility and individualised learning outcomes to its learners.

- A “one-size” fits all model does not necessarily work for those young people with significant social, economic and emotional barriers that affect their capacity to learn. For these students, continuous assessment or a program similar to the VCAL model with less of a focus on exams is worth considering for young people wishing to participate in higher education.

Family dysfunction, local cultural expectations surrounding educational attainment and intergenerational welfare dependency are significant barriers for our Youth in terms of them learning at all ages, e.g. some families still struggle to support basic student costs such as food, travel expenses, pens, textbooks, paper, enrolment and excursion fees. Transport to major mainstream educational institutions within the Shire of Yarra Ranges is a significant barrier for our students in terms of cost, inter-generational family support given low educational attainment amongst family members, self-esteem, excessive travel which affects regular attendance etc. These issues then become significant barriers for those wanting to participate in Higher Education.

- Greater continuing access, and or partnerships, with Higher Educational institutions by alternative educational providers would assist in breaking down these barriers, e.g. use of classrooms and resources on a regular basis. For example, in addressing geographical differences in participation, a transition program for students entering or considering further education would be of considerable benefit.
- Consideration of early intervention ‘alternative educational’ models that support the whole family should be considered in addressing long-term significant barriers toward accessing higher education.

UYCH is particularly interested in building on its vocational educational and training (VET) services to young people through offering appropriate courses in areas of local industry growth within the Yarra Valley.

- Given transport issues, addressing skills shortages needs to be considered not just in terms of Victoria but also localised. Responses to these skills shortages needs to involve consultation and partnership arrangements with local employers and industry. In this respect, alternative educational providers have a level of flexibility in meeting the needs of both employers and students.
Summary of suggested strategies

- Educational models that are localised and respond to the needs of those in different geographical locations is required.
- In considering completion rates for VCE, VCAL and VET, all educational providers need to work in partnership to ensure that a greater proportion of young people remain in education and training to support the government’s agenda around education and social inclusion.
- A “one-size” fits all VCE entrance model does not necessarily work for those young people with significant social, economic and emotional barriers that affect their capacity to learn. For these students, continuous assessment or a program similar to the VCAL model with less of a focus on exams is worth considering for young people wishing to participate in higher education.
- Greater continuing access, and or partnerships, with Higher Educational institutions by alternative educational providers would assist in breaking down these barriers, e.g. use of classrooms and resources on a regular basis. For example, in addressing geographical differences in participation, a transition program for students entering or considering further education would be of considerable benefit.
- Consideration of early intervention ‘alternative educational’ models that support the whole family should be considered in addressing long-term significant barriers toward accessing higher education.
- Given transport issues, addressing skills shortages needs to be considered not just in terms of Victoria but also localised. Responses to these skills shortages needs to involve consultation and partnership arrangements with local employers and industry. In this respect, alternative educational providers have a level of flexibility in meeting the needs of both employers and students.

For further information provides, please don’t hesitate to contact Sally Brennan on 03 50671776 or Sue Costello on 03 5966 2366.
UYCH YOUTH PROGRAMS AND OUTCOMES DATA

The organisation’s Youth Education and Training department offers the following programs and services:

1. **JPET** (Jobs, Placement, Employment and Training) program, funded by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), for young people in the Shire of Yarra Ranges who are aged between 15-21 years. The Manager of Youth Education and Training and two youth access workers assist young people to find work, training, accommodation and help them to address their barriers to education.

2. **STEP AHEAD** – re-introduced in 2007, this program designed for early school leavers (13-16 year olds) to participate in a twelve month program which includes literacy, numeracy, art, drug education, bike education, cooking and other life skills learning. Students are referred by local schools, case managers or can self-refer.

3. **PreCAL** - The Step Ahead course will be designed to support a young person’s pathway through education and for many students will be a precursor to the PreCAL course. The PreCAL course is an alternative way to achieve a year 10. UYCH offers a 12 month program that will bring young people up to speed with basic Literacy and Numeracy skills and start thinking about Work Skills by studying Certificate 1 in Vocational Education and Training as part of the PreCAL program. The PreCAL program offers a balance of hands on applied learning and classroom based learning for those who thrive in a non-formal and supportive environment.

4. **OONAH** – The aim of the OONAH program is to provide currently disengaged young indigenous learners with a locally based, individually tailored, sustainable and culturally specific learning program which will provide them with the opportunity to complete their schooling. The learners are currently studying the Victoria Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and the Certificate of General Education for Adults. The objectives are to build capacity and resilience within each individual learner and to provide further reinforcement of the importance of their cultural heritage through the dissemination of knowledge deeply embedded in the indigenous community through applied curricula. The program is in partnership with the Local Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group (LAECG).

5. **VCAL** – The VCAL program is for students who are ready for Year 11 or 12 studies. VCAL is a ‘hands on’ program of focusing on Applied Learning. Students study Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Development, Work Related Skills and Industry Specific Skills. Students are required to study Vocational Education Training in Hospitality, Automotive, Horticulture or Business/Retail as part of their VCAL Program.

6. **VCAL FOR YOUNG MUMS** – This program is designed for those Young Mums who want a year 12 equivalent VCAL certificate but have a baby or small child. The program is a practical hands on course that is delivered over a 2 year period, two days per week. The program allows the students to bring their children to class or alternatively they can access childcare through UYCH’s Children’s Centre. VCAL Young Mums has a very supportive environment to learn.

7. **PRE APPRENTICESHIP/VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING** - offers courses in a variety of different industry areas such as:
   - Certificate II in Automotive Technology Studies, Hospitality, Horticulture, Business
   - Certificate III in Childrens Services and Aged Care Work
   - Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

**Youth Programs Outcomes Data**

The following data highlights the student’s previous school but does not necessarily mean they were referred by the school. These enrolments include both negotiated school referrals, local service referrals and self-referral.

**2007**

**Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) - VCAL Senior** - 16 enrolments
This is by far the largest Senior VCAL program UYCH has delivered. This year we have 16 enrolments. Of these enrolments, 11 came from the previous year Intermediate program at Upper Yarra Community House, 1 came from Mt Lilydale Mercy College, 1 came from Little Yarra Steiner School, and 2 were not enrolled in a school at all. To support the high number of enrolments and expected completions, UYCH has embarked on an intensive further education program focusing on local TAFE, University Courses and partnerships with industry.

VCAL Intermediate - 11 enrolments
At this level UYCH currently has 11 enrolments. Of these enrolments, 9 came from the previous PreCAL (year 10 equivalent) program offered by UYCH, 1 came from Mulluma College and 1 was not attending school at all. The pathway for this program is Senior VCAL, return to VCE or further education.

PreCAL (year 10 equivalent) - 13 enrolments
This program has 13 students enrolled. Of these enrolments, 5 came from Upper Yarra Secondary College, 4 came from Healesville High School, 1 from Little Yarra Steiner School, 2 weren’t attending school at all and 1 is unknown.

Step Ahead (Certificate 1 General Education for adults) for Students under 16 years of age. - 17 enrolments
All of these students have come from Mainstream schools. The process is extremely thorough with interviews and negotiations between Principals, parents and students. Year level Coordinators and welfare workers are also involved. The mainstream school must agree that it is in the best interest of the student and UYCH must ensure they are able to provide the support and delivery necessary to be able to accept the student. The average time of negotiation is usually 6 weeks at minimum. Of the 17 enrolments, 6 come from Healesville High School, 5 from Upper Yarra Secondary School, 3 from Lilydale Heights, 2 from Lilydale High School and 1 from Heatherwood Specialist School. The pathway for this program is to continue at UYCH into the PreCAL program or return to mainstream.

2006

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) - VCAL Senior - 4 Students enrolled
All students had previously completed Intermediate in 2005. Of these enrolments 3 continued VCAL in 2007 and 1 went onto further education at Box Hill Tafe.

VCAL Intermediate - 30 Students enrolled
This was the largest program of 2006. Of these 30 enrolments, 15 were in partnership with UYSC, whilst others were funded by ACFE or YPP. 13 of these student enrolled in Senior VCAL at UYCH, 8 became employed (4 of which were into Apprenticeships Hospitality, Automotive, Carpentry and Fashion), 2 became parents, 2 moved to Gippsland, 2 moved to Metro areas, 2 returned to Upper Yarra Secondary College to undertake VCE and 1 is unknown.

VCAL Foundation - 2 enrolments
Both of these enrolments were self referred. 1 continued VCAL Foundation in 2007 and 1 returned to Upper Yarra Secondary College to undertake VCE.

PreCAL - 23 Students enrolled
Of these 23 enrolments, 10 were in partnership with Upper Yarra Secondary School, 1 was in partnership with Healesville High School the remainder were either ACFE or YPP funded. Outcomes for these students were as follows, 10 completed and started VCAL in 2007, 5 Continued in PreCAL 2007, 1 Returned to Upper Yarra Secondary to undergo year 11, 2 gained employment (1 hairdressing, 1 chemist assistant), 3 moved to metro regions and 2 moved interstate (1, Tasmania and 1 New South Wales).

In 2006, there was not an under 15’s ‘Step Ahead’ program offered at UYCH.

2005

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning - VCAL Senior - 7 enrolments
Of these, enrolment 4 was in partnership with Upper Yarra Secondary College and the others were funded by ACFE of YPP. Outcomes for this senior level were 4 completed (1 returned to UYSC to complete VCE, 1 continued further education at Box Hill Tafe and 2 gained employment in the Automotive Industry, 1 continued in 2007 and 2 left location unknown.

VCAL Intermediate - 24 students enrolled
Of these enrolments, 14 were in partnership with Upper Yarra Secondary College and the other enrolments were funded by ACFE or YPP. 13 students continued VCAL in 2007, 1 returned to UYSC, 3 gained employment (1 apprentice plasterer, 1 apprentice automotive and 1 apprentice Horticulture.), 2 transferred into Automotive certificate 11, 1 studied hairdressing at Box Hill and 4 left, location unknown.

There was not a PreCAL of Step Ahead program delivered in 2005.