

MATES MATTERS

Term 1, 2020

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A Message from Sam

Welcome to this special edition newsletter, celebrating 10 years of MATES Mentoring in the Wimmera.

2020 marks ten years since the MATES Mentoring Program began as a pilot program at Dimboola Memorial Secondary College.

Throughout the coming year, there will be a number of celebration events to mark this ten-year milestone and to acknowledge the wonderful contribution of over 500 volunteer mentors who have participated in the program in our region. A brief history of 10 years of mentoring has been compiled in the following pages of this newsletter.

After 10 years of supporting young people in our community, the MATES Mentoring Program has gained wide acceptance from schools as they have seen the positive impact it has had on the young people involved. MATES is now operating in more than 18 schools across the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.

To celebrate the MATES ten-year milestone, we're on the search for your MATES stories! If you are currently mentoring, or know of any great past mentors who would like to share their mentoring experiences, please contact Sam on 5381 0122 or email:

mates@llen.com.au

As always, we are on the search for more volunteers to participate in the program. If you know of anyone who would be interested, please let the MATES team know! We have regular training sessions in Horsham and the training can now be done online – either on a computer or sitting back and relaxing on the couch using your tablet or phone.

As we move into another decade of mentoring, I am looking forward to seeing more mentors step forward to experience the rewards found in making a difference in the lives of the young people in our community.

Sam Flaherty
MATES Coordinator



Contact the MATES team:

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Facebook: facebook.com/MATESMentoring

Instagram: [matesmentoring](https://instagram.com/matesmentoring)

WIMMERA
SOUTHERN
MALLEN
LLEN





Celebrating 10 Years of MATES Mentoring

The beginnings - 2010

The MATES Mentoring program had its beginnings in 2010 when Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN partnered with Dimboola Memorial Secondary College and the Hindmarsh Shire to deliver a pilot mentoring program. Pictured right are some of the first mentors and mentees who participated in the pilot program in 2010. Vicki Smithyman and Norm McLean coordinated Dimboola's pilot program.

The pilot mentoring program was further developed by Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN in 2011 under the direction of Sallie Koenig (nee Millington) and became known as the MATES Mentoring Program. MATES Mentoring Programs commenced at Murtoa College, Nhill College, Horsham College and the Satellite VCAL program.

The program in Dimboola has continued to run since 2010 with over 70 young people in Dimboola being matched with a mentor since the program began.



Sallie Millington, MATES Project Officer



Julie Nooteboom, DMSC MATES Coordinator

The Dimboola Memorial Secondary College Principal noted the value of the MATES program in his 2011 Awards Night speech:

An excellent example of this College's values lies in so many of the activities that occur at DMSC. This perhaps is most reflected in the manner upon which the MATES program coordinated by Julie Nooteboom has impacted upon our school. This wonderful program has forged relationships between members of our community and students within our school. It has become more than a mentoring program it has become an example of what this community can do and the impact that supporting and sharing can have on people's lives. Relationships have been forged beyond what any classroom could teach.



2011

The MATES Mentoring program continued in Dimboola in 2011 with 18 mentors and additional programs were established at Nhill College, Horsham College, Murtoa College and Warracknabeal Satellite VCAL program with a further 41 mentors.

In addition to mentors and mentees catching up one-on-one on a fortnightly basis, MATES coordinators in the schools conducted group activities where mentors and mentees could come together. Murtoa MATES mentoring program ran a tennis day, Dimboola ran an Amazing Race and Nhill College ran games nights.



Above: Participants in Dimboola MATES Amazing Race



Above: Participants in Murtoa MATES tennis day

The Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance produced a mentoring video in 2011 featuring mentor, Anne Gook and mentee, Georgina Moore from the Dimboola MATES Program. Georgina, Anne and Sallie Millington travelled to Melbourne for the launch of the video and are pictured below with Youth Affairs Minister, Hon. Ryan Smith (pictured below).



MATES Launch, Nhill College, July 2011



MATES Launch, Horsham College, August 2011



MATES Launch, Murtoa College, August 2011



Regional MATES celebration, May Park, Horsham Oct 2011

2012



Regional MATES visit to Halls Gap Zoo



MATES Program launched at Horsham Primary School



MATES Program featured on WIN TV News (click to view)



MATES BBQ and celebration at May park

The MATES program continued to expand in 2012 with programs being established at:

- Goroke P-12 College
- Hopetoun Secondary College
- Horsham Primary School 298
- Horsham Primary School Rasmussen Campus
- Horsham Special School
- Kaniva College

Schools were encouraged and supported to run group activities for their mentors and mentees. A feature activity for 2012 was a stall held at the Jung Market by the Murtoa MATES mentoring program (pictured below).



Region-wide MATES group activities included trips to the Halls Gap and Melbourne Zoos and a celebratory BBQ and games event at May Park in Horsham. The May Park event was attended by mentors and mentees from across the region and was featured on the WIN TV News.

[\(See the news clip from this link\)](#)



Above: WIN TV News crew filming at May Park

Community Champions Recognised

In 2012 the MATES Program began the practice of promoting Community Champions—businesses that allowed flexible working hours to enable their employees to participate in MATES mentoring during business hours.



2013

Mentor of the Year Award Introduced

2013 saw the introduction of the MATES Mentoring Awards.

Schools were invited to nominate mentors for this award and the inaugural winner of the Mentor of the Year Award was Margaret Menzel from Dimboola. Marg build a very positive relationship with her mentee, Sam, and encouraged her to participate in activities that she would not have previously considered, such as participating in the school play and appearing on WIN TV to talk about the MATES program.

Marg said, about her mentoring experience, 'I have found it to be very rewarding for me making friends with my mentee, Sam and her family, and I am sure she enjoys the time we spend together. This program has also helped me to fill a void in my life, as in the last year I have lost two of my very best friends.' Marg, who was in her 70s when she commenced mentoring, was apprehensive about being matched with a teenager.

Sam said, "Marg is like my grandma. She is very caring and she takes what she does seriously, especially volunteering. I look up to her, she's inspiring and like my best friend... Marg has encouraged me to do so many things I would never have done before which I am so grateful for. Without Marg in my life I would still be really shy, wouldn't trust many people and still be disorganised!"

New Programs Launched

As the popularity of the MATES program increased and schools heard about the success of the program, MATES continued to grow and new programs were established at Edenhope College, Warracknabeal Primary School, Warracknabeal Secondary College and St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal.

Early in 2013 MATES joined the burgeoning social media world and a Facebook page was established to provide a platform to establish communication channels about MATES and to promote mentoring in the local region.



At the end of 2013, Sallie Millington, who developed the MATES program and worked enthusiastically to establish programs in schools across the region and beyond, resigned from her position at WSMLEN as the MATES Project Officer.



Pictured from left: Margaret Menzel with mentee Sam and DMSC MATES coordinator, Julie Nooteboom



MATES Mentoring launch at St Mary's Primary School, Warracknabeal



Kaniva MATES 'Big Brekkie' event



Edenhope College MATES launch

2014 - 2015



Mentor Courtney Rigby and MATES Coordinator, Dean O'Loughlin at information session



Mentee, Tanner, Joy Forbes and 2015 Mentor of the Year, Nicole Holm



Mentor, Gavin Morrow and mentee, Michael



The MATES Mentoring Program was a finalist in the Connecting Communities category in Volunteering Western Victoria's 2015 Recognition Awards.

2014

In April 2014, Dean O'Loughlin was appointed by WSMMLLEN as the Coordinator of the MATES program. Dean resigned in August after four months in the role and Joy Forbes was appointed coordinator in September 2014.

During 2014 a new program was launched at Ss Michael and John's primary school, Horsham. By the end of 2014, seventeen mentoring programs had been established across the Wimmera and Southern Mallee region. With the growing number of programs operating, the coordination of the programs involved communicating and supporting the existing programs and recruiting and training new mentors to keep these programs running.

2015

In 2015, a new mentoring program was launched at Horsham West Primary School. Sixty new mentors were recruited and trained across the region in that year.

The MATES Mentor of the Year was Nicole Holm. Nicole introduced her mentee, Tanner, to a range of life experiences which included lawn bowls, tennis, fishing and riding sleds down sand hills.

On one particular day, Tanner went fishing for the first time, caught his first fish and had his maiden voyage in a boat. This was all capped off with a BBQ tea. They shared many activities which included cooking, sharing hot chocolate, celebrating birthdays, exchanging Easter eggs, playing board games and riding for hours on their bikes.

Tanner grew in confidence as Nicole made him feel important and special. This resulted in him doing better at school, making more friends and wanting to try new things and explore the world.

During 2015 the Weekly advertiser published an article about MATES Mentor, Gavin Morrow, and his mentee, Michael. As the mentoring relationship grew, Michael began dropping in to Gavin's business (Morrow Motor Group) after school and washing cars and was later offered a Motor Mechanic apprenticeship where the whole workplace continued the mentorship.

The mentoring program at Kaniva College demonstrated the benefits of belonging to a small, close-knit community. Mentors matched in previous years were continuing their mentoring beyond the required one-year period, and a strong community of mentors was established under the leadership of Kaniva's MATES coordinator, Fran McDonald. Regular group activities for mentors and mentees provided valuable support for this small community of 'mates'.

2016

A celebration event in Horsham in October combined the presentation of Mentor of the Year Awards with ten-pin bowling, providing a fun-filled event for mentors and mentees from across the region.

Mentoring teams were acknowledged for the first time in the 2016 Mentor of the Year Awards with the inauguration of the MATES Mentoring Team of the Year Award. This was awarded to Kaniva College, acknowledging the very active program in Kaniva, headed up by coordinator, Fran McDonald.

Community Champion of the Year for 2016 was Hindmarsh Shire who came on board and made provision for seven staff to mentor during school hours. (Hindmarsh Shire MATES Mentoring team pictured bottom right)

Andrew Sostheim was the Mentor of the Year. Andrew mentored a student from Ss Michael and John's Primary School in Horsham.

A MATES mentoring program was established at Dimboola Primary School with the support of Dimboola Memorial Secondary College. The two schools combined their recruiting efforts to find 18 new mentors for that year (nine mentors for each school).

Julie Nooteboom, founding coordinator of the DMSC mentoring program retired from her role as MATES Coordinator after six years of coordinating the most prolific mentoring program in the region. Julie and the team at DMSC had matched 70 young people with a mentor by the end of 2016.

At the end of 2016 Joy Forbes resigned from her position of MATES Coordinator at the LLEN after a little over three years in the role. As a former school principal, Joy brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the LLEN MATES team.



MATES Coordinator, Joy Forbes presenting Mentor of the Year Award to Andrew Sostheim



Kaniva MATES Coordinator, Fran McDonald receiving Mentoring Team of the Year Award from Joy Forbes



Hindmarsh Shire Council, MATES Community Champion of the Year



Horsham West Primary School MATES mentor Kelsey Webb and mentee Jordan



MATES regional celebration, ten-pin-bowling

2017



2017 Community Champion of the Year Award received by Bendigo Bank representative, Shane Gillespie



Apsley MATES Mentoring Team of the Year receiving awards from Tim Shaw and Mary Bysouth



MATES Mentor of the year, Julie Merrett-Mills receiving her award from Tim Shaw and Mary Bysouth



Youth Mentoring Week celebration and MATES Mentoring Awards presentations at Coughlin Park

Katrina Janetzki was appointed as the LLEN MATES Coordinator from February to April until Mary Bysouth took on the position in May.

Apsley Primary School established a MATES Mentoring Program with eight mentors and an aim to increase the number of mentors to match a mentor with every child in the school. Some mentors made themselves available to mentor more than one student to assist with achieving this goal. This effort resulted in the Apsley Primary School MATES Mentoring Team being winners of the 2017 MATES Mentoring Team of the Year Award.

The Community Champion of the Year was to Bendigo Bank, Horsham Branch, which made provision for six of its staff to mentor during school hours.

Mentor of the Year for 2017 was Julie Merrett-Mills from Apsley. Julie not only mentored, but also assisted with the coordination of the program, providing valuable assistance to the school.

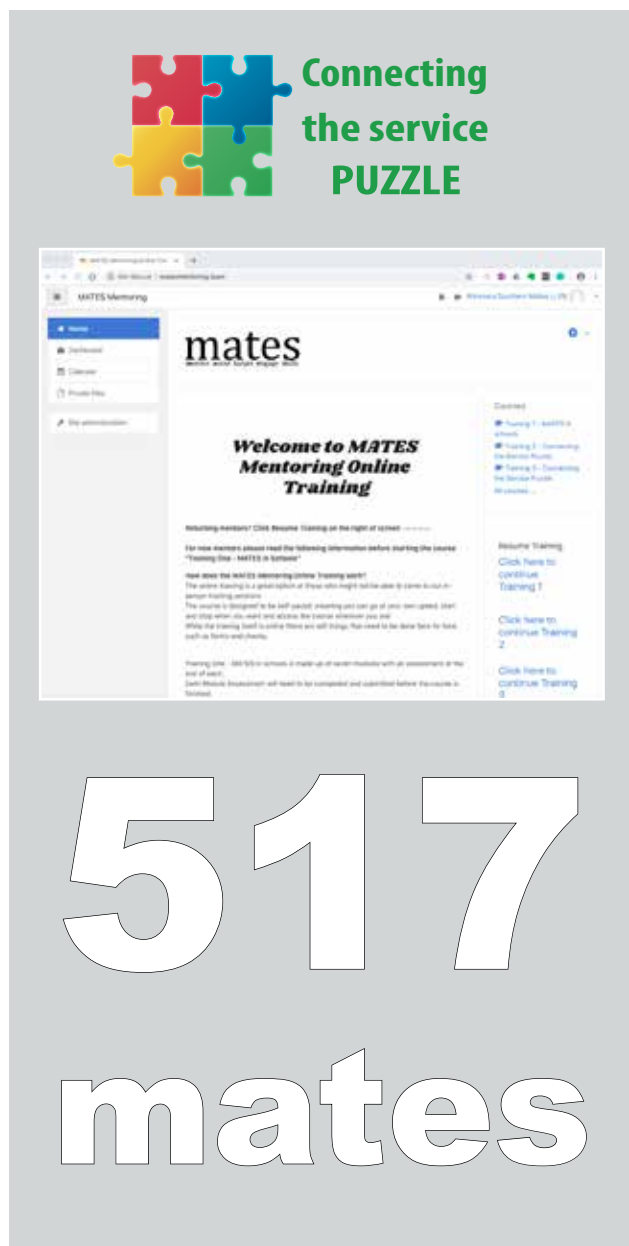
MATES Mentoring Awards were presented at a regional gathering at Coughlin Park, Horsham, during Youth Mentoring Week in October. The gathering included rounds of lawn bowls for mentors and mentees, followed by lunch.

In 2017, a new mentoring venture appeared on the horizon. In partnership with ten organisations, led by Centre for Participation, preparations began for the MATES Mentoring program to add a mentoring component to a new Youth Justice program, Connecting the Service Puzzle. Additional training modules for the MATES program were developed for mentors who would work with young people with more complex needs. The modules were developed with assistance from Emma McCarthy, Centre for Participation and Horsham College Alternate Programs. The new training modules were trialled and refined ready for the beginning of 2018.

The MATES mentor training now consisted of three modules:

- Module 1—for mentors in school-based programs
- Modules 2 & 3—mandatory for anyone who would be mentoring in the Connecting the Service Puzzle program but also available to mentors in the school-based programs and anyone in the community who wished to undertake the training for their own professional development.

2018



2018 was Warracknabeal's time to shine, with Warracknabeal Secondary College matching 23 mentors with mentees—the highest number of mentors matched at any school in any given year since the inception of the program. This was due largely to the efforts of Warracknabeal Secondary College's MATES coordinator, Naomi Malcolm and the strategy of 'the personal approach'—simply asking people in the community if they would be prepared to mentor a young person.

A new MATES Mentoring Program was established at Our Lady, Help of Christians Primary School in Murtoa.

Recruiting and training mentors for the Connecting the Service Puzzle initiative began in earnest and the newly developed training modules to mentor young people with more complex needs were delivered.

All new mentors had the option of completing the additional training, whether or not they intended to work within the Connecting the Service Puzzle program.

Mary Bysouth resigned as the LLEN MATES coordinator in November and Sam Flaherty was appointed to the position in the same month.

New to the role of MATES Coordinator, Sam took on the task of delivering the newly developed training modules.

Sam also worked on developing online MATES training, to be ready to launch in 2019. The aim was to make Module 1 of the training available in a self-paced format for mentors who were unable to attend face-to-face MATES mentor training.

Midway through 2018, the MATES Mentoring Program reached a significant milestone, having matching 500 young people with a mentor. By the end of the year, 517 young people across the Wimmera and Southern Mallee had been matched with a mentor.

The difference one year can make

In one of our Wimmera schools where the MATES mentoring program had been recently introduced, eight volunteers were matched with eight students in a new program. After 12 months, mentors and mentees came together to celebrate the program and their own individual accomplishments. The celebrations highlighted how far some of the young people had come throughout the year of mentoring, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from both mentors and mentees. Young people involved in the program spoke of the great times they had with their mentors and, when asked if they would recommend the program to other students, all said they would. During the celebration event, a

survey of mentees was conducted relating to their experiences with the program, with 100% believing they felt more confident at school and 84% feeling happier and better about themselves at school since having a mentor.

One of the most resounding comments made by a student was, 'It is one of the best programs I've joined in my life.'

The positive effects of the program were also seen by the mentors who participated. All the participants had seen a positive change in themselves and their mentee throughout the year of mentoring. All mentors enjoyed their experience and would strongly recommend the program to

people in their community. Mentors felt a sense of connectedness to the school. Mentors described their participation in the program as a growing and learning experience for themselves as well as their mentees.

The most common words used to describe the mentoring experience were: 'fun, interesting, awesome, valuable and worthwhile'.

Overwhelmingly, mentoring was a positive experience for everyone involved.

These responses are indicative of the feedback received by many schools across the Wimmera Southern Mallee area.

2019



Pictured L-R: Nathan Smith with Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN MATES team: Vanessa O'Loughlin, Sam Flaherty and Tim Shaw



Warracknabeal MATES mentors morning tea



McKenzie Creek Deckheads project, one of the projects undertaken in the group mentoring sessions.



McKenzie Creek shed project, undertaken in the group mentoring sessions to refurbish a shed to create a space for students

The MATES Mentoring Program was honoured to receive the 2019 People's Choice Award at the Centre for Participation's Volunteering Recognition Awards. The award was presented by Bendigo Bank Wimmera Senior Branch Manager, Nathan Smith in recognition of all the great work done by our mentors, schools and volunteers involved in the program.

In October, a MATES Mentoring Program was launched at Holy Trinity Lutheran College with an initial intake of six mentors.

Group mentoring activities ran throughout the year at Horsham College's McKenzie Creek campus. This new initiative of 'mentoring delivered differently' provided an opportunity for the students and mentors to become familiar with what mentoring involves without the formal commitment to the program. The range of activities allowed students and mentors to work together and build mentoring relationships in a less formal manner.

Activities included the 'Deckheads' art project which culminated in artwork produced by students being displayed in an exhibition at the Horsham Regional Art Gallery. During term four, students and mentors worked together on projects to improve and reinvigorate areas of their campus. Students chose two projects: revamping the shed and creating a fire-pit area.

The presence of MATES on social media increased in intensity in 2019 with a range of initiatives to attract more followers and promote the MATES program. Prize incentives were used to increase the MATES social media following. Prizes included a cap signed by Australian cricketer, Aaron Finch, a football signed by AFL footballers, Jarrod and Thomas Berry, and other gift packages.



MATES Mentoring Program launch at Holy Trinity Lutheran College

2019 MATES Mentoring Awards



Above: Mentor of the Year (joint winner) Robert Law
(Award received by mentee, Riley)



Above: Mentor of the Year (joint winner) Janine Harfield,
(Award received by representative, Eliza)



Above: Mentoring Team of the Year, Warracknabeal Secondary College.
(Award accepted by Kate Morgan and Brianna)



Above: Community Champion of the Year, Skillinvest
Award accepted by Glen Pohlner (General Manger)
and Nicola Powell (mentor)

The 2019 Mentor of the Year Award was awarded jointly to two recipients, Bob Law from Apsley and Janine Harfield from Horsham.

Both recipients showed a high level of commitment to their mentors and the mentoring program.

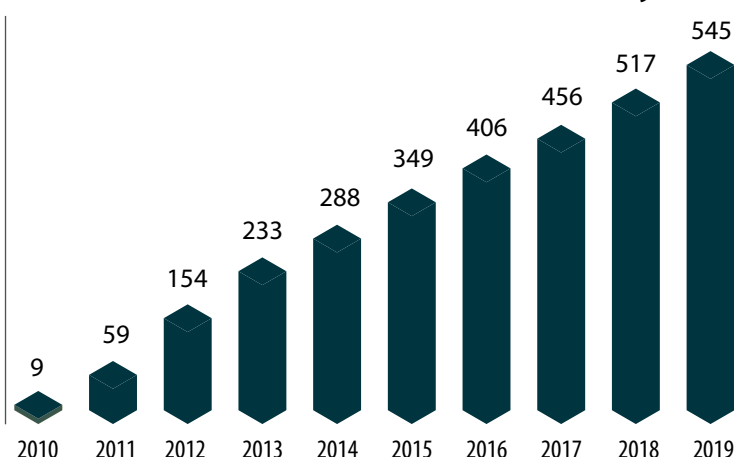
Warracknabeal Secondary College received the award for Mentoring Team of the Year. The team, under the leadership of Helen Dillon, invested a great deal of energy into their MATES Mentoring Program, developing best practice volunteering protocols and working with the community to recruit mentors, expanding their program to almost 20 mentors.

The award for the 2019 Community Champion of the Year was presented to Skillinvest. To support the MATES Mentoring Program, Skillinvest invited the LLEN team to speak to all staff and happily supported several staff to mentor young people. The Skillinvest team was so impressed with MATES mentoring that they made a staff-initiated financial donation towards MATES Youth Mentoring Program, which helped develop the online training as well as provide MATES games boxes for schools.

By the end of 2019, the total number of mentors matched with mentees over the 10 years since the inception of the program reached 545 (an average of 60 new mentors each year after the pilot program).

In 2016, a review of the MATES program was conducted by an independent agency, Regional Advance. Their report estimated the social return on the MATES Mentoring Program to be between \$18 - \$23 for every dollar invested in the program. The report valued volunteer's time at \$21.61 per hour. Assuming that each mentor gave 24 hours to the program each year, the social return in dollar value for the MATES program over 10 years is estimated to be between \$5 million and \$6.5 million.

Cumulative Total of MATES Mentors by Year

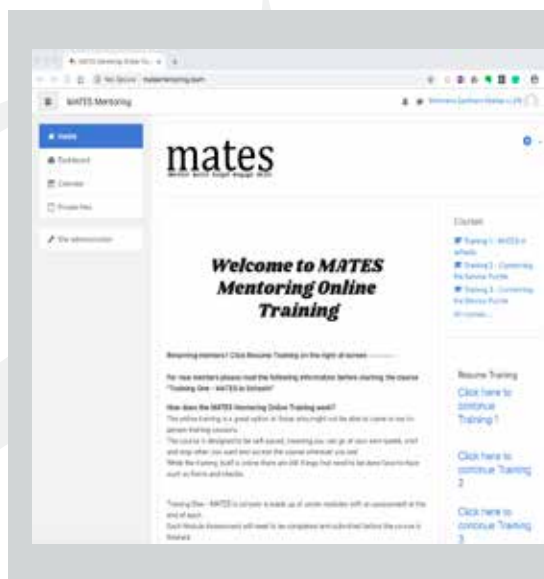


MATES Training

If your school or business would like to host a mentor training session, please feel free to contact Sam on 5381 0122 or at

mates@llen.com.au

MATES training is a free professional development opportunity and existing mentors are welcome to repeat the training as a refresher.



MATES training is available online.

The training is all self-paced and can be accessed anywhere and anytime! It takes approximately two hours to complete but can be stopped and started at any time. If you're interested or know of someone who wants to mentor but finds it hard to find the time, to attend training, let Sam know and he can sign you up.

Training Dates 2020

Face-to-face training sessions for MATES mentors for 2020 have been set for February and March.

Anyone who is interested in becoming a MATES mentor is invited to attend these free training sessions. The new year is a great time to commence mentoring a young person. The new year is often a time of uncertainty for many young people with new classes, developing new friendship groups and perhaps settling into a new school. This is a time when extra support from a mentor can make a world of difference.

All training sessions will be held at the LLEN office which is on the Federation University Campus, 289 Baillie St, Horsham.

Contact Sam on 03 538 10122 or email mates@llen.com.au to register for a training session.

2020 MATES Mentor Training sessions:

Monday 30th March 5:30 – 7:30pm

Tuesday 31st March 9:30 – 11:30am



Feedback

The MATES Mentoring Program seeks regular feedback from its participants to gauge how well the program is working and to continually improve how the program is delivered. We also use the information to promote the MATES Program and to find new mentors.

We value the feedback from all of our mentors and mentees. During this term, MATES coordinators in schools may ask mentors and mentees to complete a survey. If you are a mentor or mentee and you are asked to complete a survey, please take the time to assist us by sharing your experience of the MATES Mentoring Program. You will be able to complete the survey online using your computer, phone or tablet.



Sam Flaherty
MATES Coordinator



Tim Shaw
Executive Officer



Vanessa O'Loughlin
Systems and Development

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Facebook: facebook.com/MATESMentoring

Instagram: [matesmentoring](https://instagram.com/matesmentoring)

About the LLEN

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) are an initiative of the Victorian Government. They were established to bring together schools, business and industry, community organisations, government agencies and individuals to improve the lives and education outcomes of our young people.

The Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN works across the Hindmarsh, Horsham, West Wimmera and Yarriambiack local government areas. We have a strong focus on supporting disadvantaged young people to remain at school. The WSMLLEN strives:

- To improve the participation of vulnerable young people and their families in education
- To increase the re-engagement of young people into programs leading to qualifications
- To increase our schools' engagement with the community to improve students' aspirations and education outcomes

Helpful Phone numbers

Grampians Community Health: 5362 1200

Hindmarsh Shire (03) 5391 4444

Horsham Rural City Council: 5382 9777

West Wimmera Shire:

Edenhope: (03) 5585 9900

Kaniva: (03) 5392 7700

Yarriambiack Shire: (03) 5398 0100

Police (Horsham): 5382 9200

Rural Northwest Health (03) 5396 1200

West Wimmera Health Service (03) 5391 4222

Wimmera Health Care Group (Horsham Hospital): (03) 5381 9111

Bushfire information: 1800 240 667

headspace (Horsham): 5381 1543

LifeLine: 13 11 14

Nurse on call: 1300 060 024

SES Emergency: 13 25 00