

MATES MATTERS

Term 4, October 2020

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A Message from Vanessa

Hello MATES Community,

It has certainly been a challenging year in many ways and on behalf of the LLEN team, we sincerely hope you are all well. The LLEN team remain off-site, working from our homes and doing our best to support schools, students, local industry and the broader community.

We are pleased that, with the lifting of some restrictions in regional Victoria, we are able to establish some mentoring in the Wimmera region.

In-school mentoring will unfortunately not be re-established at this point in time and we thank those mentors (and mentees) for their patience. Due to the ever-changing school environment and level of student engagement, most schools were unable to support Zoom mentoring or pen pals. Now that students have returned to the classroom, hopefully some contact can be made prior to the end of the year for existing matches – even if it is not face-to-face.

Moving forward, mentoring which is undertaken off-site (and in situations where the benefits greatly outweigh the risk) will be able to occur in accordance with COVID-safe planning and procedures. WSMLEN have been working to establish protocols and ensuring that returning mentors have the utmost support and understanding around safety. Some of the major changes will include mentoring being completed outdoors only, a portable hygiene safety kit for mentors and a logbook system designed to support contact tracing if necessary. There is further information on page 2 of this newsletter regarding COVID-safe mentoring.

As you are aware from our last newsletter, Sam has moved on and I will be the MATES point of contact for Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN. Thank you to the schools and mentors I have had the opportunity to speak to so far. As mentors, if you have any questions or queries related directly to your participation, your first contact should be to your school's program coordinator, otherwise, feel free to call me on 0418 312 556.

Over the coming weeks, I hope to contact as many volunteers as possible regarding returning to mentoring. Volunteers are under no obligation to return to mentoring and further advice will be provided to those who consider a role as a mentor.

If you are keen to help out, or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0418 312 556 or via email mates@llen.com.au. We already have a waiting list of young people.

Vanessa O'Loughlin
Project Officer



Contact the MATES team:

Phone: 03 53810122

Email: mates@llen.com.au

Web: llen.com.au/mates

Facebook: facebook.com/MATESMentoring

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

WIMMERA
SOUTHERN
MALLEE
LLEN



In-School Mentoring

COVID-19 has presented some very big challenges for schools and for the children and young people across the region. The Victorian State Government has set in place school restrictions on non-essential volunteers to minimise the risk of COVID-19 to the community.

During the shut-down period, some schools elected to trial virtual mentoring and pen pals, but unfortunately, due to the significant resources required and the ability to maintain student engagement through remote learning, both systems did not take-off as hoped.

For the remainder of 2020, no new in-school mentoring is likely to occur due to the short time between now and Christmas to form new relationships. WSMLEN hopes to work with each of the participating schools to provide some level of communication and connection for existing mentor-mentee matches where possible and if beneficial to the young person.

As we look over the horizon towards 2021, we are crossing our fingers for a full return of the program.



COVID-Safe Volunteering



As mentioned in the introduction, WSMLEN have been working on COVID-safe plans for volunteer mentors. WSMLEN's plan extends only to Wimmera volunteers and only to mentoring that has the relevant permissions to be off school or LLEN sites.

The safety of volunteer mentors and mentees is priority. WSMLEN has aligned protocols with the Australian Government's advice and restriction rules and has built a structure that fully informs potential volunteers of the risks, and the ability to self-assess if returning to mentorship is the right thing for them. We have seven key elements:

1. We provide advice from The Australian Government Department of Health on high-risk categories and advice on WSMLEN's volunteer insurance and duty of care. We encourage any individuals thinking of volunteering to consider issues of self-care and to avoid putting themselves and others in the community at risk. Volunteers are under no obligation to volunteer if they do not feel comfortable doing so.

2. Ask mentors to complete the Australian Government Department of Health Covid-19 Infection Control Training. (Training link - <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>).
3. Implementation of new Codes of Conduct that reference COVID-19 safety and new Volunteer Agreements (WSMLEN Volunteers only) to ensure everyone understands the role and workplace safety measures and has access to necessary contact details.
4. Supply of 'Stop the Spread' checklist and information.
5. A document outlining restrictions and communication. An online community of practice and other communication structures have been established to ensure all participating mentors are kept up to date with restrictions, program changes and necessary information. The global pandemic response is extremely fluid and the MATES Mentoring Program needs to be flexible as well with information easily accessible and immediately available.
6. Provision of a MATES Mentoring portable hygiene kit.
7. COVID-safe log book designed for mentors to easily complete.

Existing or potential volunteer mentors can call Vanessa on 0418 312 556 or email mates@llen.com.au for further information on COVID safety and mentoring.

If you are seeking more details or have questions specifically about the Coronavirus in Australia, call the Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). You can also call Healthdirect Hotline on 1800 022 222 (24 hours a day, 7 days per week) to speak to a registered nurse about your health concerns.



Many of the young people are seeking additional support during a time when social connection has been significantly restricted.

The seven young people are all aged between 12 and 16 with interests ranging from gaming, riding scooters, walking, cooking, camping, fitness and outdoor adventures. Mentoring goals include assisting them with resumes, building self-confidence, building practical everyday skills (changing a tyre, cooking, managing bills etc.) and creating new experiences.

In an ideal world, we seek both male and female mentors who can spare at least one hour per fortnight outside of school hours (weekday afternoons/early evenings or weekends).

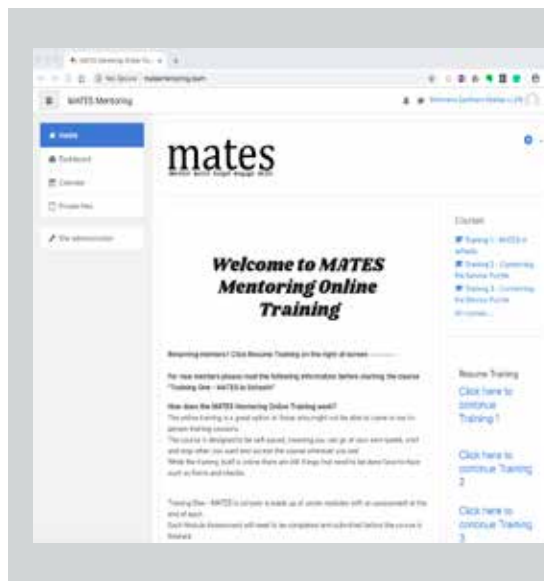
Whilst WSMLLEN will aim to contact as many registered mentors as possible, if you are interested, please do not hesitate to contact Vanessa on 0418 312 556 or email mates@llen.com.au

Currently, we have seven young people seeking connection. The young people have been referred from supporting organisations in preparation for the re-establishment of mentoring programs and will greatly benefit from a positive role model.

MATES Online Training

Thanks to Sam and his technical skills, the MATES Training is all set-up to be delivered online. Current mentors who wish to revisit the training in preparation for a return to mentoring, or new mentors who have attended an information session, can access the training by emailing: mates@llen.com.au

Mentors are also encouraged to complete the Australian Government Department of Health's COVID Infection Control Training which can be accessed via this link: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>



MATES training is available online.

The training is all self-paced and can be accessed anywhere and anytime! If you're interested or know of someone who wants to mentor but finds it hard to find the time to attend training, let Vanessa know and she can sign you up.

MATES Virtual Information Session

With the return to mentoring, the MATES team is opening an online information session via Zoom for all existing and potential volunteer mentors to learn about the off-site program in more detail and our COVID-safe planning. Anyone interested in a 2021 start is also more than welcome. Anyone seeking more information but cannot attend the information session is encouraged to contact Vanessa on: 0418 312 556 or emailing mates@llen.com.au

MATES Information Session Online - Via Zoom

Participants can also telephone in.

1.00 pm, Friday 30 October

When you register via the link below, the webinar log-in details will be sent to you.

Registration link: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/mates-mentoring-information-session-tickets-125563215959>





MATES in the Spotlight

'MATES in the Spotlight' will be a new inclusion to our newsletters and will feature feel-good mentoring stories to highlight some of our wonderful mentors in the MATES team.

We are asking anyone to send us the name of a mentor or details of a mentoring story that is worthy of the spotlight!

Please forward the details to mates@llen.com.au

The MATES Team look forward to sharing!

End-of-Year Celebration

MATES Awards

Yikes! 2020 it really is flying!

Normally at this time of year, the LLEN MATES Team plans an end of year celebration to mark all the wonderful contributions of participating schools, businesses, mentors and mentees. The 2020 celebration was going to be BIG to highlight the MATES Mentoring Program's 10th birthday.

Last year, WSMMLLEN hosted 'MATES on the Green' which was full of fun, outdoors games, snags on the BBQ and lots of laughter. In the past, the broader MATES Community has participated in lawn bowls, ten-pin bowling, pool parties, pizza days and much more. We'd love to hear about your favourite event.

This year, things will be a little different and we look forward to coming together as a regional MATES community in 2021.

WSMMLLEN will work with participating schools to mark the end of the mentoring year in their own special way.



Working with Deakin

For the last few months, the WSMMLLEN team has been fortunate to be working with Deakin University Students to develop a new communication strategy for the MATES Mentoring Program.

The Deakin Team consisted of five young people who were given MATES Mentoring as their focus project as part of their communications degree.

It was such a wonderful experience to work with them to build new concepts and get different prospective and insights. The Deakin team carried out their final presentation last week and the outcome blew us away!

The ultimate goal of the project is to attract more mentors. Watch this space!



MATES Contact - Who can you call?

For current in-school mentors, please contact your school program coordinator. If you are unsure who this is, or if you haven't been able to establish contact, please call Vanessa on 0418 312 556 or email mates@llen.com.au.

For new volunteers and for mentors who have not yet been matched to a school or other program, please contact Vanessa on 0418 312 556 or email mates@llen.com.au





Tim Shaw
Executive Officer



Vanessa O'Loughlin
Project Officer

Contact the MATES team:

Phone: 03 53810122

Email: mates@llen.com.au

Web: llen.com.au/mates

Facebook: facebook.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