

# POSITIVE FUTURES

# FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



# Annual Report



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WSMLEN acknowledges the following for their funding support:

- Horsham Sports and Community Club
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Hindmarsh Shire Council
- Yarriambiack Shire Council
- Centre for Participation
- Wimmera schools:
  - VET Cluster
  - Grampians Virtual School
  - Western Victorian Careers Expo

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Wimmera Southern Mallee  
 LLEN is supported by the  
 Victorian Government.

## Mission

To create partnerships between industry, education and the community that develop positive futures for our young people.

## Objective

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network's objective is to assist young people to complete year 12 or its vocational equivalent. This includes traineeships and apprenticeships. A particular focus of our work is with young people from a disadvantaged background.

## Who we are

Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN is a not-for-profit organisation which works towards improving education outcomes for young people in the local community. WSMLEEN is funded by the State Government of Victoria and was established in 2002.

## We work with

Schools  
Local businesses  
Organisations  
Community  
Training providers

## Focus areas

School Industry Engagement

Work Placements for Students

Improving Literacy

Increasing school engagement and retention rates

Raising educational aspirations

Improving outcomes for young people

Social inclusion



*One child, one teacher, one book, one pen  
can change the world.*

*Malala Yousafzai*



## From our President

Although 2020 was such a challenging year for all of our schools and students, the LLEN has still been able to offer supports for schools and it has been a year of great innovation.

When the Western Victorian Careers Expo could not be held in its usual 'on-site' format, the LLEN supported the Careers Expo to deliver a virtual on-line Expo.

When students were unable to attend Try VET Day to assist them to choose their courses for 2021, the LLEN developed a website with detailed course information and an online enrolment application process. This will continue to be a great asset in the future.

When we were unable to hold meetings face-to-face, we all mastered new skills to run online meetings — a skill-set that will be used in the future and has already made it possible to form closer connections with our more remote schools.

I congratulate schools, parents and students who took on the huge challenge of remote

learning and I congratulate the LLEN team for the supports that they provided.

During 2020 we have all been forced to do things differently and I am sure that many of the 'new ways of doing things' will continue in years to come.

This is my last year as President and it has been a real honour to be part of a team helping to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.

I would like to thank members of the Committee of Management, Tim and Lorraine (wishing you well in your eventual retirement) and all the LLEN staff. I'm very proud of what the LLEN has accomplished. We have come a long way but there is still much to do. I wish the incoming president and Committee all the very best for 2021.

"One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."

*Malala Yousafzai*



*Wendy Bywaters*

Wendy Bywaters  
President



*It is important that we pause for a moment to acknowledge that 2020 was a very challenging year for our young people, our families, our schools and our communities.*

## From our Executive Officer

As we reflect on the challenges and successes, it is important that we pause for a moment to acknowledge that 2020 was a very challenging year for our young people, our families, our schools and our communities.

The impact of COVID-19 was life changing for all. Our thoughts are with everyone who has been adversely affected, including those who have been ill, those who have lost loved ones and people who have lost their jobs or businesses.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our work with schools and local business. Many schools cancelled non-essential meetings and restricted access to schools. All schools placed a halt on volunteers and non-essential personnel visiting their campuses. We also acknowledge that businesses were dealing with the ramifications of the pandemic and many did not have the time or desire to be discussing work placements or school-industry engagement activities.

### **DET – LLEN contract 2020-2021**

As part of the new Department of Education and Training (DET) funding agreement, the WSMMLLEN undertook a strategic consultation process with schools, DET regional staff,

employers and other stakeholders to determine priorities and actions required to achieve the contract key performance indicators.

The LLEN team consulted widely with principals, careers advisers, VET providers, business and community groups throughout January, February and March. We focused on identifying the areas where the LLEN could best support our schools.

Under the new contract, opportunities for the WSMMLLEN to support schools included:

- workplace visits and industry tours
- mock interviews and work-readiness preparation
- structured workplace learning, work experience and school-community work
- guest speakers and presenters from industry
- school based apprenticeships and traineeships.

The information gained through the consultation process was used to inform the development of our workplan to the DET. As the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions increased, it was apparent that our workplan would have to be modified to enable the WSMMLLEN to provide enhanced support through technology. Most WSMMLLEN staff

commenced working from home on 24 March 2020. We scheduled team meetings each morning on Microsoft Teams to facilitate planning, task allocation and maintaining the LLEN team morale and collegiality.

The LLEN state network worked closely with the DET and following discussions regarding the impacts of COVID-19, the DET and the LLEN state network agreed to a variation to the funding agreement in April 2020. This variation allowed for additional activities to be delivered or facilitated by LLENs across the state and included:

- supporting students for whom mandatory work placements were required to complete their VET certificate
- supporting the delivery of VET in our region
- developing online school-industry engagement resources
- brokering partnerships to address emerging issues such as online provision, transitions, pathways and loss of apprenticeships and traineeships.

The WSMMLLEN was able to respond quickly to the additional requirements detailed in the contract variation and provide enhanced support in the targeted areas. The following annual report provides comprehensive detail of the WSMMLLEN's achievements in 2020.

### Committee of Management

The WSMMLLEN Committee of Management, led by Wendy Bywaters (President), Alethea Gulvin (Vice President), Deb Nelson (Treasurer) and Brendan Ryan (Secretary), continued to provide the organisation with excellent governance, guidance and strategic direction. We are fortunate to have a group of highly skilled and passionate professionals who volunteer their time and expertise to improve the lives of young people throughout the region. These members continue to provide the Executive Officer and staff with significant support. On behalf of our members, stakeholders and young people, I acknowledge and thank our committee for their valuable contribution to the WSMMLLEN.

### Financial

The WSMMLLEN's financial operations are overseen by our Finance Committee. This group meet prior to every Committee of Management meeting to oversee our financial processes and to examine the financial reports. Our thanks go to Treasurer, Deb Nelson, Wendy Bywaters, Karen Fuller and Brendan Ryan for their contribution. The WSMMLLEN had a very successful year, achieving a net operating result of \$161,738 for 2020. The organisation maintains a strong balance sheet with \$540,091 of retained earnings (equity) at the end of 2020.

### Staff

I would like to recognise and thank the WSMMLLEN staff for their contribution throughout a challenging year. Our team throughout 2020 included Lorraine Merton, Vanessa O'Loughlin, Di Dent, Sam Flaherty and Annie Minter and I thank them for their passion, resilience, adaptability and willingness to overcome the many challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions imposed throughout 2020.

We farewelled Sam Flaherty and Annie Minter throughout the year. I thank them for their service and contribution during their time at WSMMLLEN and wish them well in their future roles.

### Acknowledgements

Our achievements would not be possible without the support and contribution of many organisations and individuals. We would like to acknowledge and thank our region's schools, stakeholders and partners for their enthusiasm and contribution throughout 2020. Our work would not be possible without the ongoing support of our principals and schools. We look forward to continuing to work closely with them to support the education of our young people.

We thank the Victorian Government and the Department of Education and Training for their continued support.

### 2021 and beyond

We approach the coming years with a strong resolve to work with our schools and partners to improve the education outcomes and lives of our young people. The future prosperity and well-being of our region is dependent on providing our youth with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in the 21st century. Our region continues to be innovative and resilient in facing significant environmental, social and economic challenges. We look forward to working with our partners to invest in the growth of our region's young people. Our mission is clear and we are committed to developing positive futures for our young people and our region.



*The future prosperity and well-being of our region is dependent on providing our youth with the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed in the 21st century.*

*Tim Shaw*

Tim Shaw  
Executive Officer



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# Our Staff



Tim Shaw  
Executive Officer



Dian Dent  
VET and SWL Coordinator



Sam Flaherty  
MATES Mentoring Coordinator  
Resigned September 2020



Lorraine Merton  
Administration Officer



Vanessa O'Loughlin  
Project Officer



Annie Mintern  
Careers Expo Coordinator



# COVID-Ready

The national report from Infoexchange<sup>1</sup>, found not-for-profit organisations were unprepared for the tech challenges of COVID-19. While 97% of the not-for-profit sector experienced disruption to their services during the COVID-19 pandemic, only 30% of organisations, that required staff to work from home, had the technology needed to make the transition.

WSMLLEN was among the 30% of not-for-profit organisations that was well prepared to enter the world of working from home.

In 2014 a digital phone system was installed. In July 2016 we accessed a subscription to Microsoft Office 365 which was provided free or charge to not-for-profit organisations through Microsoft's donations program.

All staff commenced using the cloud-based function of Office 365 for emails and calendars providing a much more secure and reliable back-up for data as well as remote access to emails and calendars via portable devices.

In November 2017, we began the migration of files to the Microsoft Office 365 cloud-based system, to which we had immediate free access as part of our subscription.

<sup>1</sup> Page 6, [https://www.infoexchange.org/sites/default/files/digital\\_technology\\_in\\_the\\_not-for-profit\\_sector\\_2020.pdf](https://www.infoexchange.org/sites/default/files/digital_technology_in_the_not-for-profit_sector_2020.pdf)

A SharePoint site was developed and the migration of files to the new system was completed by January 2018.

By the time the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, all of the necessary technology had been in use for two years and all staff were able to instantly transition to working from home. Staff continued to work from home throughout the year.

Following the revision of our Rules of Association in 2018, Committee of Management meetings were able to be held using technology that allows members present at the meeting to clearly and simultaneously communicate with each other. This enabled our committee meetings and the 2020 WSMLLEN AGM to be held successfully via the Zoom platform.

COVID restrictions enforced a number of innovations in the use of technology that will, no doubt, continue in the future. In particular, the capacity for LLEN Executive Officers from across the state, to meet online will save enormous amounts of time in travel and has the potential for greater collaboration between LLENs in the state-wide network.



LLEN staff commenced working from home on 24 March due to COVID19 restrictions and 'checked in' via online staff meetings each morning to plan and schedule each day's work. Other meetings previously held face-to-face, were held online. State-wide LLEN Network meetings, VET Cluster meetings, the Annual General Meeting, Committee of Management meetings and day-to-day meetings with partners and stakeholders, were all held online as we 'zoomed' our way through the year.

# Strategic Plan

## Objectives

## Strategies

### Goal 1

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 credentials

To ensure that young people remain engaged in education, training or employment

To provide support and opportunities to ensure that vulnerable young people achieve their full potential

To improve literacy as a foundation for educational success

1. Build on the work already underway to develop and improve early intervention literacy projects
2. Provide active coordination and support for the provision of flexible learning options
3. Support the delivery of the DET and DHHS plans for improving Koorie education outcomes
4. Further develop the Wimmera Sports Mentoring Program<sup>1</sup> to provide opportunities for vulnerable young people to participate in community and sports activities
5. Further develop a process and structure to facilitate effective advocacy for our community and its young people

### Goal 2

To increase our schools' engagement with stakeholders in their community to improve students' aspirations, education and transition outcomes

To build community capacity through our brokered and supported partnerships

1. Ensure the effectiveness of the Community Action Networks in strengthening relationships between schools and agencies working with 'at risk' young people and their families
2. Develop and implement a proactive industry engagement plan, and review the effectiveness of the plan on an annual basis
3. Maintain, support and develop the MATES mentoring program and document and celebrate its success

### Goal 3

To remain a sustainable, innovative and responsive organisation, focused on key outcomes

To practise sound and responsible governance

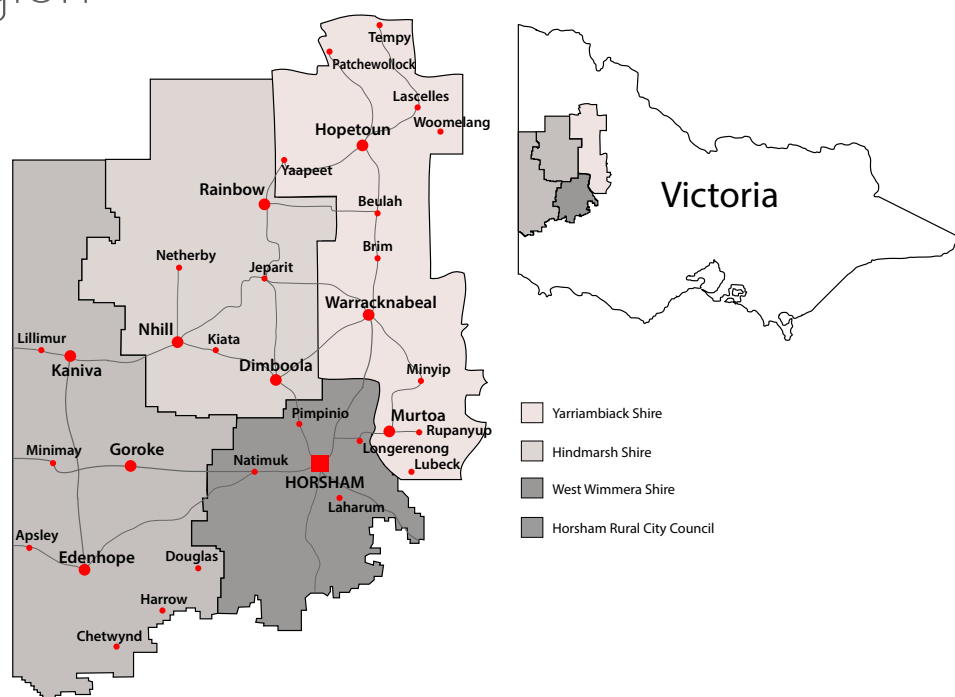
To ensure that the work of the LLEN will be responsive to needs and informed by evidence

To ensure that the LLEN is financially sustainable

1. Develop and implement a communication/marketing plan which communicates the unique value and purpose of the LLEN to all partners and to the general community
2. Undertake a review of the governance structures and processes of the LLEN, including composition, succession planning and options to include a voice of youth within the governance structure and processes
3. Develop a data-bank of locally derived data, case studies, research data and impact data to support informed decision making by the LLEN and partner agencies
4. Actively seek alternative revenue sources and funding models to support program development and delivery. Actively monitor a 3-year financial plan, to ensure that the LLEN is well-placed to make financially responsible decisions at the end of the current government funding cycle.

<sup>1</sup> The Wimmera Sports Mentoring Program was further developed and re-named in 2019 to become the 'Community Connections Program'.

# Our Region



## Schools in our service region

Yarriambiack Shire Schools 13 Schools	Hindmarsh Shire Schools 8 Schools	West Wimmera Shire Schools 5 Schools	Horsham Rural City Schools 9 Schools
1. Beulah Primary School	1. Dimboola Primary School	1. Apsley Primary School	1. Holy Trinity Lutheran College (Horsham)
2. Hopetoun P-12 College	2. Dimboola Memorial Secondary College	2. Edenhope College	2. Horsham College
3. Minyip Primary School	3. Jeparit Primary School	3. Goroke P-12 College	3. Horsham Primary School
4. Murtoa College	4. Nhill College	4. Kaniva College	4. Horsham Special School
5. Our Lady Help of Christians School (Murtoa)	5. Nhill Lutheran School	5. St Malachy's Primary School (Edenhope)	5. Horsham West – Haven Primary School
6. Rupanyup Primary School	6. Rainbow P-12 College		6. Laharum Primary School
7. St Joseph's Primary School (Hopetoun)	7. St Patrick's School (Nhill)		7. Natimuk Primary School
8. St Mary's Primary School (Warracknabeal)	8. St Peter's Lutheran School (Dimboola)		8. St Brigid's College
9. Tempy Primary School			9. Ss Michael and John's Catholic Primary School (Horsham)
10. Warracknabeal Secondary College			
11. Warracknabeal Primary School			
12. Warracknabeal Special Developmental School			
13. Yaapeet Primary School			



# Committee of Management

President:  
Wendy Bywaters

Vice President:  
Alethea Gulvin

Treasurer:  
Debra Nelson

Secretary:  
Brendan Ryan

Committee Members:

Joanna Day  
Karen Fuller  
Anne Gawith  
Josh Koenig  
Liam Offer  
Geoffrey Lord  
Chris Sounness  
Craig Turvey  
Daniel Weller

## Our Members

### 1. Schools

- |  |                            |  |
|--|----------------------------|--|
| 1. Balmoral Community College          | 8. Horsham College         | 15. Rainbow P-12 College                       |
| 2. Beulah Primary School               | 9. Horsham Primary School  | 16. Rupanyup Primary School                    |
| 3. Dimboola Memorial Secondary College | 10. Horsham Special School | 17. St. Brigid's Secondary College             |
| 4. Edenhope College                    | 11. Kaniva College         | 18. Warracknabeal Secondary College            |
| 5. Goroke P-12 College                 | 12. Murtoa College         | 19. Warracknabeal Special Developmental School |
| 6. Holy Trinity Lutheran College       | 13. Nhill College          | 20. Yaapect Primary School                     |
| 7. Hopetoun P12 College                | 14. Nhill Lutheran School  |  |

### 2. TAFE institutes or universities with TAFE sector

- |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Federation University | 2. Longerenong College |
|--------------------------|------------------------|

### 3. Adult community education organisations

- |                                    |  |   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Centre for Participation        | 4. Murtoa and District Neighbourhood House       | 6. Rainbow Community Learning Group & Neighbourhood House |
| 2. Gateway BEET                    | SLAAM Inc  |   |
| 3. Kaniva LINK Neighbourhood House | 5. Nhill Neighbourhood House Learning Centre Inc | 7. Warracknabeal Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre  |

### 4. Other education and training organisations

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. Community Axis | 2. Skillinvest |
|-------------------|----------------|

### 5. Trade Unions

No representative

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## 6. Employers, employer organisations, regional employer organisations and employment agencies.

3. Business Horsham	8. Horsham Real Estate	13. Warracknabeal AMCAL Pharmacy
4. Feet First Footwear	9. Horsham Regional Art Gallery	14. Warracknabeal Herald - North West Press
5. GWM Water	10. J & F May	15. Wimmera Mail Times
6. Hopetoun Courier	11. Luv-a-Duck	16. Woodbine Inc
7. Horsham Autoelectrical Services Pty Ltd	12. Morrow Motors	

## 7. Local government

1. Hindmarsh Shire Council	3. West Wimmera Shire Council	4. Yarriambiack Shire Council
2. Horsham Rural City Council		

## 8. Other community agencies and organisations

1. Art Is Festival	6. Leadership Wimmera	11. Wimmera Development Association
2. Department of Education and Training	7. Regional Development Victoria	12. Wimmera Primary Care Partnership
3. Department of Health and Human Services	8. SalvoConnect Western, Horsham	13. Wimmera Regional Library Corp.
4. Grampians Community Heath	9. Uniting Wimmera	14. Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly
5. Horsham Police	10. Wimmera Business Centre	

## 9. Koorie organisations

1. Barengi Gadjin Land Council	2. Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative	3. Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (LAECG)
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## 10. Community members

1. John Ackland	9. Anne Gawith	17. Dianne Richards
2. Kim Boulton	10. Rob Gersch	18. Murray Robinson
3. Steve Braybrook	11. Alethea Gulvin	19. Iain Sedgman
4. Wendy Bywaters	12. Neil King	20. Kylie Smith
5. Russell Christie	13. John Millington	21. Mandi Stewart
6. Joanna Day	14. Campbell Pallot	22. Margaret Stewart
7. Hugh Delahunty	15. Gary Pilgrim	23. Mark Zimmermann
8. Kim Drummond	16. Sue Radford	

# Industry Engagement

The contract between WSMMLLEN and the Department of Education and Training, sets the directions and priorities for our work. Our contract for 2020-2021 outlined a new direction, moving from an emphasis on addressing disadvantage in the education sector, to one of increasing engagement between schools and industry. The driving force behind this change has been the desire to align what students are learning in schools with the skills necessary to perform successfully in a working environment.

As a first step in increasing the engagement of schools with industry, an Industry Engagement Forum was held in February to find out how we can better support both schools and industry to engage youth. The follow-on from this forum was over shadowed by COVID-19 restrictions but strategies developed can be implemented in 2021. The forum was well attended by representatives from schools, registered training organisations and industry.

At the forum, local businessman, Tim Hopper, presented information on what employers are expecting from youth in the work force.

Mark Fletcher from Wimmera Development Association gave a presentation on the future direction of industry in our region.

Ian Westhead from Skillinvest provided useful websites for schools preparing secondary students for work.

Attendees were given opportunities to 'brainstorm' and provide feedback on a range of discussion topics. Feedback was positive and, schools in particular, indicated they would welcome more engagement with industries in supporting their students.

Follow-on from the forum continued in a limited way via online engagement, and various workforce resources were developed to support the ongoing process of school-industry engagement.

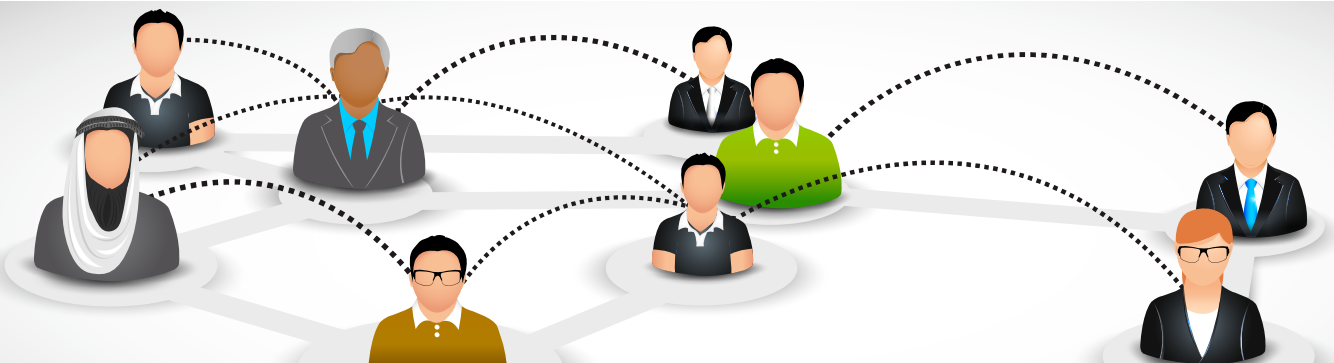
# Engineering Workforce Development Project

Following consultation with Wimmera engineering businesses and local training providers, the WSMMLLEN has identified a significant skill and labour shortage in the engineering sector. There is a lack of candidates to fill available employment vacancies and a lack of young people interested in pursuing a career in engineering.

The Wimmera Development Association and the Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN convened a meeting of industry and training organisation representatives on 7 September 2020 to identify the workforce challenges faced by the engineering sector and to develop strategies to address these challenges. A series of short, medium and long term objectives were identified.

Chris Sounness (Wimmera Development Association) led a program logic session with industry representatives and WSMMLLEN staff to identify the needs of industry and strategies to address the workforce development issues. WSMMLLEN staff developed a project plan to increase industry promotion in schools by way of industry tours, marketing videos and flyers, work experience, structured workplace learning, school based apprenticeships and an industry network.

The overarching goal is that, in five years' time, Wimmera engineering businesses will have the workforce they need to meet the demands of their customers. We acknowledge Vanessa O'Loughlin for the great work she has done to date, including the development of the proposal and action plan and her work in bringing together a range of stakeholders to advance the project.



# Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The VET program for 2020 started relatively smoothly. We welcomed Ararat College and Stawell Secondary College to the VET cluster.

The year began with 278 students undertaking one of 16 vocational courses. The WSMLEN was successful in working with V-Line and the Department of Transport to provide public transport to Horsham for Ararat and Stawell students. We received great support from our local MP, Emma Kealy and Member for Ripon, Louise Staley. We acknowledge Paul Baumgartner from V-Line for his work in working with the Department of Transport to secure the trial service.

Student attendance was dramatically impacted in the second half of the year due to a number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 across the region.

As the COVID restrictions tightened, we worked with the VET cluster, schools and training organisations to ensure that VET classes continued.

For much of the year, courses could not run 'on-site' so theory components of courses were delivered by remote learning during terms two and three. For courses delivered online, all students had access to the learning materials, in either digital format or in hard copy. With the return to on-site learning, term four was used to complete as many practical components of courses as possible, with some registered training organisations providing additional classes to ensure students had the opportunity to complete their courses.

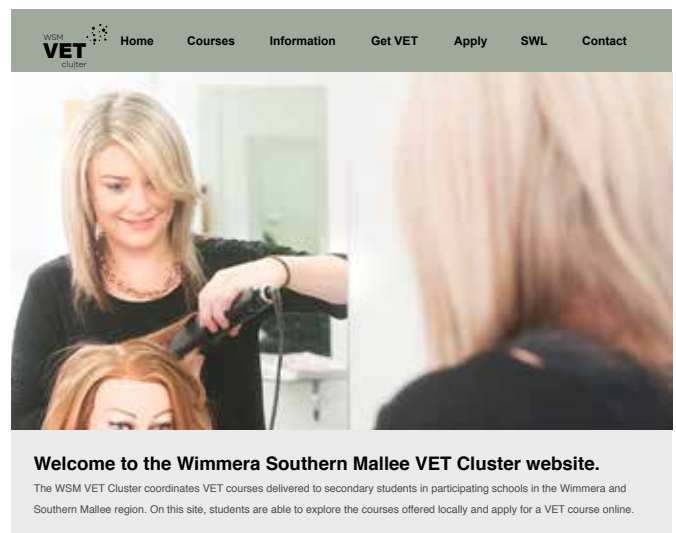
## Try VET Day

WSMLEN developed a Wimmera Southern Mallee VET Cluster website in direct response to the cancellation of the annual Wimmera Southern Mallee schools' Try VET Day, due to COVID19 restrictions. Lorraine Merton created the website with assistance from Sam Flaherty, Di Dent and Vanessa O'Loughlin. A 36-page website, complete with all course information, downloadable student handbook, information for parents, bus and travel information, video clips from local registered training organisations and an online student application form, was completed by July. The website enabled students to get a strong understanding of vocational learning to assist in them to identify career pathways and make subject selections. The development of the website was a significant project carried out in a short time frame to meet the needs of schools, RTOs and the community. A big thank you to Lorraine for her work in creating the website and to all staff for their contribution.

The online application process proved to have many benefits for schools, students and WSMLEN staff.

Feedback from parents, indicated that the website gave them more information about the courses in which their students were enrolling.

The VET website will continue to be used in ensuing years and will be updated with new course information each year.



## VET Induction Day

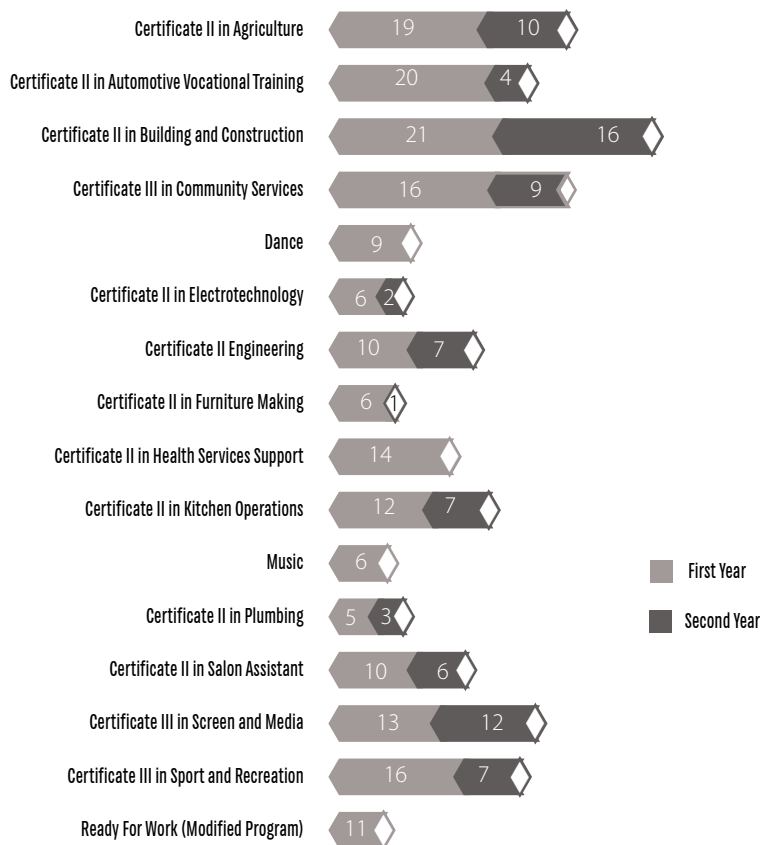
VET Induction Day is usually held in late October or early November, but with COVID restrictions this was not able to go ahead in 2020. VET Induction Day allows students to have a 'trial run' to become familiar with the routine of travel to and from their course venue and to meet their course instructors. In some courses, the Induction Day also

involves literacy, numeracy testing to establish the levels of support some students may need to complete the course. For students commencing VET courses in 2021, their induction was scheduled for the first day of attendance at their chosen course.

# VET Enrolments 2020

## Student enrolments by course 2020

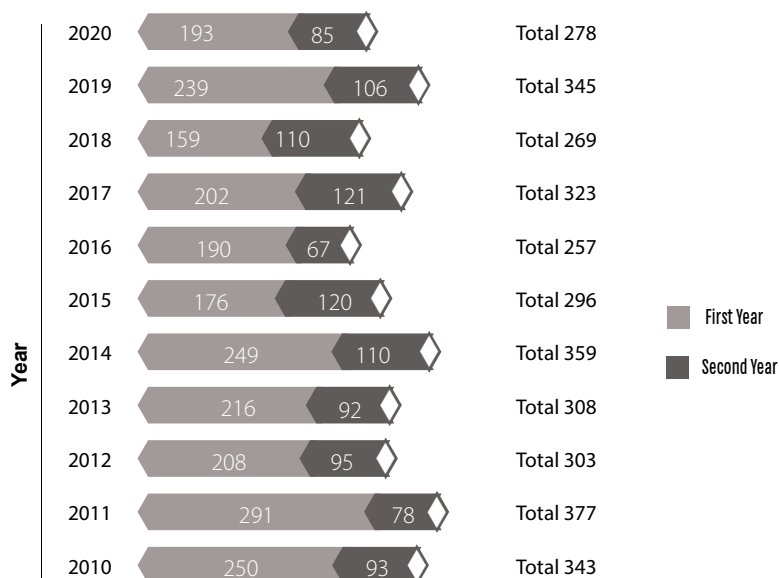
Accredited courses facilitated by the Wimmera Southern Mallee VET Cluster



# VET Enrolment History

## Student enrolments by year

Courses facilitated by the Wimmera Southern Mallee VET Cluster



\*Enrolment data is based on the number of students who were enrolled at the commencement of the school year and does not take into account, the number of students who subsequently withdrew or did not complete the course.



# Structured Workplace Learning

The Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) Program faced enormous challenges in 2020. The program relies on local businesses hosting students in their workplaces. With many businesses forced to close or to significantly change the way they operated, very few SWL placements were able to go ahead, with the number of students participating, way down on previous years. There were 80 work-placements consumed via the SWL online portal. These placements were organised early in the school year, prior to pandemic restrictions coming into play, so not all of these placements were able to go ahead. Students who had not organised work placements prior to pandemic restrictions, did not take up work placements and consume opportunities that were available.

Uptake of SWL placements via the online portal		Number of schools accessing the SWL online portal	
2017	91	2017	8
2018	114	2018	8
2019	111	2019	11
2020	80	2020	8

There was also a decrease in demand for SWL placements in 2020 due to lower numbers of VET enrolments. Enrolments in 2020 totalled 278 (a significant decrease from 345 enrolments in 2019).

A major challenge for the SWL program was in finding placements for VET students undertaking Certificate II in Health Support Service. This course was the only course delivered by the WSM VET Cluster for which a SWL placement was a compulsory part of the course and necessary to successfully gain a VET qualification. Students undertaking this course usually find placements in hospitals and health facilities but, due to the fact that hospitals and health facilities were required to maintain strict COVID-safe protocols, no facilities were prepared to take students on placements. As a result, students will have to continue courses into January 2021 to successfully complete their qualification.

A positive sign, towards the end of 2020, was that local industries began to engage in preparation for 2021.

## Partnership with Deakin University

During 2020, WSMLEN partnered with students from Deakin University to develop promotional materials for the SWL program. Deakin students undertaking a design course, worked with us to create an advertising campaign and materials to promote Structured Workplace Learning. A collection of posters, flyers and an animation were designed to promote students and schools working hand-in-hand with industry.



*Dian Dent*  
VET and SWL Coordinator

## Workforce Resources

The LLEN delivered a range of webinar sessions for small groups of secondary students. Five local secondary colleges engaged with this program.

Webinar sessions covered topics such as: writing cover letters, resumes and addressing key selection criteria for job applications, using workforce language, preparing for interviews and post-COVID tips for the workforce—specific information on things that have changed because of COVID-19.

Students were also given opportunities to practise 'cold calling' (phoning an employer to seek a work placement) and take part in mock interviews.

Webinar sessions were delivered live online or as pre-recorded sessions. These sessions were designed to prepare students for Structured Workplace Learning, making job applications and entering the workforce.

An online 'mock job application' was set up on the VET website, providing students with a virtual experience of applying for a job online and uploading a resume and cover letter.

## Support for Schools (Community Action Networks)

Due to the challenges faced by our schools delivering remote learning, WSMLEN convened a combined Community Action Network (CAN) meeting in each of the four Wimmera shires in Term 3, to look at ways the LLEN and other organisations could support our schools.

The meetings had two main areas of focus:

1. Health and Well-being—School Focused Youth Service had available funding for student well-being projects. The meetings provided an opportunity for principals to hear about available health and well-being programs and to discuss any projects or programs schools would like to see delivered. Also headspace Horsham and representatives from the Navigator program delivered presentations about the support they were able to provide to students.
2. School-industry engagement activities—the LLEN team offered support for schools in this area. We sought input on how we could best support schools with online industry engagement activities and any projects that were of interest.

Feedback from the school principals was overwhelmingly positive and we look forward to convening more of these combined CAN meetings in each local government area throughout 2021.



## Navigator Program

The Navigator program supports disengaged young people to return to education and learning. The program works to support young people, their families and support networks to address issues underlying disengagement and help them re-engage with their education.

Navigator is delivered by contracted community service organisations, who work closely with local schools and school area teams. In each area the program is tailored to its local community and range of services.

In the Wimmera South West Area, the Navigator program is delivered by Anglicare. WSMLEN has partnered with Anglicare to assist with the delivery of the program by connecting Navigator staff with local schools, providing office space, and the use of a WSMLEN vehicle. The program assist young people to overcome challenges that make it hard to go to school every day. Things like having trouble learning or concentrating, problems at home, feeling uncomfortable at school, struggling with emotions and mental health, worrying about their or someone else's alcohol or drug use or simply having trouble communicating with teachers or other young people.

The program provides a free service to young people who need help transitioning back to school.

In some ways COVID restrictions provided some benefits. A significant number of young people in the Navigator program face anxiety and other challenges that, at times, are overwhelming. Many found it easier to talk to case managers over the phone to build a relationship with a focus on their education and to develop an Individual Education Plan to meet their needs. Working together with schools and other services, with the best interest of young people in mind, is vital in re-engaging them with the education they deserve.



## Wimmera South West Virtual School

The Grampians Virtual School has expanded to include South West Victorian schools and is now known as the Wimmera South West Virtual School. The Grampians Virtual School was created in 2007 and the Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN has coordinated the Virtual School since 2015.

With the addition of Camperdown, Casterton, Heywood, Terang and Timboon Colleges, the Wimmera South West Virtual School has 19 participating schools. The Virtual School enables participating schools to receive or deliver VCE subjects to partner schools. This is particularly important for our smaller rural schools as it enables them to offer a broad VCE curriculum to their students.

## Read to Me

The Read to Me project was hampered by the COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. The WSMLLEN worked with our partners, Uniting Wimmera and Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative to continue the delivery of the Read to Me project on a restricted basis. The project model was developed by the Raising Literacy Australia Foundation and is currently delivered to all South Australian children in care. The WSMLLEN-led project is the only Read to Me project delivered in Victoria.

The objective of the program is to ensure that all pre-school children in out-of-home care receive a regular supply of books to build up their own personal library. The children receive a ten-book 'start-up' pack and then receive three books every quarter. More than 45 Wimmera children have received books through the program. There are also literacy resources and games included in the program. If the children move to different foster carers, they are able to take their personal library of books with them. Training is available for the carers to assist them to support the children's literacy development. This important project ensures that the carers have the resources to support each child's literacy and language development from birth to six years of age.

## Community Connections

Community Connections, like many other programs, was affected by COVID-19 restrictions. The Community Connections program provides support for students in primary and secondary school who, without financial assistance, would not be able to participate in community sports, social and cultural groups. The program assists students by paying membership fees.

Because many community and sporting groups did not operate during 2020, there was minimal up-take of the program.



## Reading Buddies

The Reading Buddies program was placed 'on hold' during 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, non-essential visitors, including volunteers in the Reading Buddies Program, were not permitted on-site at school campuses. For a number of weeks throughout the year, students were learning from home which meant that some of our young readers, who would have benefited from having a reading buddy, missed this connection to a positive reading experience.

We look forward to re-establishing a COVID-safe Reading Buddies Program in 2021.

## Let's Read

The WSMLLEN continued to work with our health providers, local governments and Maternal and Child Health Nurses to maintain the Let's Read program in each of the four local government areas.

Let's Read is an early years evidence-based literacy program aimed at promoting the importance of reading with young children from birth to five years. Let's Read was developed by the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne. The Murdoch Children's Research Institute and The Smith Family have partnered with Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN (WSMLLEN) and partners to implement Let's Read in all communities across the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.

Let's Read supports literacy-rich home environments and the promotion and delivery of literacy development initiatives across the region. A key element of Let's Read is the provision of Let's Read bags to all families with young children in the four Wimmera Southern Mallee shires. The resource bags contain a new book, a read-aloud DVD, reading tip sheets, an age appropriate recommended book list and a library flyer.

Families receive the literacy resources and support for their children at 4 months, 12 months, 18 months and 3½ years from Maternal and Child Health Nurses during the child's health check. Families continued to receive the Let's Read books and resources from our wonderful Maternal and Child Health Nurses throughout 2020. A total of 1269 Let's Read resource bags and books were distributed to young Wimmera Southern Mallee families in 2020. The four Let's Read partnerships have now distributed more than 9,380 Let's Read bags since formation in 2014.

# Western Victorian Careers Expo



*Western Victorian Careers Expo keynote speaker, comedienne, Georgie Carroll*

The WSMLLEN team worked with the Careers Expo committee to deliver a 'virtual' Western Victorian Careers Expo on the 23 June 2020. This is the first year we have delivered a virtual Expo. The Expo featured over 80 webinars including university and industry representatives. More than 1,500 students from the Wimmera and across the state logged in to one or more webinars.

The Expo keynote speaker was comedienne, Georgie Carroll, who enjoyed a career in nursing before launching into a career in the entertainment industry.

The WSMLLEN hosted the guest speaker webinar and organised and hosted local trade and information webinars at the Expo.

This included:

- seven online webinars by industry representatives relevant to the region and local employers
- three Q & A panels (Health, Agriculture, SBATs and Apprenticeships & Traineeships).

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***School-industry roundtable—  
working with the Careers  
Association and local employers  
to develop strategies to improve  
student transitions into training  
and the workforce.***

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***The first virtual Western Victorian  
Careers Expo—delivering 80  
webinars by university and industry  
representatives to more than 1,500  
students from the Wimmera and  
across the state***

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The WSMLLEN worked with the DET to deliver a virtual School-Industry Round Table (SIRT) event to launch the Expo. The key objective of SIRTs is to improve student achievement, employability capabilities, engagement, transitions and employment outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged students who often do not have strong connections or networks with employers. This is achieved by engaging schools with industry, local employers, education and training providers and relevant community groups.

The event was attended by 40 industry, school, parent, student, and government representatives. The event focused on labour market data, skills shortages and future job growth sectors in the Wimmera region. A feature of the round table was the presentation by Ivan Neville, Assistant Secretary, Labour Market Research & Analysis Branch, Dept. of Employment, Skills, Small & Family Business. Ivan's presentation informed the discussion on:

- Economic developments in the region creating employment growth
- How the region prepares its workforce for the growth in the regional economy
- How the region addresses current and predicted skills shortages.

As a result of the roundtable, we worked with the Careers Association and local employers to set up a working group to develop strategies to improve student transitions into training and the workforce. The inaugural working group is focused on the engineering sector, which is currently experiencing a significant labour and skill shortage.

# Agriculture Careers Research Project

Following an introduction by Chris Sounness (WDA) to Professor Ruth Nettle, the WSMLEN team led a series of information sessions and meetings, with LLENs across the state, regarding LLEN participation in a Melbourne University research project. If the application for Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage funding is successful, the 'Securing the next generation in farming and food careers' project will take place over three years. The project will involve local partners, Wimmera Development Association and Birchip Cropping Group, as well as other agriculture industry partners across the state.

To secure the future growth of Australia's farming and food system, governments, industry and community organisations need evidence-based data to understand young people's lived experiences of farming and food sector work and careers. Currently little is known about why young people enter the farming and food sector for work or as a career and why they stay or leave. This lack of knowledge jeopardises Australia's food production, as well as the livelihood of young people

and the sustainability of regional and rural communities. In order to design and implement effective measures to attract and retain young people in agriculture, governments and industry must understand the needs and preferences of young people for policy support, services and methods of engagement for working in the farming and food system.

The project has three key research outputs:

1. Identification of labour market drivers which stakeholders can collectively influence.
2. Identification of the factors responsible for retention in each sub-region and industry.
3. Young people endorsed policies and/or interventions that improve attraction and retention.

To date, we have firm commitments from 23 LLENs to be involved as project partners and we await, with interest, the decision of the Australian Research Council, regarding funding for the project.

# MATES Mentoring Program

The MATES mentoring programs were effectively closed down for most of 2020. Following public health advice, schools requested that mentors not meet with their mentees, due to the public health COVID-19 restrictions. We focused our energies on re-starting and reinvigorating the 16 active MATES programs across our region in 2021. It is pleasing to see that MATES mentoring continues to grow and programs are being delivered by North Central LLEN, Central Grampians LLEN and Campaspe and Cohuna LLEN in 2021.

2020 marked ten years since the commencement of the MATES Mentoring Program, and plans to celebrate the 10-year milestone with special activities in schools were put on hold.

See pages 22 - 32 for a history of the MATES mentoring program over the past ten years.



*Sam Flaherty,  
MATES Mentoring  
Coordinator*



*Vanessa O'Loughlin  
MATES Mentoring Systems  
and Development*

2010-2020  
Celebrating 10 Years of MATES Mentoring



# MATES Mentoring Program, 2010–2020



## mates

## 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. Christine Picone, 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.*





# MATES Mentoring Program, 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*



# MATES Mentoring Program, 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.





# MATES Mentoring Program, 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 WSMMLLEN as the MATES Project Officer.

Like us on Facebook



*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*

# MATES Mentoring Program, 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 WSMLLEN 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'.



# MATES Mentoring Program, 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 below 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*

# MATES Mentoring Program, 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 awarded 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.

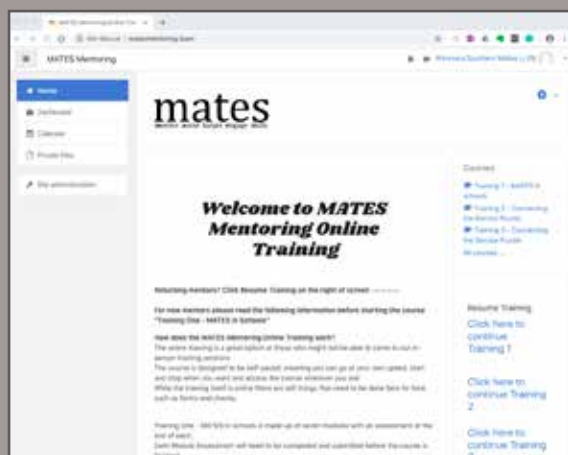
The MATES mentor training now consisted of three modules:

- 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.

# MATES Mentoring Program, 2018



Connecting  
the service  
PUZZLE



517  
mates

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 matched 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.



# MATES Mentoring Program, 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 involved 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*

# MATES Mentoring Program, 2019



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 Manager) and Nicola Powell (mentor)

## MATES Mentoring Awards

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.

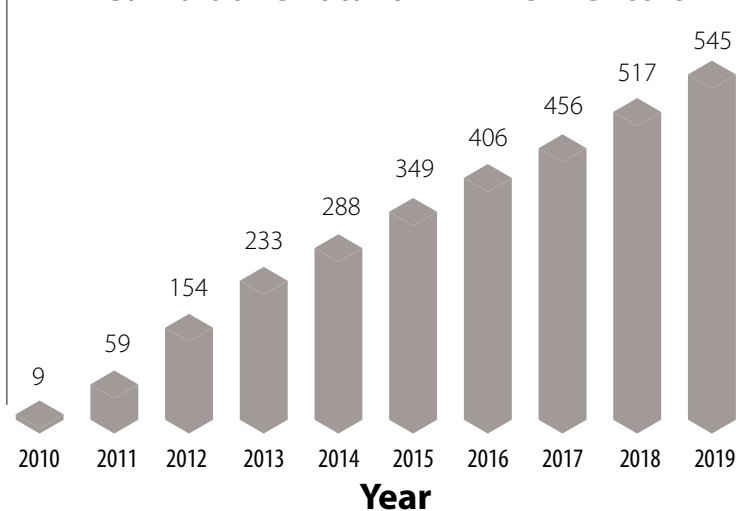
The award for the 2019 Community Champion of the Year was presented to Skillinvest. To support the MATES Mentoring Program, Skillinvest invited the LLEN team to speak to all staff and happily supported several staff to mentor young people. The Skillinvest team was so impressed with MATES mentoring that 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.

## Social Return

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).

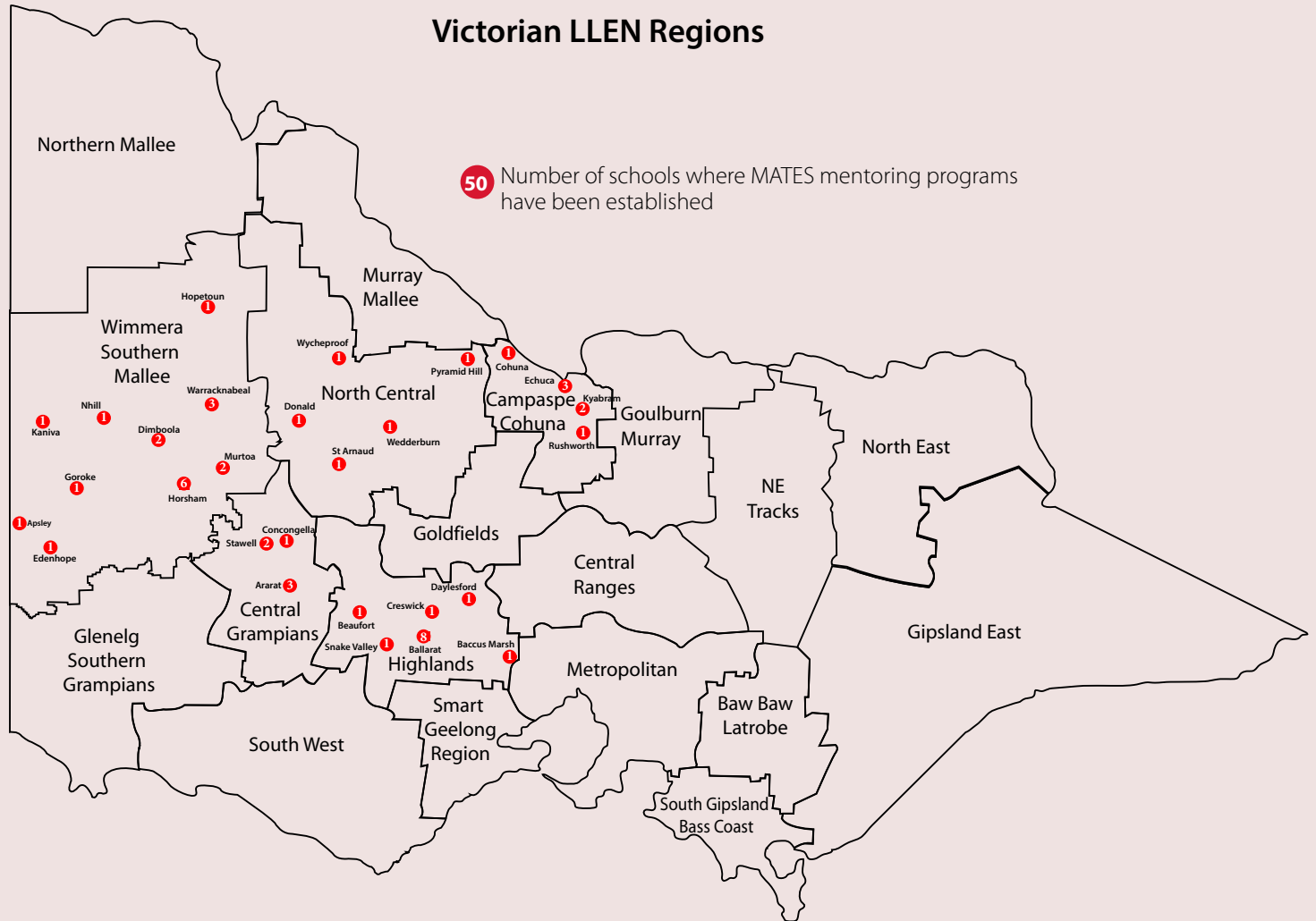
In 2016, a review of the MATES program was conducted by an independent agency, Regional Advance. Their report estimated the social return on the MATES Mentoring Program to be between \$18 - \$23 for every dollar invested in the program. The report valued volunteer's time at \$21.61 per hour. Assuming 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



# MATES Beyond the Wimmera

## Victorian LLEN Regions



## Highlands LLEN

After the successful implementation of the MATES Mentoring Program in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region, Highlands LLEN began to implement MATES programs in their region. Between November 2011 and the end of 2014, the Highlands LLEN established the MATES Mentoring Program in 13 schools. By the end of 2014, 82 mentors had been matched with students. Highlands LLEN were unable to continue to support the MATES programs in 2015, and the Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) mentoring program agreed to manage and support the matches made by the MATES Mentoring Program. The following quote came from the MATES Mentoring Coordinator from Ballarat Secondary College:

*"The MATES Mentor Program has been part of our school since 2012. The MATES Program is one of the best programs we have implemented in our school. Initially to set up the program there was a lot of work involved but to*

*see the young people's faces when they meet their mentor for the first time is worth every phone call, email, training session and interview. We have recently matched up three young people this year and the benefits for the young people have been instantaneous, particularly for one of our mentees. This particular student was feeling very disconnected and school attendance was low. Her situation is slowly improving and having a mentor has been a significant factor in these positive changes. Three of our first mentees continue to have regular contact with their mentor outside of school which the school believes supports the values and aims of this fantastic program."*



# MATES Beyond the Wimmera

## North Central LLEN

The NCLLEN started investigating the benefits and feasibility of setting up a mentoring program for young people in their schools in 2010. Their own mentoring program called 'Links for Life' was offered to students at Wedderburn P-12 College and Wycheproof P-12 College which ran successfully for two years, funded and coordinated by the NCLLEN.

In 2012, inspired by the WSMLEN's MATES mentoring program and after a visit to Dimboola Memorial High School to see the program in action, the NCLLEN decided to adopt the MATES mentoring model in their schools which would make the program more sustainable and embed mentoring into the school curriculum.

The program was offered to all students in Yr 10 at five schools in the North Central LLEN region (except for Wedderburn P-12 College which offers the program to students across the whole school).

A community member was appointed as the MATES Coordinator at each school, supported by schools and the NCLLEN. Mentors were matched according to interests of the students. Group activities and events were run each term.

MATES Mentoring programs were established at:

- Wedderburn P-12 College – 2012 to 2020 (approx. 26 students per year)
- Wycheproof P-12 College – 2012 to 2020 (approx. 20 students per year)
- St Arnaud Secondary School – 2013 to 2016 ( approx. 25 students per year)
- Donald High School – 2017 (23 students), 2018 (20 students), 2019 (24 students)
- Pyramid Hill P-10 College – 2017 (4 students), 2018 (20 students), 2019 (17 students)

## Central Grampians LLEN

In 2020, preparations were being made to revitalise the MATES programs in the Central Grampians region at Stawell West Primary School, Stawell Secondary College and Concongella Primary School in 2021.

MATES Mentoring programs recommenced in Ararat College in 2021 with five mentors. In 2013 the MATES program had 47 mentors supporting students at Ararat College, Stawell Secondary College, Ararat North Primary School and Ararat 800 Primary School.

## Campaspe Cohuna LLEN

MATES Mentoring programs were established by CCLLEN and continue at:

- Echuca College
- St Joseph's College Echuca
- Rushworth P-12 College
- Kyabram P-12 College
- St Augustine's College Kyabram
- Echuca Twin Rivers Specialist School.
- Cohuna Secondary College.



*Above: Donald High School mentors and mentees 2018*



*Above: Donald High School MATES activity 2018*



*Above: Pyramid Hill MATES trip to AFL game (Geelong vs Goldcoast Suns) at the MCG 2019*



*Above: MATES mentor training at Pyramid Hill 2017*

## **Independent Audit Report**

### ***To the members of Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network***

We have audited the accompanying financial report of Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2020, and the Statement of Profit and Loss for the year then ended, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information and the Statement by Members of the Committee Declaration.

### ***Committee of Management responsibility for the Financial Report***

The Committee of Management of Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Associations Incorporation Reform Act (Vic) 2012 and for such internal control as Committee of Management determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### ***Auditor's responsibility***

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report whether due to fraud or error. In making those assessment, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Associations preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of the accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by Committee of Management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### ***Independence***

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of the Australian professional accounting bodies.



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***Electronic publication of the audited financial report***

It is our understanding that the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network intends to electronically present the audited financial report and auditor's report on its internet website.

Responsibility for the electronic presentation of the financial report on the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network website is that of Committee of Management of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network. The security and controls over information on the website should be addressed by the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network to maintain the integrity of the data presented. The examination of the controls over the electronic presentation of audited financial report(s) on the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network website is beyond the scope of the audit of the financial report.

**Opinion**

In our opinion, the financial report of Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network presents fairly, in all material respects the Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network financial position as at 31 December 2020, and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Associations Incorporation Reform Act (Vic) 2012.




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BRIAN WATTS  
 Certified Practicing Accountant

15 / 3 / 2021

Watts Price Accountants  
 44 Wilson Street  
 HORSHAM VIC 3400



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## STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS

**WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK INC.****STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS****FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Revenue	585,234	507,999
Advertising and promotion expense	350	2,965
Depreciation and amortisation expense	6,303	8,565
Employee expenses	315,242	338,292
Employee provisions expense	6,644	616
Motor Vehicle expenses	7,092	9,761
Other expenses	56,663	64,955
Project expenses	20,585	82,588
Rental expense	10,616	10,309
<b>Net current year surplus</b>	<u>161,738</u>	<u>(10,053)</u>
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<u>161,738</u>	<u>(10,053)</u>
Net current year surplus attributable to members of the entity	<u>161,738</u>	<u>(10,053)</u>
Total comprehensive income attributable to members of the entity	<u>161,738</u>	<u>(10,053)</u>

## STATEMENT OF PROFIT FINANCIAL POSITION

**WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK INC.****STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION****AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2020**

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash on hand	581,052	732,024
Accounts receivable and other debtors	344,824	52,332
Prepayments	4,132	4,037
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>930,008</b>	<b>788,393</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Property, Plant and Equipment	18,393	24,696
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>18,393</b>	<b>24,696</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>948,401</b>	<b>813,089</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable and other payables	34,526	36,129
Provisions	44,020	40,294
Income received in advance	286,756	324,897
Current tax liabilities	37,950	28,825
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>403,252</b>	<b>430,145</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Provisions	5,057	4,590
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>5,057</b>	<b>4,590</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>408,309</b>	<b>434,735</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>540,091</b>	<b>378,353</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Retained surplus	474,026	378,353
Capital Acquisition Reserve	66,065	-
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>540,091</b>	<b>378,353</b>

## STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

## WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK INC.

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	Capital Acquisition Reserve \$	Retained Surplus \$	Total Equity \$
<b>Balance at 1 January 2019</b>		388,406	388,406
Comprehensive Income			
Net Surplus for the year		(10,053)	(10,053)
Total Comprehensive Income attributable to the members of the entity 2019	-	(10,053)	(10,053)
Transfers in/out of reserves for the period			
Capital Acquisition accretion to reserve	-	-	-
Capital Acquisitions	-	-	-
Capital Proceeds	-	-	-
Total Transfers in/out of reserves for the period	-	-	-
<b>Balance at 31 December 2019</b>	-	378,353	378,353

	Capital Acquisition Reserve \$	Retained Surplus \$	Total Equity \$
<b>Balance at 1 January 2020</b>	-	378,353	378,353
Comprehensive Income			
Net Surplus for the year	-	161,738	161,738
Total Comprehensive Income attributable to the members of the entity 2020	-	161,738	161,738
Transfers in/out of reserves for the period			
Establishment of Capital Acquisition Reserve	50,000	(50,000)	-
Capital acquisition accretion to reserve	16,065	(16,065)	-
Capital Acquisitions	-	-	-
Capital Proceeds	-	-	-
Total Transfers in/out of reserves for the period	66,065	(66,065)	-
<b>Balance at 31 December 2020</b>	66,065	474,026	540,091

# STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS

## WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK INC.

### STATEMENT OF CASHFLOWS

#### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
<b>CASHFLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Grants (state) operating received	102,344	587,055
Non Government Funded Projects funds received	66,923	109,815
Other Income	77,516	-
Interest received	7,818	12,071
Payments to suppliers and employees	<u>(405,572)</u>	<u>(471,720)</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities	<u>(150,972)</u>	<u>237,221</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment	-	181
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>-</u>	<u>181</u>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	(150,972)	237,402
Cash on hand at beginning of financial year	<u>732,024</u>	<u>494,622</u>
Cash on hand at end of financial year	<u>581,052</u>	<u>732,024</u>



# STATEMENT BY COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

## WIMMERA SOUTHERN MALLEE LOCAL LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORK INC. STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

In accordance with a resolution of the committee of Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Inc., the members of the committee declare that the financial statements as set out:

- present a true and fair view of the financial position of Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. As at 31 December 2020 and its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (including Australian Accounting Interpretations) of the Australian Accounting Standards Board and requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act (Vic) 2012; and
- at the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

The statement is signed for and on behalf of the committee by:

Chair:



Wendy Bywaters  
Chair's Name

Treasurer:



Debra Nelson  
Treasurer's Name

Dated this .....12th..... Day of .....March..... 2021.





