

Centre for People,
Organisation & Work



**Innovative practices: review of Victoria's LLENs activities and their
outcomes**

Report for Regional Australia Institute

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1 Introduction

Aligning skill supply with skill demand is a challenge, which education and training providers are trying to address. The notion that education and training providers can simply provide skills and qualifications, without considering the demand for and use of these skills, is no longer credible (Buchanan et al. 2010). This complexity requires proactive and innovative education and training practices that involve a wide range of actors (e.g. employers, industry associations, unions). It also requires a co-ordinated approach, with regional development actors and agencies assisting with regeneration and job stimulus to align education and employment pathways. This more inclusive approach to skill considerations needs to account for current and future demands within the labour market (particularly the need for replacement workers) and the education and training market, as well as how skills are being used and sourced. In this regard, the Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks provide an insightful case study to consider long standing initiatives involving students, teachers, employers, training providers and support workers that are designed to connect people to training and employment from a position embedded within regional communities.

1.1 Local Learning and Employment Networks: Aims and Background

The Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) aim to facilitate and enable the transition from school to work and employment. They were put in place in 2001 to support people aged from 10 to 19 years, to engage or re-engage with education and training (Department of Education and Training 2018). The Kirby (2000) review, which recommended the LLENs, influenced the development of similar programs at the time. These programs included the Commonwealth's Local Community Partnerships, Queensland's District Youth Achievement Plan, Innovative Community Action Networks in South Australia and Area Taskforces in Tasmania (Long 2005), although none of these programs are still in operation. Recently the Commonwealth established the *Regional Employment Trials Program*, which is similar to the LLENs in its intent and focus on training and industry connections (Department of Jobs and Small Business 2018b).

The LLENs have two primary objectives:

- a) To engage in community building through cooperative approaches to community renewal and by coordinating service delivery;
- b) To support and build shared responsibility and ownership for post-compulsory education and training for 15-19 year olds (LLEN 2018).

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) further clarifies the fundamental goals of the LLENs in terms of improving "participation, engagement, attainment and transition outcomes" for "young people, 10-19 years old, within their geographic boundaries" (Department of Education and Training 2017b).

To achieve these goals, LLENs serve as facilitators, brokering partnerships with key stakeholders in their local communities. These stakeholders include education and training providers, businesses, community agencies, and parent and family organisations. LLENs provide strategic guidance for their partners and their initiatives, as well as developing their

own targeted activities to address the needs of the young people in their communities. A 2012 review of the LLENs program describes the LLENs operational structure as “a form of network administrative organisation” (p. 6). More specifically, the review notes that LLENs are intended to identify service gaps and ‘coordinate the appropriate response through forming networks and partnerships that possess the necessary social and economic capital’ (Allen Consulting Group 2012, p. 6).

The LLENs were seen by many as part of a global movement towards “social partnerships that understand and address local needs as a basis for service delivery” (Seddon et al. 2005, p. 26). These programs were the result of recommendations from the Victorian Government’s *Ministerial Review into Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways*, which included the recommendation for local planning networks to:

- *develop collaborative approaches towards planning and improved delivery of post compulsory education and training programs and services.*
- *investigate and trial key elements of regional coordination and delivery of programs as outlined in this report (Kirby 2000, p. 19).*

The recommended programs included those that link work and education, meeting the needs of specific cohorts such as Indigenous communities and refugees, the analysis of key economic and labour market data and monitoring and evaluation of outcomes (op. cit., 21). It is a testament to the success of the LLENs program that in this age of frequent departmental restructuring, retitling and churn, the program is still in place as it approaches its 20th year of operation.

It is also of note that following an initial focus, in some instances supported by Commonwealth research grants (Hull 2003; Robinson & Keating 2004, 2005; Seddon et al. 2005), the network has not been subject to academic inquiry in the subsequent years. The early research on the outcomes of the LLENs program indicated that they had been successful in improving training in their regions and therefore better outcomes for young people, as well as providing ‘an ear to the ground’ (Robinson & Keating 2004, p. 49). Seddon et al. (2005, p. 45) saw the LLENs as a redemptionist intervention into the Victorian neoliberal project, observing:

... a disjuncture between the warm rhetoric of supporting young people and making a difference, and the actual impact of these initiatives which advance targeted and individualised strategies to support learning and address the risk posed by young people who do not fit the usual patterns of education and training.

There was also a view at the time that LLENs needed to be given more time and resources to properly develop the networks within their regions (Robinson & Keating 2004), as well as to draw conclusions on their effectiveness (Long 2005). A review of the state-wide LLENs governance indicated that the networks could benefit from increased coordination between the regions and with other government departments (Robinson & Keating 2005), and to reduce ‘silos’ and competition for clients with other organisations (Spiteri 2014). Nonetheless, while competition remains a feature of this area of activity, often involving private training organisations, the State Government appears to be exploring ways of

extending the scope of the coverage of service provision, with implications for the LLENs remit, with the establishment of the GROW program, a joint initiative between the Give Where You Live Foundation and the G21 Regional Alliance. The objective is to “strengthen employment and training opportunities for targeted job seekers” (GROW n.d.), with \$1 million in funding from the Victorian Government.

A further dimension of the challenges faced by LLENs was the promotion of educational and training pathways to work and employment. Spiteri (2014, p. 126) reported a notable intervention by a regional LLEN operation, that as there were no pathways into the growing regional health and community services sector, the LLENs “through partnerships with the local TAFE, local university and local health services worked on devising new training pathways for young people into that field of employment”. Partnerships with schools and industry were also seen as vital for LLENs to fulfil their remit, as:

... discussions at one LLEN revealed public transport to be a major constraint on young people’s learning – they could not get to school. At another, community agencies revealed that children as young as 10 were saying they wanted to leave school – something schools knew nothing about. Breakfasts were popular with employers because they offered good networking opportunities without being resource intensive (Seddon & Ferguson 2009, p. 94).

Thus, while the LLENs have a well-established and working relationships, they face a range of difficulties and challenges in meeting their remit.

The review presented here has the aim of identifying actions that some places/towns/regions have carried out. The purpose is to assess the scope and scale of distinctive local initiatives and where it is possible, an assessment has been made of efficacy. It provides both a perspective on locality based initiatives that connect learning to employment, as well as set the scene for more detailed work and analysis in the future.

1.2 Funding

Between 2001 and 2014, LLENs were funded by the Victorian Department of Education. Beginning in 2010, the Australian federal government contributed funding to the LLEN program via the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions - Partnership Broker program. Following a change in federal government leadership in 2014, the Partnership Broker program was dissolved. This unexpected funding decrease had a major impact on the efficacy of LLENs across the state. The Victorian State Government extended ‘rescue’ funding to the LLENs by means of a single-year contract in 2015, but the LLENs were still forced to reassess their programming strategies to account for the loss of anticipated resources. In many cases, this new strategy encompassed a shift toward brokering partnerships and connections rather than developing internal programs that engaged with young people directly. As explained in Capital City LLEN’s 2017 annual report:

Our 2015 contract represented a significant diversion from our previous contractual focus, requiring the LLEN to concentrate on industry and business initiatives

compared to re-engagement, retention and attainment – the traditional cornerstones of the LLEN program (p. 1).

In 2016, the Department of Education introduced a revised version of the Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) service. The service includes an online, state-wide portal for SWL placement opportunities in concert with local coordination and support by LLENs. The SWL contract provided much-needed funding to the 31 LLENs, however it can be seen as a shift from the tradition brokering and relationship development role of the LLENs to a greater role in the provision of services.

2 LLENs at work

Of the 31 LLENs in Victoria, 26 have annual reports or other measurable data accessible on their websites. As such, these 26 organisations constitute the full 'cohort' for the analysis.

The LLENs are listed in the table below.

2.1 Annual Reports

A few LLENs have annual reports spanning several years on their websites. The South West LLEN, for example, posts reports dating from 2007. This allows for a more detailed consideration of the LLEN in question, as the organisation's changing activities can be tracked over subsequent years. However, the majority of the LLENs provide more limited data on their operational activities. Seven LLENs provide annual reports dating back three years on their website, while six LLENs only provide annual reports for a single year. Notably, more than half of the LLENs (16) only provide annual reports dating from *after* the 2014 decrease in government funding. The inconsistent range of documentation ultimately limits the scope of analysis possible across the full cohort.

Table 1: Victoria's 31 LLENs

Region	LLEN
Melbourne City	Capital City LLEN
North Eastern Victoria	Gateway LLEN
	Goulburn Murray LLEN
	Inner Northern LLEN
	NE Tracks LLEN
	North East LLEN
	Outer Eastern LLEN
North Western Victoria	Banyule Nillumbik LLEN
	Brimbank Melton LLEN
	Campaspe Cohuna LLEN
	Central Ranges LLEN
	Goldfields LLEN
	Hume Whittlesea LLEN
	Murray Malley LLEN

	North Central LLEN
	Northern Mallee LLEN
South Eastern Victoria	Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN
	Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN
	Inner Eastern LLEN
	Gippsland East LLEN
	South East LLEN
	South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN
	Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN
South Western Victoria	Central Grampians LLEN
	Geelong Region
	Glenelg and Southern Grampians LLEN
	Maribyrnong & Moonee Valley LLEN
	South West LLEN
	Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN
	Wyn Bay LLEN

2.2 Executive Leadership

Each LLEN is overseen by a Committee of Management (CoM), which provides strategic direction for the organisation. Committee members are volunteers who are elected by the wider membership of the LLEN and serve for two-year terms. The Committee is structured with 11 designated membership categories:

- Category 1 – Schools: government and non-government
- Category 2 – TAFE Institutes or Universities with TAFE sectors
- Category 3 – Adult Community Education (ACE) organisations
- Category 4 – Other education and training organisations
- Category 5 – Trade unions

- Category 6 – Employers, peak/regional employment organisations, and employment agencies
- Category 7 – Local government
- Category 8 – Other community agencies and organisations
- Category 9 – Koorie organisations
- Category 10 – Community members
- Category 11 – Co-opted members appointed by the committee

Data for each LLEN's Committee of Management was primarily drawn from 2017 annual reports and thus reflects each Committee's make-up during that year. In cases when the 2017 annual report was unavailable or does not list membership specifics, data has been drawn from current website listings.

Across the total cohort of 26 LLENs, a few key trends emerge. Despite the balanced gender representation in the associated LGAs (approximately 50/50 female and male across Victoria), the CoMs are inconsistent in terms of gender representation. Only 23% (6) of the CoMs are gender balanced, with approximately the same number of male and female members. The remaining 77% (20) are gender imbalanced.

Of these, ten of the LLENs have more women than men as Committee members, and ten have more men than women. The data shows varying degrees of imbalance, in which 40% (9) of these 20 are within striking distance of equal ratios of men and women (e.g., 3 positions apart). The CoMs for Goldfields LLEN and Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN, for example, were both comprised of eight women and six men in 2017. Other LLENs demonstrate more glaring imbalance in their leadership representation. The CoM for the Wyn Bay LLEN, for example, included 10 men but only two women in 2017. Geelong Region LLEN similarly had 9 men and two women on its Committee in 2017, while Glenelg and Southern Grampians LLEN had 12 women and 4 men.

In terms of diversity, the LLENs do not provide cultural demographics on their Committee members. However, according to the listing of CoM members by category, more than 60% of the full LLEN cohort did not include a representative from an Indigenous organisation in 2017.

2.3 Areas of Coverage

Each LLEN provides support to residents within designated Local Government Areas (LGAs), including cities, shires, and rural areas. All but one of the LLENs under consideration (Capital City) encompass more than one LGA, with nearly half (12) covering three LGAs or more.

The range of coverage for each LLEN varies by region. For LLENs located in Melbourne City and its close suburbs, the LGAs generally comprise less than 600 km². Capital City LLEN covers just 36 km², while Inner Eastern LLEN comprises 107 km². In more rural areas, the LGAs encompass a significantly greater area. North East LLEN covers a range of 13,938 km², for example, and Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN covers 28,000 km². Gippsland East LLEN covers the greatest area out of the total cohort, with its two LGAs collectively comprising 31,920 km².

This range of coverage highlights the necessary regional specificity of each LLEN. The more urban communities benefit from a concentrated population of young people that have easy access to LLEN activities by means of public transport. In contrast, more regional LLENs must contend with the obstacle of distance and need to frame their activities strategically to account for the more dispersed population.

2.4 Youth Population (10-19 years)

In order to establish youth population figures for the LLENs across the total cohort, the researchers compiled census data from 2016 for each designated LGA. Population figures for two distinct age groups were collected (10-14 years and 15-19 years) in order to cover the 10-19 year age range targeted by the LLEN program.

The resident youth population associated with each LLEN varies widely, dependent on the characteristics of the region (rural versus urban), overall population, and size of designated LGAs. As to be expected, rural areas generally have smaller youth populations in comparison to more urban areas. Hume Whittlesea LLEN has the highest youth population out of the total LLENs cohort with 51,372 young people between the ages of 10 and 19. Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN and Brimbank Melton LLEN also have substantial youth populations at 45,521 and 42,340, respectively. Central Grampians LLEN and North Central LLEN have the two smallest youth populations out of the total cohort, with each serving less than 3,000 young people.

2.5 Operating Budget

Out of the full cohort of 26 LLENs, six do not publicly list their operating budget, including revenue and expenditure. For the remaining 18 LLENs, financial data was drawn from the most recent annual report available, or 2017, unless otherwise stated.

The average operating revenue across all 18 LLENs was \$683,242 with significant variation from organisation to organisation. Certain LLENs note revenue as high as \$1,777,303 for 2017 (e.g. Inner Northern LLEN), while others operated with less than \$400,000 in the same year (e.g. Central City LLEN).

It is unclear from the data why certain LLENs appear to be more financially stable than others. In terms of expenditure, ten of the 18 LLENs reported a deficit following their activities in the financial year under review. This deficit ranges from as little as \$82 (e.g., NE Tracks LLEN) to as high as \$38,584 (e.g., Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN). The remaining eight LLENs report a budgetary surplus in their annual reports, and in some cases, these figures are significant. Glenelg and Grampians LLEN, for example, reports a budget surplus of \$119,347 in 2017, or 22% of their operating revenue for the year. Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN reports an even more substantial amount, listing equity of \$189,973 in 2017, or more than 50% of their assets for the year. The size of the budget surplus held by certain LLENs suggests the need for a more efficient programming strategy, in which expenditure is more evenly matched with operating revenue.

The financial data assumes additional complexity when tracked against each LLEN's youth population, presented below, in Table 20.

Table 2: Overview of LLEN revenue, youth population, and subsequent \$ amount of resources per individual

LLEN	Revenue (2017)	Youth Pop (2016)	\$ per individual
Capital City LLEN	\$373,203	12,472	\$29.90
Inner Northern LLEN	\$1,177,303	33,173	\$35.49
NE Tracks LLEN	\$567,265	6,031	\$94.05
North East LLEN	n/a	9,248	n/a
Banyule Nillumbik LLEN	\$745,737.79	22,670	\$32.80
Brimbank Melton LLEN	n/a	42,340	n/a
Campaspe Cohuna LLEN	n/a	5,828	n/a
Central Ranges LLEN	n/a	13,266	n/a
Goldfields LLEN	n/a	17,226	n/a
Hume Whittlesea LLEN	\$724,373	51,372	\$14.10
North Central LLEN	\$787,343	2,893	\$272.15
Northern Mallee LLEN	\$897,636*	7,266	\$123.54
Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN	\$547,293	14,721	\$37.17
Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN	\$589,270*	33,871	\$17.40
Inner Eastern LLEN	n/a	37,772	n/a
Gippsland East LLEN	\$507,083	9,814	\$51.67
South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN	\$487,546	6,737	\$72.36
Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN	\$367,763	45,521	\$8.07
Central Grampians LLEN	\$589,885	2,519	\$234.17
Geelong Region	\$772,813	33,031	\$23.40
Glenelg and Southern Grampians LLEN	\$550,260	4,343	\$126.70
Highlands LLEN	\$470,630	22,458	\$20.95

Maribyrnong & Moonee Valley LLEN	\$510,674	19,494	\$26.19
South West LLEN	\$509,015	10,953	\$46.47
Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN	\$460,837	4,826	\$95.49
Wyn Bay LLEN	\$644,427	36,943	\$17.44

* denotes 2016 data

The youth population is divided by the annual revenue figures in order to establish an approximate dollar (\$) figure for each young person under the LLEN's purview. This figure does not reflect actual spending as it does not include operating expenses, such as personnel costs or property leasing. Rather, the figure frames each LLEN's financial resources in terms of potential population demand.

Using this methodology, Central Grampians LLEN has resources amounting to \$234.17 per young person under its purview. In contrast, Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN has a little more than \$37 per young person. This contrast can potentially be used to contextualise the programming activities at different LLENs, as well as their necessary prioritisation of certain activities over others.

3 Overview of LLEN Activities

Annual reports from the LLENs cohort were reviewed in order to categorise and assess the scope of LLEN activities across the state.¹ Four general kinds of activities were identified. These can be classified as:

- *Networks and community groups*

As a facilitator or ‘broker,’ LLENs provide crucial administrative support to various networks and organisations involving schools, teachers, parents, and other invested community members. These networks and groups often support designated activities: the Inner Northern Youth Employment Taskforce of Inner Northern LLEN, for example, oversees the Jobs for Youth Campaign. However, these groups also exist solely as networks, in which members meet on an annual basis in order to stay informed on prescient issues and also work to improve existing infrastructures. Examples include the Northern SBAT Network Partnerships at Banyule Nillumbik LLEN and the Ovens & Murray Children and Youth Area Partnership at NE Tracks LLEN.

- *Capacity building for teachers, careers professionals, and others*

A number of LLEN activities focus on training and capacity-building for teachers and careers professional so that they can better serve the young people in the community. At Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN the Trauma Informed Practice program provides professional development sessions to Teachers’ Aides. Other examples include the North East Career Advisors Association at NE Tracks LLEN, which provides upskilling sessions to teachers in career advisory roles, and the Students on the Spectrum program at Capital City LLEN, which trains teachers to support young people with autism.

- *Professional development for young people*

This category encompasses activities that are designed to directly impact a young person’s ability to enter the workforce and constitute the bulk of LLEN’s activities that have direct youth engagement. Examples include targeted work experience programs, such as those promoted through SWL and SBAT, as well as independent partnerships with apprentice or work experience elements (e.g., Central Ranges LLEN’s work experience on an army base or Gippsland East LLEN’s 3-day practical construction program). This category also includes specific employment preparation opportunities, including RIJI – Real Industry Job Interviews, Passport 2 Employment, and other work readiness programs.

¹ As noted in Section 3, data is limited by annual report availability.

- *Personal development for young people*

In addition to professional development opportunities, LLENs also prioritise activities that promote life skills, confidence, and other traits that may indirectly contribute to or enable success in the work force. These programs often involve mentorship from community members or opportunities to meet potential role models for young people to emulate. Examples include the L2P Learner Driver Program, the Inspiring Young People program, Capital City LLEN's AfroX program, and Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN's STEM Sisters.

As part of this review of activities, the researchers also identified two further categories of programs across the cohort:

- 1) General programs, or activities common among two or more LLENs within the cohort
- 2) Innovative programs, or activities which represent good practice programming.

Each of these programs is described in brief below.

3.1 General Programs

The review shows that LLENs share a number of common programs that have positive and, in many cases, tangible outcomes. Some LLENs have also elected to adapt these programs to better suit the needs of their local communities and thus produce a greater impact.

L2P Learner Driver Program

Currently or recently active at:

Inner Northern LLEN, Banyule Nillumbik LLEN, Hume Whittlesea LLEN, Central Grampians LLEN

The L2P program assists young people to reach their required 120 hours behind the wheel before being eligible to sit for their driving test. Many young people who access the program do not have the financial capacity to pay for driving lessons. In addition, many do not have the means within their family setting to access a vehicle or find a supervising driver to help them complete the requirement. The emphasis on the program is teaching young people safe driving habits as well as enabling them to access job opportunities and experience a little bit of freedom. In addition to practice sessions with volunteer 'supervising drivers,' all learner drivers receive professional driving lessons from qualified instructors.

The program leads to measurable outcomes that can impact a young person's ability to seek and hold employment. At Banyule Nillumbik LLEN, the program has supported 7,600 supervised hours for more than 160 learner drivers since 2010. Of these, 93 young people have obtained a probationary license.

The program also has key community impacts beyond a young people securing their mandatory 120 hours of driving supervision. For example, the Inner North LLEN hosts the program in the Moreland local council area, and other benefits include young people developing mentoring relationships with volunteer community members, as well as police and clubs such as Rotary. Police engagement further extends to two local police stations

housing the vehicles which again enables young people to develop positive relationships with police.

Passport 2 Employment

Currently or recently active at:

Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN, South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN, Geelong Region LLEN, Glenelg and Southern Grampians LLEN, Highlands LLEN, South West LLEN

Various Passport 2 Employment programs are hosted by a large number of the LLENs. This program is used to engage with young people living with a disability. The program enables young people to access direct support assisting them to develop their communication skills in order to present themselves for job interviews and to gain understanding of how workplaces function. The program takes participants through how to present at interview, what to wear and what to expect in employment.

A number of the LLENs also engage other young people in the community to assist participants with purchasing appropriate clothing for interviews and work, thereby extending the mentoring outcomes of the program. At Highlands LLEN, for example, local VET hair and beauty students prepared P2E participants for their graduation. In 2015 the P2E program was one of five state finalists in the Victorian Disability Sector Awards. In many regions, local businesses also facilitate visits from participants, and a number engage in mock interview processes to provide hands-on experience for participants.

In 2017, Glenelg and Southern Grampians LLEN focused their Passport 2 Employment on young people with a disability, Indigenous students and students at risk of dislocating from employment via **Transition Action Networks (TAN)**. Initially established in 2013, the TAN brings together community organisations, secondary school specialists and local government in one central portal and enables local knowledge to be shared across networks. This broadens the reach of employment and education opportunities in the region. Activities undertaken include professional development for TAN participants to better understand disability, common behavioural tendencies, and ways to communicate with young people with disabilities. The GSGLLEN also dedicated two structured workplace learning advisors to the P2E program to support the work of the SWL and TAN.

Real Industry Job Interviews (RIJI)

Currently or recently active at:

Inner Northern LLEN, NE Tracks LLEN, Brimbank Melton LLEN, Campaspe Cohuna LLEN, Hume Whittlesea LLEN

Developing young people's communication skills and exposing them to what to expect in a job interview process is the principle behind the RIJI program. In 2017, Hume Whittlesea LLEN introduced the program to Year 9 students. Results were immediate, with a number of students reporting they were successful in gaining part-time employment. One student obtained employment the same day as the practice run. Interviewers also reported being

energised by the opportunity, which indicated their willingness to continue participation with the project.

Campaspe and Cohuna LLEN also ran successful mock interview programs, which discussed how to write a job application, what to expect from an interview, presentation skills, body language, and handshake etiquette.

School Leavers Guide

Currently or recently active at:

Capital City LLEN, Inner Northern LLEN, Banyule Nillumbik LLEN, Brimbank Melton LLEN, Campaspe Cohuna LLEN, Hume Whittlesea LLEN, Highlands LLEN, Maribyrnong & Moonee Valley LLEN, Wyn Bay LLEN

School Leavers Guides or Manuals are developed in consultation with LLEN members and participants. The final document is meant to provide young people with a single source that contains a wealth of information on how to seek out job opportunities and where to find support services available in the region.

The School Leavers Guides undoubtedly provide useful information for young people. However, the researchers identified inconsistencies across LLENs in terms of format and date of origin. The majority of LLENs post their guides on their websites, rather than providing printed copies, which in some cases, reflects a strategy to specifically avoid printing costs. While a number of the School Leavers Guides are updated on an annual basis, others are less up-to-date: at Wyn Bay LLEN, for example, the online guide was last updated in 2013.

The Capital City LLEN represents a case of best practice with the School Leavers Guide. Rather than providing an online pdf, the LLEN maintains a designated website for school leavers called zoomin.org.au. The website includes resources that would be traditionally included in the hard-copy guide but also provides links to additional online resources, such as Victorian Skills Gateway, Generation Success, Youth Central, and LinkedIn.

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL)

Currently or recently active at:

All LLENs

Structured workplace learning programs are provided by all LLENs consistent with their contractual arrangements with the Victorian government. The purpose of the program is to provide students with quality workplace experiences in roles they may assume after leaving school. Participating students receive credits that go to their overall VCE (education program), VCAL (applied learning) or SBAT (apprenticeships) outcome. This is achieved by LLENs developing associations with employers, secondary schools, TAFEs, and community organisations that are able to find local placements for students.

The SWL is also tasked with assisting students who may find it difficult to be placed in learning environments, as well as young people not currently connected to the secondary

school system. The Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN identified a number of positive outcomes beyond job placements for young people participating in the SWL, including developing their communication and time management skills, increasing motivation, and early-stage networking opportunities for future reference.

One value of the SWL program being embedded within communities is the collaborative relationship that develops between SWL personnel and local businesses in the community. SWL personnel are able to identify the skills sets of the students and, coupled with their knowledge of local workplaces and their internal organisational principles, can identify suitable placement opportunities. The SWL portal was revamped in 2017, which enabled all LLENS to pool their resources and post job opportunities across the state.

In 2016, Frankston and Mornington Peninsula LLEN placed 83 secondary students and 13 young people disconnected from secondary schooling into placements. The LLEN reports that a number of students were able to secure part-time or full-time work from these placements and some were offered apprenticeships.

School Based Apprenticeship Training (SBAT)

Currently or recently active at:

All LLENS

The SBAT is tailored to operate within the available resources of the region and provides opportunities for students to experience the work of a particular trade that is seeking apprentices.

Banyule Nillumbik LLEN supports 'sample sessions' for prospective apprentices. The sessions are attended by 15 industry representatives. Prior to the event students are invited to nominate which of the 15 options interest them. On the day they are channeled into their preferred industry and provided with an intensive workshop of what the role is like and what opportunities might await them post apprenticeship completion.

Ticket to Work

Currently or recently active at:

Brimbank Melton LLEN, Inner Eastern LLEN, Gippsland East LLEN, Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN, Geelong Region LLEN, Highlands LLEN, Maribyrnong & Moonee Valley LLEN

The Ticket to Work program provides young people with an the opportunity to apply for a placement in an area of their interest.

For example, in 2017, Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong LLEN were approached by a local secondary school to assist a young person whose application had been unsuccessful in 2016. With the assistance of the LLEN and the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, the student was placed into a school based training opportunity with a local auto shop. The student attended the workplace, demonstrated his skill set, and was

recommended by his manager to step up into another form of work in the auto industry. This gave the young person the opportunity to extend their skills and an opportunity to learn how to interact in different workplaces.

A number of other LLENs focus their Ticket to Work programs on engaging young people with a disability. Geelong LLEN adopts a two-pronged approach in this area, both assisting young people with skill development to transition to work and also skilling up local employers to offer jobs to people with disability.

Inspiring Young People

Currently or recently active at:

Baw Baw La Trobe, Gippsland East LLEN, South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN

The Inspiring Young People program works to connect young people with people from inside or outside their community who have experienced adversity and found pathways through these periods.

In 2017, South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN expanded the program to include young people in the preparation of the event. In groups, young people work together to learn how to manage the logistics of organising an event. This step in itself enabled young people to learn communication, logistics and time management skills. The students chose to invite a local wheelchair-bound footballer who talked about resilience and not giving up despite his spinal cord injury. Other mentors discussed their work journeys, setbacks and how they accommodated new life experiences.

On Track Connect

Currently or recently active at:

All LLENS

On Track is a survey-based instrument introduced by the Department of Education and Training to follow up with students who left school or other training based institution between Years 10 and 12. The aim of the project is to identify those young people who are not currently in employment at the time of the survey. Via the identification process, LLENs are able to offer follow up services and referrals. The value of the data set is in identifying gaps amongst young people in terms of finding and maintaining employment. The follow up process also identifies those young people who have subsequently found employment after the survey date. The data indicates what services young people have been directed to, what form of employment they have obtained.

3.2 Innovative Programs

3.2.1 Previous programs

A report on the LLENs by the Department of Education (2007) identified innovative programs that had been established in the early years of the LLENs' operations within Victoria. The short case studies provided were:

- The Managed Individual Pathways Mapping Tool that was used to identify students at risk of leaving school early, trialed by the Brimbank Melton LLEN. This program was subsequently funded by the State Government for all state schools until 2018, when it was replaced by career education funding (Department of Education and Training 2017a).
- The Brimbank Melton LLEN also ran the Hope program, which offered mentoring and support programs for year 9 and 10 students most at risk.
- The East Gippsland LLEN's Changing Lanes program provided VCAL opportunities to re-engage at-risk and disengaged students. Partners in the program included the local secondary college, Victoria Police and local service and community health organisations.
- The Poll Position program, run by the Hume Whittlesea LLEN, offered an automotive program in conjunction with Kangan Batman TAFE and the motor companies in the region. The program reported a 95% retention and retraining rate, indicating its success.
- Similarly, the Wyn Bay LLEN ran a Transport, Distribution and Logistics program, reflecting the strength of the sector in western Melbourne.
- The Top jobs network was an initiative of the members of the Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN, which focused on transitioning people from part-time and casual work into full time positions.

3.2.2 Current programs

The review of current programs identifies a number of innovative programs that represent examples of good practice among the cohort of LLENs. However, the review also shows that 'innovation' is very much informed by geographical location, traditional industry-based employment opportunities, and shifting population cohort. A program that is 'innovative' in the context of one region can be far from innovative in another. As such, while these programs represent good practice across the wider cohort, they must be still considered within the specific context of the presenting LLEN.

100 Years of Women in Policing

Currently or recently active at:

Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN

The goal of working together with the community to provide opportunities, knowledge and insight into various pathways open to students is well represented by this initiative. The southern police area approached the BGEKLEN to match 100 young female students with 100 female police officers and celebrate the contribution that women have made to the police service. Students discussed the myriad jobs available in the police service with women performing some of these roles. This program has contributed to breaking down gender stereotypes in the labour market.

Passions & Pathways

Currently or recently active at:

Goldfields LLEN

This project specifically targets Year 6 students from low socio-economic backgrounds and assists them in their transition to high school by building their knowledge of how their new education experiences can lead to future job opportunities. This organic program developed in and by the Bendigo community in 2010 identified generational poverty as a leading cause of disadvantage for young students. This program intervenes at an early age for students. This program intervenes at an early age for students. As this period of transition means that students will come into contact with a broader range of people in new settings, the program seeks to equip students with the skills to manage this transition beyond the school setting. The program consists of community members from various workplaces visiting the school in order to develop students' knowledge of job opportunities. Students are also able to visit local workplaces and begin to develop an understanding of what workplaces are like. Mentors assist students to develop life skills and capacities such as communication, presentation, and problem solving to better equip them for life and work.

Career Horizons

Currently or recently active at:

Goldfields LLEN

The Career Horizons website was developed to provide students and education providers with information about what placement opportunities may be on offered by local businesses and industry. It operates as a partnership between the LLEN and the Bendigo, Mt Alexander and Central Goldfields Councils. The program is notable in that it provides information on experiences and placements available in the region, from work experience through to PhD scholarships, as well as work place tours and community engagement opportunities.

Jobs for Youth Campaign

Currently or recently active at:

Inner Northern LLEN

The LLEN activated the Jobs for Youth Campaign to assess barriers to engaging young people in employment opportunities. The campaign supported the Darebin youth citizen jury to explore how young people are interacting in the broader community and continued to develop its mentoring capacity to reach unemployed youth or those at risk of disengaging from school. One of the most innovative aspects of the campaign is its use of online engagement to promote job and training opportunities to young people. In addition to providing job listings (www.jobsforyouth.com.au), the campaign maintains a designated events and activities website (www.jfyevents.com.au). These online portals have a wider reach than the LLEN itself: in 2017, the jobs portal had 2,432 job views, while the events and activities website had 16,177 page views.

Hands on Career Expo

Currently or recently active at:

NE Tracks LLEN

This event, held in 2017, enabled 704 students to observe 34 trade exhibitors at the Winton Motor Raceway and experience firsthand what is involved in a particular trade. Featured trades included brick laying, panel beating, spray painting, mechanical repairs, 3D printing, hair styling, cake making and nail colouring. Students were able to see the logistics involved in participating in the trade, the work required, and how skills can be developed in order to progress from apprentice to tradesperson. The event also enabled 210 local business and community providers to network, thus expanding offerings for future expos. While career expos and trade shows are fairly common among the LLEN cohort, the hands-on aspect of this program represents a variation on the standard model. Another positive variation is the program's use of SWL students to manage the operational logistics of the event, including set up, filming, catering, and day operations. This provided students with an opportunity to practice employment skills in real time.

AfroX Event

Currently or recently active at:

Capital City LLEN

The AfroX event in 2017 presented an important opportunity for young African students to come together with other African community members and address the impacts of recent negative commentary targeting them as problems in society. The event was co-developed with the African Australian Students Association (AASO) and concentrated on showcasing African role models who have developed careers in all range of professions in Victoria. The program was particularly designed to reinforce the importance of remaining engaged with education to achieve their life goals. The event enabled an exchange of skill development and knowledge for LLEN staff and members of the AASO.

Girls in STEM

Currently or recently active at:

Capital City LLEN

After consulting with female students to understand their barriers to participation in STEM subjects, the LLEN partnered with Engineers Australia to develop a program addressing these barriers. The event was attended by 130 students, as well as female STEM professionals and parents interested in introductory information about STEM and opportunities for their daughters. A series of STEM professionals were on hand to provide insights into their STEM journeys, tips on how to access STEM in vocational and tertiary settings, and discussions on the range of jobs available to young people who choose a career in STEM areas.

STEM Sisters

Currently or recently active at:

Gippsland LLENs

Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN hosted a STEM Sisters program in collaboration with South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN. The event involved a number of women professionals in STEM careers including those working in the local LLEN areas. The evening opened up new opportunities for young women to ask questions of presenters covering a wide range of issues including how they became involved in STEM careers, how they overcame barriers to participation, and what opportunities lie ahead for young women choosing a STEM path. This example of collaboration showcases the partnership capabilities of LLENs in impacting and engaging with young people.

Green Bean Project

Currently or recently active at:

North East LLEN

As part of the social enterprise in schools program in 2016, students established the 'AOK Café' which was ultimately successful in taking over the contract for the Albury-Wodonga Health café in Albury. In 2017, the Green Bean project again gave year 9 students the opportunity to learn hospitality and commercial skills by establishing a pop-up café in which all money raised was donated to a local charity.

Health Careers Event

Currently or recently active at:

Campaspe Cohuna LLEN

Teaming up with local health providers, the LLEN organised a number of events that introduced students to the broad range of health services in the Campaspe region. Students visited a local hospital and spoke with hospital personnel about the range of jobs available in the health sector, including hospital-based roles and community-based services, such as social work, pathology, paramedics and speech pathology. Students participated in a case study of a fictional person who has had an accident and required transport to hospital. Students were able to identify all professions and services required in the process exposing them to the number and types of jobs available in health services. In another event, students were taken to the Rochester health services and engaged directly from people performing the roles in the sector.

Bachelor of Social Science

Currently or recently active at:

Central Grampians LLEN

This program was re-introduced into the Grampians region in 2017 in partnership with Federation University. Entry was based on peoples' willingness to learn and participate in all aspects of the program. Successful applicants attended the LLEN in Ararat two days per week where they were provided with a resourced learning environment including computers and internet access. The LLEN also provided opportunities for students to update their skills

such as digital knowledge so they could engage fully in the course and apply their freshly updated skills to their work.

Young Workers Centre Collaboration

Currently or recently active at:

Highlands LLEN

In 2017, Highlands LLEN celebrated 20 years of the VET (Vocational and Educational Training) Cluster in the region. Starting with 62 students across 10 schools in three programs, the cluster now offers 18 programs to students across the region: 484 students participated in 2017. Vocational teaching staff identified that, as students go into the workplace, they are not sufficiently equipped with knowledge of what conditions of work to expect. In 2017 the HLLLEN partnered with the Young Workers Centre in Melbourne to offer young people information sessions on workplace standards. Topics covered included information of what workplace standards to expect, rates of pay, health and safety, as well as information on how to recognise and respond to workplace harassment and discrimination. This offering was well attended and reached about 400 students in VCAL programs from 11 mainstream regional secondary schools and additional 150 students from other HLLLEN learning programs.

Young Carers Program & Manual

Currently or recently active at:

Inner Eastern LLEN

Inner Eastern LLEN identified a key group of disengaged young people as those who are either caring for parents or siblings or are being cared for by elderly family members. In 2017, specific focus was placed on young people who assume the role as 'carers.' A range of programs were offered both on and off school premises in order to support these young people in remaining engaged in their education. The program was attended by eight young people across term 3. Students were able to develop relationships with school staff who assumed a mentoring role. The program was co-developed by participants and a significant outcome was the development of a program guide for use by other schools.

4 Eight LLENs: Practice and Process

A snapshot of eight LLENs is provided to indicate the range of regions and populations serviced, budgets, partnerships, the board composition and community engagement and the programs offered.

The eight LLENs and summary data for each of them is provided in the table on the following page. Of note is that the LLENs that cover greater area also tend to have lower populations, both in total and also for those aged between 10 and 19 years.

Table 3: Summary Eight LLENs

LLEN	Region	LGAs	Area (km ²)	Population (2016)	
				Total	Youth ²
Inner Northern	North Eastern Victoria	Darebin, Moreland, Yarra	124	395,934	33,173
NE Tracks		Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta	9,839	50,755	6,031
Banyule Nillumbik	North Western Victoria	Banyule, Nillumbik	495	183,138	22,670
Hume Whittlesea		Hume Whittlesea	994	394,867	51,372
Wimmera Southern Mallee	Western	Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Horsham	28,000	36,500	4,826
Geelong	G21 Region ³	Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Queenscliff, Otway, Golden Plains	8972	272,534	33,031
Baw Baw	West Gippsland	Baw Baw, Latrobe City	5,456	121,736	14,721
South Gippsland Bass Coast	Eastern	Bass Coast, South Gippsland	4,169	61,507	6,737

² People aged 10-19 years

³ Data drawn from the online G21 regional alliance portal - <http://www.g21.com.au/node/16> accessed 251018

4.1 Inner Northern LLEN

The Inner Northern LLEN encompasses Darebin City, Moreland City, and Yarra City.

The INLLEN's stated objectives include improving retention and completion rates for the 10-19 age group (particularly Indigenous and CALD/refugee young people), promoting more effective transitions for students leaving school, improving employment opportunities and parental engagement, and re-engaging young people who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from their education.

INLLEN maintains one of the highest operating budgets out of the total cohort, with its 2017 revenue listed as \$1,177,303. Expenditure for 2017 totaled \$1,149,524, for a budget surplus of \$27,779. Annual reports are available from 2014.

Across all three LGAs, approximately half of the total population identifies as either Australian or English in ancestry, with specific percentages ranging between 42% and 54% in each LGA. Darebin City and Moreland City also have high rates of Italian ancestry among the total population (13.6% and 15.6%, respectively), while Yarra City has strong Irish representation (15.1%). Additional ancestries include Greek, Scottish, Chinese, Indian, German, and Vietnamese. Darebin City notably has one of the highest populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Victoria, or 0.8% of the LGA's total population.

The youth unemployment rate for the three LGAs combined is significantly higher than in the state of Victoria overall. The INLLEN identifies unemployment at 21.5% for young people between 15 and 19 years and 12% for those between 20 and 24 years.

4.1.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

According to the INLLEN's 2017 annual report, the Committee of Management is currently comprised of 15 total members: 8 women and 7 men. Of these, three represent schools (category 1), three represent TAFE / Universities (category 2), two represent employers (category 6), three represent local government (category 7), one represents the larger community (category 10), and three are co-opted members (category 11). Notable vacancies on the board include representatives from trade unions (category 5) and Koori organisations (category 9). There is no framework for community members to contact the CoM directly.

Membership and Partners

The INLLEN does not specify number of members or their designated categories on its website or annual reports. The INLLEN does cite a number of its active partners, including La Trobe University, Melbourne Polytechnic, Wick Studios, Vic Roads, Sutton Tools, Transport Accident Commission, Rotary Club of Brunswick, the City of Yarra, Moreland City Council, City of Darebin, and AGA Apprenticeships Plus, among others.

Information Dissemination

In addition to its website, the IN LLEN maintains an active social media presence, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The organisation also maintains two independent websites as part of its Jobs for Youth Campaign, one specifically for job listings and one for activities and events.

Accessibility

The INLLEN is involved in the North West Melbourne Regional Strategy on Information for Young People with a Disability and Their Family. This initiative supports schools and stakeholders in providing a more consistent approach to information dissemination amongst students with disabilities. The BNLLEN's annual report and website do not cite any further activities specifically directed at young people with disabilities accessibility or disability-supportive employment opportunities.

4.1.2 Overview of Programs

Since 2014, the INLLEN has consistently offered a number of programs designed to engage with different aspects of youth unemployment and other obstacles to engagement. While some other LLENs focus primarily on facilitation through networks, administrative support, and professional development, the INLLEN appears to prioritise programs that directly engage with young people. Key activities include:

- **Jobs for Youth Campaign** (launched in 2014)
- **L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program**
- **Joining the Dots – Primary Secondary School Transition Project** (launched in 2012)
- **RIJI – Real Industry Job Interviews**
- **CTS – Community Transition Support**, and
- **Structured Workplace Learning**

A number of these programs involve mentorship or interaction between students and community members, including the L2P program with its supervised driving hours, and the Powerful Placements program supported by CTS, which matches students to work experience opportunities with local Members of Parliament. In terms of employment-based activities, the Jobs for Youth Campaign had a particularly high participation rate, with 2,315 young people involved in 60 events over the course of the year. A further 584 individuals completed the RIJI program.

Assessment

The INLLEN does not specify any current framework for self-evaluation on its website or in its annual report. However, the organisation does provide detailed statistics related to each of its activities, which suggests active tracking of immediate outcomes. Participant data is not broken down by gender or demographic. The INLLEN also produces independent annual evaluations of its Jobs for Youth Campaign in addition to its standard annual reports. These extensive reports include an overview of the annual campaign and activities, as well as a list of internal recommendations for the following year.

4.2 NE Tracks LLEN

The NE Tracks LLEN encompasses Benalla Rural City, Mansfield Shire, and Wangaratta Rural City. The organisation outlines the key objectives of its 2016-19 Strategic Plan in its 2015 annual report, including to:

- raise aspirations and involvement in education and careers,
- increase career pathway information access and awareness,
- measure changes and impacts, and
- maintain organisational sustainability

In 2017, NE Tracks LLEN had an operating revenue of \$567,265. Expenditures for the year totaled \$567,347, for a budget deficit of \$82. Annual reports are available from 2015.

The three LGAs serviced by the NE Tracks LLEN are predominately rural, with residential areas located around smaller townships. Each is more than 200 km from the Melbourne CBD. The cultural demographic of the three LGAs is fairly homogenous, with more than 95% of the total population in Benalla City and Wangaratta City claiming either Australian, English, or Irish ancestry. The vast majority of the total population was also born in Australia, with only 8% born overseas in Benalla and Wangaratta. Additional ancestral demographics in Benalla and Wangaratta include Italian, German, and Dutch. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders make up a little more than 1% of the total population: 1.6% in Benalla and 1.3% in Wangaratta. The LGAs have fairly low rates of youth unemployment, with rates under 11% for both Benalla and Wangaratta in 2016.

4.2.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

According to NE Tracks LLEN's website, the Committee of Management is currently comprised of 13 total members: 6 women and 7 men. Of these, three represent schools (category 1), one represents TAFE / Universities (category 2), one represents ACE (category 3), one represents other training organisations (category 4), one represents trade unions (category 5), one represents employers (category 6), two represent local government (category 7), two represent other community agencies (category 8), and one represents Koorie organisations (category 9). The committee does not include any representatives from the larger community but is one of the few LLENS to engage a Koorie representative. There is no framework for community members to contact the CoM directly.

Membership and Partners

According to its website, the NE Tracks LLEN has nearly 100 members. The organisation does not provide any further information about these members or their designated categories. The NE Tracks LLEN cites a number of its current partners in its 2017 annual report, including Borinya Wangaratta Community Partnership, Wangaratta Primary School, Wangaratta High School, Catholic Education Office, Rural City of Wangaratta, Education Advantage, CSU, Northeast Health Wangaratta, Department of Health and Human Services,

City of Greater Shepparton, Dairy Australia, 4Upskilling, and Careers Education Association of Victoria.

Information Dissemination

In addition to its website, the NE Tracks LLEN maintains a Facebook page with fairly active postings. The organisation also has a designated Twitter handle but has never tweeted.

Accessibility

The NE Tracks LLEN facilitates the regional Disability Services Network. This network includes more than 50 members, including representatives from local government, employers, community health organisations, and job service providers. The purpose of the network is to discuss information and current strategies specific to young people with a disability as they transition from school to employment. The NE Tracks 2017 annual report does not provide any additional information about number of meetings or initiatives stemming from this network. The NE Tracks LLEN's annual report and website do not cite any further activities specifically directed at young people with disabilities, accessibility, or disability-supportive employment opportunities.

4.2.2 Overview of Programs

Like other LLENs, the NE Tracks LLEN actively facilitates networks and partnerships throughout the LGA communities. Examples include the North East Career Advisors Association (NECAA), which supports teachers and career advisors from secondary schools; the Disability Services Network (see above); and the Ovens & Murray Children and Youth Partnership, which endeavours to support better outcomes for vulnerable young people. Additional student-focused activities include:

- **Project Rockit** – workshops to help young people address and overcome cyber bullying
- **Live4Life** – initiative to promote mental health education and youth suicide prevention
- **Digital Technology Advisory Committee** – activities include the STEM Expo in 2016 and 2017
- **Career Events: Food and Fibre Careers** – showcasing the agricultural sector
- **Career Events: Health Careers Forum** – interactive workshop with health workers
- **Hands On Career Expo** – interactive trade expo
- **Camp Dookie** – a 3-day agricultural camp (2015 only)
- **Mock Job Interviews** (2015 and 2016 only)
- **Structured Workplace Learning**

As with other LLENs, these activities and events focus on employment opportunities and personal development among young people. The NE Tracks LLEN also appears to prioritise activities that are particularly relevant to the local community. For example, the two Career Events activities specifically showcase agricultural and health sector careers, both of which are highly-represented industries in the LGAs. The programming also demonstrates an awareness of the current social environment—with efforts to address cyber bullying, promote STEM events, and highlight mental health issues increasingly common in rural communities.

Assessment

According to the 2016-19 Strategic Plan, the NE Tracks LLEN intends to introduce a Results Based Accountability framework involving a scorecard of 6 key indicators. However, the status of this framework and/or any subsequent results are not referenced in the 2017 annual report or on the organisation's website. The annual reports are also inconsistent in terms of providing participation data for specific activities and programs and do not provide any data breakdown by gender or demographic. The NE Tracks LLEN does not specify any other framework for self-evaluation or reference any method for tracking short-term or long-term impacts beyond the immediate outcomes of attendance or participation figures.

4.3 Banyule Nillumbik LLEN

The Banyule Nillumbik LLEN encompasses Banyule City and Nillumbik Shire. The BNLLLEN outlines its organisational values as follows:

- 1) 'Broker partnerships to develop a range of innovative opportunities and pathways
- 2) Respect the right of young people to pursue their own goals and develop their capacity to do this
- 3) Engage with and empower all young people to focus on their needs and connect with their communities
- 4) Support and value diversity
- 5) Effective transparent, accountable and responsible processes' (*Annual Report 2017*, p. 3)

In 2017, the BNLLLEN's annual revenue was listed as \$745,737.79. Expenditure for 2017 totaled \$685,904.07, for a budget surplus of \$59,833.72. Annual reports are available online for 2017 only.

Located in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, both Banyule City and Nillumbik Shire have less diverse populations than more urban LGAs, such as those included in the Inner Northern LLEN. Individuals of Australian, English, and Irish ancestry constitute the vast majority of the population (73.8% in Banyule City, 90% in Nillumbik Shire), but the region also has large communities of residents with Italian, Scottish, Chinese, Greek, German, Indian, and/or Dutch heritage. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Banyule City and Nillumbik Shire is between 0.6% and 0.4% of the total population, respectively, or 938 individuals.

Youth unemployment rates for the two LGAs are close to the 12% in Victoria overall with 14.2% unemployment in Banyule City and 11.5% in Nillumbik Shire.

4.3.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

According to the BNLLLEN's 2017 annual report, the Committee of Management is currently comprised of 12 members: 4 women and 8 men. Of these, three represent schools (category 1), one represents TAFE / Universities (category 2), two represent other training or

educational organisations (category 4), two represent local government (category 7), two represent other community agencies (category 8) one represents the larger community (category 10), and one is a co-opted member (category 11). Notable vacancies on the board include representatives from trade unions (category 5), employers (category 6) and Koorie organisations (category 9). There is no framework for community members to contact the CoM directly.

Membership and Partners

The BNLLLEN does not specify number of members or their designated categories on its website or in its annual report. The BNLLLEN does cite a number of active partners, including Austin Health, E-Focus, Melbourne Polytechnic, Apps Matter, Banyule Youth Services, Banyule City Council, and Nillumbik Shire Council.

Information Dissemination

In addition to its website, the Banyule Nillumbik LLEN maintains a Facebook page. It does not maintain a Twitter or Instagram account. According to its 2017 annual report, the BNLLLEN disseminates a significant amount of its information by means of posters and postcards. The organisation benefits from having its office located at Melbourne Polytechnic, which provides an opportunity to access young people on campus.

Accessibility

In 2008, the BNLLLEN formed the Banyule and Nillumbik School Disability Network, which provides support to schools in assisting students with disabilities. Key representatives from stakeholder schools meets four times per year as part of this network. The network also hosts regional forums for students, parents, and school staff; provides general information about the Disability Employment Service, and supported disability-focused professional development in schools in 2011. The BNLLLEN's annual report and website do not cite any further activities specifically directed at young people with disabilities or disability-supportive employment opportunities.

4.3.2 Overview of Programs

In 2017, the BNLLLEN facilitated a number of networks and groups to build capacity of schools and careers professionals, as well as provide administrative support. These include the Banyule Nillumbik Careers Group, the Northern VCAL Coordinators Network, and the Northern SBAT Network Partnership. Each network or group meets multiple times per year in an effort to provide further professional development and strategic support for stakeholder schools and professionals. The BNLLLEN also supports a number of youth-directed activities, including:

- **L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program**
- **SBAT Sample Sessions** – 15 industry sessions attended by students
- **Stories from My Life** – partnership with an aged care facility, involving weekly meetings with students and residents
- **Work Readiness Sessions** – sessions offered to senior secondary students
- **Structured Workplace Learning**

With the exception of the L2P program with its supervised driving hours, the majority of these programs involve student placements or introductions to potential occupations. The SBAT Sample Sessions, for example, provided 100 students with the opportunity to attend one of the 15 industry sessions. Similarly, 300 students from 12 schools attended work readiness sessions to prepare for employment. As other LLENs in the cohort, the BNLLLEN has continued the SWL program, with 210 new SWL and SBAT opportunities sourced in 2017.

Assessment

The BNLLLEN does not specify any current framework for self-evaluation on its website or in its annual reports. The organisation also provides inconsistent data in terms of participation, noting the number of participants for some but not all of its activities and not breaking down data by gender or demographic. The BNLLLEN does not reference any method for tracking short-term or long-term impacts of its programs beyond the immediate outcomes of attendance or participation figures.

4.4 Hume Whittlesea LLEN

The Hume Whittlesea LLEN encompasses Hume City and Whittlesea City. Unlike other LLENs, HWLLEN maintains two joint executive officers, each of whom works solely in either Hume or Whittlesea.

As outlined in its 2017 annual report, the strategic objectives of the HWLLEN are:

- 'Supporting young people in their career and pathway development;
- Creating and strengthening connections between young people, education providers, industry partners, community agencies and Governments;
- Raising young people's aspirations and broadening their scope of opportunities and choices' (*HWLLEN Annual Report 2017*)

In 2017, the HWLLEN's annual revenue was listed as \$724,373. Expenditure for 2017 totaled \$633,742, for a budget surplus of \$90,631. Annual reports are available online from 2012.

Located within 20 km of the Melbourne CBD, both Hume City and Whittlesea City are noted for their cultural diversity. According both city council websites, two out of five residents in Hume City and Whittlesea City speak a language other than English at home (hume.vic.gov.au; whittlesea.vic.gov.au). Out of the combined total population, approximately 40% of residents identify as either Australian or English in ancestry. Other highly-represented ancestries in Whittlesea City include Italian, Indian, Macedonia, Greek, Irish, Chinese, Scottish, and Lebanese. In Hume, significant percentages of the population also identify as Turkish, Assyrian/Chaldean, and Iraqi. Approximately 35% of the combined total population was born overseas. Both Hume City and Whittlesea City also have a high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander compared to wider Melbourne: 0.7% of the total population in Hume and 0.8% of the total population in Whittlesea.

Youth unemployment rates for the two LGAs are significantly higher than the state's 12%, with 18.3% unemployment in Hume City and 16.4% in Whittlesea City.

4.4.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

According to the HWLLEN's 2017 annual report, the Committee of Management is comprised of 13 members: 8 women and 7 men. Of these, one represents TAFE / Universities (category 2), two represent ACE (category 3), one represents other training or educational organisations (category 4), one represents trade unions (category 5), one represents employers (category 6), two represent local government (category 7), two represent other community agencies (category 8), and two represent the larger community (category 10). Notable vacancies on the board include representatives from schools (category 1) and Koorie organisations (category 9). There is no framework for community members to contact the CoM directly.

Membership and Partners

The HWLLEN cites 80 members in its 2017 annual report, including representatives from 25 schools, 3 TAFE institutes or universities with TAFE sectors, 4 adult community education organisations, and 14 education and training organisations. The HWLLEN also cites 8 representatives of employers or employer organisations, 2 members from local government, 7 from other government or community agencies, and 17 members of the larger community. Despite the high representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders among the larger population, none of the HWLLEN members represent the Koorie community.

The HWLLEN does not list any active partners in its 2017 annual report but references others in earlier reports, including Hume City Council, Sunbury Gisborne Careers Group, the Sunbury Business Association, and Communities for Children.

Information Dissemination

The HWLLEN provides a number of resources on its website, including a video resource for parents of children leaving school, a number of parent 'tip sheets,' and one School Leavers Guides specific to both Hume and Whittlesea. In addition, HWLLEN maintains a Facebook page and Twitter account and is fairly active on both platforms. While the Hume office is located off-site, the Whittlesea office is located at Melbourne Polytechnic, which provides an opportunity to access young people on campus.

Accessibility

The HWLLEN does not specify any particular activities or networks specifically directed at young people with disabilities in its annual reports. The organisation also does not appear to actively promote disability-supportive employment opportunities.

4.4.2 Overview of Programs

Citing its organisational role as that of an 'independent broker,' the HWLLEN facilitates a number of networks and groups across the two LGAs, including Hume Youth Commitment

(HYC), Tangible Connections Network, HYC Community Team, Whittlesea Youth Commitment (WYC), WYC COM, and WYC Community Team (*HWLLEN 2017 Annual Report*, p. 3). Combined, these groups comprise a membership of 1,000 individuals from various community stakeholders. The HWLLEN also supports a number of youth-directed activities, including:

- **L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program**
- **Careers Expos and Trade Taster events**
- **RIJI – Real Industry Job Interviews**
- **YEOF – Youth Employment Opportunities Fair**
- **Sunbury Gisborne Career & Jobs Expo (2015 only)**
- **Making Choices Breakfast** – a 2-day event on employment opportunities
- **Structured Workplace Learning**

With the exception of the L2P program with its supervised driving hours, the majority of these programs do not involve community mentorship but focus on promoting student placements or introducing young people to potential career paths through general career expos or trade events. The Real Industry Job Interviews had a high participation rate of 1,200 students over the course of the program. Smaller youth cohorts attended other employment events, including 330 students involved in the Youth Employment Opportunities Fair and 145 students at the Making Choices Breakfast. As other LLENs in the cohort, the HWLLEN has an active contract for the SWL program and sourced 133 SWL opportunities in 2017.

Assessment

The HWLLEN does not specify any current framework for self-evaluation on its website or in its annual reports. Similarly, the HWLLEN does not reference any method for tracking short-term or long-term impacts of its programs beyond the immediate outcomes of attendance or participation figures. Instead, the 2017 annual report references statistics from the 2016 census which show Year 12 completions increasing from 40% in 2008 to 72.7% in 2016 for 20-24 years. However, the report does not provide any evidence to support a correlation between the HWLLEN's activities and this percentage increase. The 2016 annual report references state-wide LLEN data collected as part of the Whalesong Project, but no additional details were provided on the HWLLEN website and no further information could be found online.

4.5 Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN

The Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN covers Shires in the west of the state and its office is based in Horsham. The LLEN identifies the creation of partnerships within the community between industry and education facilities as a primary principle of its operations. Its main focus is to assist young people to remain in school until the completion of year 12 or the equivalent in a structured vocational education setting.

In 2017 the LLENs income was listed as \$460,837 and expenditure as \$486,283, for a budget deficit of \$25,446.

In 2014 the Indigenous population of the Wimmera region was recorded as 1.6% of the broader community, approximately double that of the state of Victoria.

4.5.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

The 2016-2017 annual report lists 14 Committee members of which eight are women. Of these, two represent schools (category 1), one represents TAFE / Universities (category 2), two represent local government (category 7), one represents the Koorie organisations (category 9) and three are community members (category 10).

Membership and Partners

The Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN has 115 members listed on its website and is a member of 15 local community organisations with these connections enhancing the LLENs capacity to identify educational and support services for young people. The full list of members is included in the annual report.

Information Dissemination

The website provides a comprehensive list of services available for young people online, and they maintain an active Twitter and Facebook presence.

Accessibility

The LLEN provides comprehensive data analysis of their partner schools and organisations. However, it is unclear how they engage all young people regardless of ability is unclear. The website refers people to Woodbine disability services.

4.5.2 Overview of Programs

The LLEN has a particular focus on developing literacy skills. The **Let's Read Wimmera** program was a finalist in the Department of Education Early Years Awards. This program supports and encourages parents and families to read to children from birth. **Reading Buddies** and **Pop-Up Libraries** also provide invaluable services to the region.

The LLEN has had great success initiating **Community Action Networks (CAN)** across the region. There are seven networks including a specific Indigenous network with each network meeting once per term in their specific region. Network meetings are attended by community members and organisations interested in how young people can connect with each other and services. The networks provide the opportunity for people to develop linkages with other people and services they may not ordinarily come into contact with.

The **MATES Mentoring Program** continues to be successful in linking young people with others in the community. Established in 2010, mentors meet with mentees for one hour per fortnight throughout the year. Despite the time commitment the program has increased in popularity and is a staple of the LLENs activities.

Assessment

The LLEN provides a comprehensive data set detailing who they have engaged with in the community through programs such as MATES mentoring, how many books have been distributed throughout the region as part of the **Let's Read** program and have assessed the **CAN**. This data is not broken down by age, gender, or Indigenous status nor does the report identify how many young people with a disability are accessing services.

4.6 Geelong LLEN

The Geelong Region LLEN includes the shires of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Queenscliff, Otway Shire and Golden Plains (Southern) and forms part of the G21 regional alliance⁴.

The GRLLLEN is committed to improving employment and life outcomes for young people, 10-25 years old, by increasing opportunities for their participation, attainment and successful transitions in education, and training or employment. The GRLLLEN also strives to engage the community through cooperative approaches to community renewal and coordination of service delivery and encouraging shared responsibility and ownership for post-compulsory education and training with and for 15-19 years.

With the downsizing of traditional manufacturing jobs and increasing roles available in public services and social assistance the GRLLLEN has spent considerable time forging new pathways for school leavers in emerging industries. One recent initiative is the GROW program, which has a stronger focus on service delivery than the traditional relationship and brokering role of the LLEN. While the GRLLLEN interact with this program, given the shared interests in youth pathways to employment, there is risk of overlap and thus implications for funding and the role of the LLEN, particularly given the State Government funding allocation to Grow.

The GRLLLEN lists its 2017 revenue listed as \$772,813 and expenditure as \$794,777, for a budget deficit of \$21,964. Annual reports are available from 2012.

In 2016, 3,065 residents identified as Indigenous in the G21 area, about 1% of the total population. The three highest ethnicities are English 39.1%, Australia 37.1% and Irish 13.5%.

Youth unemployment for 15-24 years is 12.8% of the total population of the G21 region. This is consistent with other regional areas in Victoria. Of this number the highest proportion of unemployed youth are in the City of Greater Geelong: 13.5%.

4.6.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

The 2016-2017 annual report lists 11 Committee members of which two are women. Of these, two represent schools (category 1), two represent TAFE / Universities (category 2), one represents trade unions (category 5), one represents employers (category 6), and two represent the larger community (category 10).

⁴ http://www.g21.com.au/sites/default/files/resources/141029_region_profile_geelong_web.pdf

Membership and Partners

Membership is open to people in the region who have an interest in the education and employment opportunities for young people. However, specific members are not noted. The GRLLLEN has identified young people are at risk of homelessness, unemployment and crime and have sought out community and professional groups to come together and act cooperatively to reduce risk to young people. These include the police, the Rotary Club and a variety of community service organisations who are providing employment, education and health services.

Information Dissemination

The GRLLLEN uses a variety of on-line services to disseminate information including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Accessibility

Data gathered by the GRLLLEN indicate that in the 2016-2017 period, 18 young people commenced an apprenticeship and 89% were still in the apprenticeship after one year. Identifying young people with disability as a particular focus, the GRLLLEN has contributed substantial resources to developing the capacity for young people with a disability to access social structures, skills and employment opportunities.

The **Ticket to Work** program, an initiative funded by the National Disability Services, prepares young people with a disability for work. Collaborating with Gordon TAFE, schools and Careers Coordinators and PSD (Program for Students with Disability) Coordinators young people have been supported in transitioning to employment.

This program works in tandem with **Passport 2 Employment** program where young people work to develop their communication and presentation skills over the course of seven weeks. It is unclear from the data if the type of disability impacts capacity to access services.

4.6.2 Overview of Programs

In the preceding 10 years in the Geelong region manufacturing has declined by 30% and the following industries have grown:

- Health care and social assistance, 54%
- Financial and insurance services 45%
- Arts and recreation, 43%
- Professional, technical and scientific services, 40%
- Education and training, 37%
- Construction 34%
- Accommodation and food, 34%
- Public administration and safety, 33%

These growth industries present opportunities for the GRLLLEN to target skills and employment programs. One way of doing this has been by concentrating on a number of projects that bring together various cultural and marginalised groups.

The **At Risk Youth** project was developed in concert with local police who had identified gaps in services for young people. This project has developed connections between service groups, community groups and state government in order to work to reduce crime and homelessness and encourage young people to remain in school.

The **Growing the Health & Community Services Workforce Program** represents an opportunity for the GRLLLEN to connect young people with the largest growing labour market in the area. The project commenced in 2016 and concentrates on developing skills for the sector. Available data indicates that participants include people living with disability, people from low SES backgrounds and recent immigrants (including refugees).

In 2017, a DHHS funded programme for at-risk Aboriginal youth, **The Storyteller** game, was implemented. Through a board game, this project engages Aboriginal youth in out of home care developing connections within community. The game is also delivered to service workers so they can develop cultural awareness of factors impacting Aboriginal young people.

The Geelong Project seeks to standardise data collection methods across the region so that at-risk young people can be identified and encouraged to remain in educational settings. Available data indicates that early school leaving has reduced by 20% since its inception.

Assessment

Data on how many young people have entered and remained in the workforce, types of employment engagements and the industries they have entered is not available on the website or in the annual report.

4.7 Baw Baw LLEN

The Baw Baw LLEN covers the Shire of Baw Baw and Latrobe City. The LLEN emphasises building community capacity through collaborative partnerships to support vulnerable young people in its regions. Schools, local businesses, local industry, community organisations and government departments come together to support young people complete their schooling and attain skills to assist their transition into work.

The LLEN lists its 2017 revenue listed as \$547,293 and expenditure as \$582,978, for an budget deficit of \$35,685. Annual reports are available from 2015.

The cultural demographic of the Baw Baw shire identifies as 93% Non-Indigenous, 0.92% Aboriginal, 0.03% Torres Strait Islander and 0.03% identify as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In Latrobe City 90.6% of the population identify as Non-Indigenous, 1.5% Aboriginal, 0.06% Torres Strait Islander and 0.05% identify as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The Baw Baw LLEN identifies unemployment at 21.5% for young people between 15 and 19 years and 12% for those between 20 and 24 years.

4.7.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

In the 2016-2017 there were 18 Committee positions with three vacancies. Of the 15 sitting Committee members six were women and nine men. Of these three represent schools (category 1), one represents TAFE / Universities (category 2), one represents trade unions (category 5), one represents employers (category 6), two represent local government (category 7), one represents a Koorie organisation (category 9) and four represent the larger community (category 10). Contacts for the LLEN are recorded in the annual report but it is unclear if there is a specific communication strategy in place for the broader Baw Baw/Latrobe City to easily access CoM members directly.

Membership and Partners

The LLEN partners with a number of local organisations including Federation University, the Victorian Energy Education and Training (VEET) program, Ausnet Services and are supported by local businesses such as Bank Australia and Equisuper. Other enterprises assist in facilitating visits to their premises including Coles and McDonalds.

Information Dissemination

The Baw Baw LLEN primarily uses its website and community connections to raise awareness of their activities.

Accessibility

The Passport 2 Employment (P2E) program is specifically targeted to reach students with a disability. This initiative supports young people transitioning to employment. Activities include findings ways to access employment opportunities and developing communication and presentation skills. Other programs reviewed in the annual report such as visits to power stations, do not specifically articulate how people living with disability would access available opportunities.

4.7.2 Overview of Programs

Through their partnership approach the LLEN has identified a number of key areas where skills gaps exist. Programs designed to bridge these gaps to equip young people for future employment include:

- **Passport To Employment**
- **Victorian Energy Education & Training Program**
- **Structured Workplace Learning**
- **Vocational Education & Training in Schools**

The **Structured Workplace Learning** program provides direct access for young people to work in established businesses or organisations. The most recent annual report identifies

the following organisations have provided support; TW Power Services, Ausnet Services, Latrobe City, Baw Baw Shire and AGL Loy Yang Power.

The LLEN website also promotes these opportunities for young people. Neither the annual report nor data available on the website indicates how many students have gained employment.

The LLEN has established long term programs targeting specific groups of young people. The **Inspiring Young Women** program which brings together 50 women in the community and 50 young women in year 10 has been running for 12 years. These events enable women in the community to share their experiences with younger women.

The **Inspiring Young People** also brings community members together with younger community members to share experiences of work.

The **STEM Sisters** program was launched in October 2017 with the theme “**IF YOU CAN’T SEE IT, YOU CAN’T BE IT**”. Young women attending the session were able to engage directly with guest speakers through a Q and A session and apply some of their new found knowledge in hands on activities. Two associated programs were also delivered to students from years 9 and 10, including an Eco link tour discussing opportunities in the environmental sector and a ‘Girls Night Out’ evening was hosted by the Moe library for Science week. Participants heard from women in the military performing engineering and science based work as well as other women working in the sector.

In addition, a number of specific opportunities to access workplaces have been facilitated by the LLEN including:

- **Federation University Experience Days**
- **Augmented Reality**
- **Civil Construction Taster Program**
- **JobSkills Expo**
- **GippsWebs for Business**

Assessment

Data on how many young people have entered and remained in the workforce, types of employment engagements and the industries they have entered is not available on the website or in the annual report.

4.8 South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN

The South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN is one of three LLENs in the eastern part of the state with the others being Baw Baw Latrobe and Gippsland East. The purpose of the LLEN is to develop partnerships between business and community within their region to identify and develop solutions for young people who may be at risk of disengaging with their education.

In 2017 the LLENs income was listed as \$487,546 and expenditure as \$481,191.

4.8.1 Community Engagement

Committee of Management

The current Committee consists of eleven members, six men and five women. Of these, there is no representative for Koorie organisations.

Membership and Partners

There are eight members listed on the website, six women and two men. Both men represent the school sector. The remaining members represent the community in roles including parent and community service providers.

Information Dissemination

The LLEN has an active Facebook page and website that provide updates on programs being undertaken, connections within the community and job opportunities for young people. The annual report notes that the biggest challenge for the LLEN is encouraging young people to take advantage of available opportunities from the LLEN. Active web-based information portals are part of the LLENs approach to bridging this gap.

Accessibility

The LLEN has a clear commitment to STEM Sisters and introducing young people of all genders to a variety of work opportunities. Apprenticeships available in the area are in male-dominated workplaces and the two successful beginning apprentices in the 2017 annual report have gone to young men.

4.8.2 Overview of Programs

In 2017 the **Passport 2 Employment** program specifically engaged young people with disability. Reaching 10 students in two schools the program enabled the students to access workplaces, develop their interviewing and communication skills and meet with other students in the community to exchange experiences in dressing and preparing for job interviews. Similarly, the **Inspiring Young People** event enabled students to hear from other community members about barriers and successes they had experienced in life and how they overcame adversity.

The LLEN also ran a number of **professional development days for teachers** in the area developing their knowledge of what technologies are available to assist in their curriculum development and also how work opportunities are changing for young people.

The **Trade Training Open Day** run in 2017 provided an opportunity for the LLEN to bring together students from around the region. Distance between schools and community centres can isolate young people. Bridging this gap through combining opportunities to meet other people in structured learning environment has been identified by the LLEN as a key measure in achieving their goals. The day enabled young people to learn about developing industries in the area: construction, transport, agriculture, education and training, health,

tourism and professional services, and what training opportunities are available for them in these emerging industries.

The **STEM Sisters** program developed by the Baw Baw LLEN is a successful example of partnerships across the LLEN program. Working with Baw Baw the South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN facilitated the attendance of young women at a day of learning about STEM opportunities are available and listening to other women convey their experiences of being STEM workers.

The **Engineers Without Borders (EWB)** program enabled students to develop their own engineering ideas over a two-day workshop. The program developed student's collaborative decision making and problem solving skills. In a community where a third of residents have completed tertiary education this opportunity provided students with knowledge of available tertiary education options open to them.

Assessment

In addition to the above highlighted programs, the LLEN has provided students with opportunities to participate in a number of work ready programs including OH&S inductions, workplace visits where they can their knowledge to real life projects such as the chemistry program at the Lattice Energy's Lang Lang gas plant. Data collection on impact can be enhanced by noting the gender, ethnicity, age and ongoing engagement rates of participating students.

5 Analysis

Four features of the LLENs are noteworthy:

- Organisation
- Developing and delivering programs
- Evaluation
- Cross-LLENs engagement

5.1 Organisation

- **The LLEN cohort has inconsistent resource allocation.**

The LLEN cohort comprises a range of budgets. Some LLENs with small budgets are innovative in their programming activities. Some LLENs with larger budgets seem to have less impactful strategies, and it is not always clear where funds are going. This discrepancy may stem from differing LLEN philosophies: while some LLENs operate with a particular focus on direct youth engagement, others prioritise stakeholder partnerships and community networks. Both strategies lead to positive impacts in the community, but outcomes from the latter are less immediately evident. The federal budget cut in 2014/15, in part addressed by the state government providing additional funds, has clearly constrained LLENs in their ability to provide comprehensive programs. Despite these cuts, many LLENs have adopted innovative practices to continue to connect young people within their spheres of influence.

- **The LLEN cohort has inconsistent gender representation on its leadership committees.**

Seventy-seven per cent of the 26 LLENs have Committees of Management with imbalanced gender representation. It is beyond the scope of this review to track the programming strategies of LLEN in terms of gender representation, but it is not implausible to suggest that imbalanced gender representation in leadership may lead to a similar imbalance in programming representation for certain groups of young people. Given the prevalence of gender stereotypes in certain occupations, particularly in more rural areas, the research team suggests that this imbalance may need to be addressed.

- **The LLEN cohort has inconsistent cultural representation on its leadership committees.**

Sixty per cent of the LLEN Committees of Management do not have a designated Koorie organisation representative. No additional demographic information is available for other board members. However, based on a cursory review of current membership, it is concerning that CoMs do not appear to reflect the cultural diversity of their designated LGAs.

Both of these factors may have a negative impact on programming strategies specifically targeted to Indigenous and CALD young people.

5.2 Developing and Delivering Programs

- **The activities at some LLENs are more culturally relevant than others.**

A number of LLENs have programming strategies that consider larger cultural trends and the potential impacts on the young people in their communities. For example, ten LLENs offered STEM-focused activities in 2017, such as STEM career expos, gaming industry workshops, and training in computer programming. Meanwhile, the remaining 16 LLENs offered no similar events.

- **The activities at some LLENs are clearly targeted to engage with specific groups.**

A number of LLENs feature events that are designed to engage with groups of young people that may be particularly vulnerable to leaving education or employment. This includes young women, Indigenous youths, and immigrant or CALD populations. Without an evaluation framework in place, it is impossible to determine whether these activities have a more significant impact than programs designed for a general population. However, these activities demonstrate an awareness of the local community and specific areas of concern, which is commendable.

- **Some LLENs are better at digital engagement than others.**

Some of the LLENs clearly prioritise digital and social media engagement as a way of connecting with their youth populations. The online components of Inner Northern LLEN's Jobs for Youth Campaign are an example of best practice with measurable outcomes in terms of reach and engagement. Overall, the full LLEN cohort is inconsistent in how they leverage the Internet, both in terms of directed social media strategies and in terms of using online resources in lieu of outdated materials.

5.3 Evaluation

- **The LLEN cohort does not use a consistent evaluation framework for measuring program efficacy.**

There is no evidence of a consistent method for evaluating the success or failure of any given activities across the LLEN cohort. Instead evaluation varies widely by individual LLEN. Participation statistics are not forthcoming for every activity; when they are provided, statistics are not broken down by gender, cultural demographic, or any other factor that might support a critical analysis of the program. This makes it difficult to track actual outcomes from program to program or to compare findings across LLENs.

- **Impact is typically measured in terms of immediate outcomes. There is no framework for measuring long-term impact or impacts by targeted groups.**

When LLENs do assess their activities, impact is most often measured in terms of immediate outcomes, such as event attendance. As mentioned above, these immediate outcomes are rarely broken down by additional factors. In addition, there appears to be no structural framework for measuring long-term impacts related to specific programs. Without this extended data, it is impossible to assess the actual impact of LLEN activities or identify areas that need to be reevaluated.

5.4 Cross-LLENs engagement

- **Individual LLENs have uneven involvement with other LLENs.**

There are programming overlaps across the LLEN cohort, as well as some best practice examples of collaboration between neighboring LLENs (e.g., the Gippsland LLENs and STEM Sisters.) There is little evidence of strategic collaboration across the *full* LLEN cohort, such as a platform for cohort discussion, sharing successes and failures, or opportunities to combine resources and strategies. Consider Capital City's 'School Leavers Guide' website (zoomin.org.au), which could easily be used by the full LLEN cohort with the addition of designated LLEN-specific pages. While each LLEN must prioritise the needs of its local community, this lack of cohort-wide communication represents a significant missed opportunity.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

The LLENs occupy a critical place in relation to the development and promotion of pathways between school and work, as well as in facilitating and promoting engagement between schooling and work.

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 Future Skills and Capabilities

While the most visible aspect of the LLENs is the development of networks with training providers and potential sources of employment for their region's youth, the analysis of employment and economic data and forecasts has been a part of their remit since their inception in the early 2000s. For example, the Geelong Region LLEN provides scans of the regional education, training and employment environment, as well labour market research as part of their services (<http://www.grllen.com.au/research/research-1>). Of note, their website indicates an awareness of the economic transitions at play in the region. This underwrites the importance of the LLENs having the capacities to understand and develop programs informed by the future skill and capability requirements within their regions.

Many LLENs have the capacity to engage with local industry to provide introductions to employment opportunities for students within their communities. The SBAT program connects secondary students to apprenticeship programs is available at all LLENs, who portals for students to access opportunities (See <http://www.bmlen.com.au/applied-learning/sbat-promotion/> for example). Some LLENs support the SBAT program with expos and events, such as the 15 industry SBAT Sample Sessions run by the Banyule Nillumbik LLEN and the SBAT on Tap sessions run by the Inner Northern LLEN. The outcome of the SBAT program, as well as SWL, is to develop students understanding of the pathways to tangible employment opportunities within their communities. By collaborating with industry and providing lines of communication to students regarding training requirements point students towards the workforce skills and capabilities required in their region.

There are examples of the LLENs instituting programs to meet projected employment needs. The promotion of STEM opportunities indicates an alignment of LLEN activity with expected future capability requirements. The NE Tracks LLEN has a Digital Technology Advisory Committee, which is involved in the regional STEM Expo, and the various STEM programs for women address the skills shortage in this area, and particularly the low levels of female participation (Crook 2018). Other examples such as Geelong's Growing the Health & Community Services Workforce Program provide pathways to the growing employment in the health sector is also notable, particularly given that this field has been noted as an area of opportunity in the North West Tasmania and Big Rivers case studies and also that it has closely defined education and training requirements for its workforce.

The importance of a future focus for the LLENs program is illuminated by the earlier program developed by the Hume Whittlesea LLEN, whereby the Pole Position program had been successful in providing work and re-engagement through connections with the automotive industry. Holden and Ford were partners in the program but have since closed with the

demise of the Australian car manufacturing industry in 2016. While these closures have impacted on the labour markets and households, the closures were not unexpected and indicates the need for the LLENs to consider the future of their region's labour market in establishing programs. It is of note that in 2017, the Hume Whittlesea LLEN reported high levels of engagement with the Structured Workplace Learning program, which provides connections to opportunities across all industries. This may reflect the transition of the region's economy to a wider range of smaller employers, as well as a mitigation of the risks associated with a single-industry focus.

6.1.2 Education and training pathways

The promotion of pathways for young people to employment is a central purpose of the LLEN network. Pathways are promoted through a range of activities and events that expose community members in need of support to training and development opportunities, and ultimately employment.

Within the current suite of prevalent programs operated by the LLENS, there is a series that could be described as preparatory, in that they provide generic employment skills, including:

- L2P learner driver program
- Passport 2 Employment
- Real Industry Job Interviews
- School Leavers Guide
- Inspiring Young People
- On Track Connect

These programs can be seen as facilitating pathways to employment for students from backgrounds that do not provide these fundamental employment requirements, which is an issue evident in the studies of North West Tasmania and the Big Rivers region in the Northern Territory also included in this report. Also of note is that LLENs are engaging with children in their primary years, including the Joining the Dots program at the Inner Northern LLEN and the early years reading program Let's Read Wimmera. In these ways the LLENs are providing an important enabling service for regional youth and developing essential workplace skills and aspirations from an early age through to the point of exit from the secondary education system.

Similarly, prominent programs connect sections of the community to types of employment that traditionally they have not considered, such as the efforts to break down gender stereotypes in the 100 Years of Women in Policing, STEM Sisters and the Girls in STEM programs. The AfroX is another important pathway enabling program addressing specific cohorts, developing a sense of opportunity and ambition within the African community through role models.

The LLENs have also developed programs that promote opportunities and pathways in general, providing young people with a source of information on training, employment and workplace experiences. The Career Horizons program operated by the Goldfield LLEN is a particularly relevant example of this role, as a one-stop portal in the vein of a Seek employment web-site, in provides information on experiences and placements available in the region, including tertiary education linked to work places. Within the metropolitan area,

the Inner Northern LLEN also provides links to jobs, training opportunities and events through its Jobs For Youths portals. Along with the use of websites and social media programs to connect with their constituents, the success of these programs may reflect the 'digital native' target markets for the programs. Further, some of the youths intended for these programs may have difficulty in accessing programs, which may be a consideration for promoting pathways in some of the more expansive regional LLEN areas. Other LLENs run more traditional job expo programs, such as the Hands on Career Expo run by the NE Tracks LLEN. This event indicates the success of the LLEN in building relationships, as 34 trade exhibitors attended in 2017, and 210 businesses and community providers took up opportunities to network.

6.1.3 Employer, training provider and job seeker relationships

Developing relationships between employers, training providers and job seekers continues to be a central purpose of the LLENs. From the early years of the LLENs, programs were developed to address employment opportunities within their jurisdictions based on strong connections to industry, illustrated by the Hume Whittlesea LLEN automotive focused Poll Position program and the Wyn Bay Transport, Distribution and Logistics program. The snapshot of eight representative LLENs section reports that the Boards of Management and Membership and Partners include representatives from the public and private sector, training organisations, and from community groups, indicate that the LLENs are seen as a worthwhile contributor to regional employment and training. Key to the success is the ability of LLENs to develop relationships involving employers, training providers and job seekers across a region.

The LLENs frequently act as brokers in the school to work space. The SBAT and SWL programs are an example of the LLENs capacity to act as brokers between schools and industry to meet the needs of students. The Gateway LLEN provides a case whereby a local student was placed in an SBAT plumbing program following an SWL placement, which was brokered by the LLEN as the employer had not participated in the program before⁵.

The key point is that the relationships with employers and training providers are critical to the promotion of the employment pathways fostered by LLENs. This engagement is central to the job expos, mentoring and role modelling programs, and the connection to community services providers that come together to support regional youth, particularly those at risk of disengagement. Events such as the Hands on Career Expo and the workplace experiences made available through the Goldfields LLEN Passions and Pathways program indicate that the LLENs have developed networks and relationships to support their key activities.

6.1.4 Innovative Interventions

The introduction of the LLENs program in Victoria was and remains innovative, with the Kirby Review of 2000 providing the impetus for other states and the Commonwealth to develop similar place-based partnerships to provide pathways through training to employment. The place-based nature of the LLENs is an innovative element of the program, providing an ear-to-the-ground role in the development and implementation of state-wide education policy (Department of Education 2007). Therefore, in effect the LLENs were established to be engaged and inclusive rather than as distributed implementers of pre-

⁵ <http://www.gatewayllen.com.au/ns/swl/swl-case-study-pathway-to-sbat/>

established policies and programs. They were instituted to respond to the needs of their respective communities.

This embeddedness within regions provides the basis for active engagement that reflects, responds to local issues and opportunities and initiates pathway solutions. This form of local engagement means that relationships can be developed and sustained with key members of the community; the realization of these possibilities may be challenging, resting on capabilities and resources that may be limited. Programs such as the Geelong Regional LLENs At Risk Youth program, developed with the local police, has worked on addressing gaps in the region's services in order to increase participation and reduce crime in the region. These types of targeted interventions built on local knowledge and coordinated responses and are made easier and possible through a local presence.

Innovations within the LLEN network also reflect the political economy of skills in that they recognize the importance of developing the aspirations of their participants as an integral step in facilitating participation in training and employment. In this regard, the widespread use of role model and mentoring programs are noteworthy innovations. The Inspiring Young People program provided by the South Gippsland Bass Coast and Baw Baw LLENs has a particular focus on providing examples of how people had overcome adversity. The successful MATES Mentoring program in the Wimmera is another example of how mentoring programs can be effective within regional communities.

6.2 Recommendations

This project has provided an introduction to the innovative LLENs network, in place in Victoria since the early 2000s. The structure and purposes of the network were, and continue to be innovative in their regional nature, whereby the programs, services and communication channels are designed to meet the needs of the community and local industry. That the networks continue to operate after almost two decades is a testament to their efficacy and ability to develop relationships with government, industry, training providers and most importantly the youth that are the central focus of their activities.

Based on the review of activities outlines in this report, the following recommendations are made:

First, there is a need to understand how similar organisations can be instituted in other regions where the focus on developing youth pathways through building relationships with industry and training providers may prove beneficial. The LLENs provide a template for negotiating the political economy of skills, including building aspiration through communicating the connections between training, education and employment. The question is how can such networks be promoted and replicated in sustainable and secure ways. It would appear that overarching State Government support is critical and the question is how to ensure that initiative and engagement remains local and place-based. Consideration of the variation in budgets, populations and area covered is important in developing sustainable models for implementation, as well as the importance of drawing on a broadly representative cross-section of the community in governance bodies.

Second, the LLENs illustrate the importance of being local in approaches to and innovations in regional skills and employment. These networks are place-based and they display the strengths and possibilities of such engagement. At the core of the LLENs innovation is that they are responding to the specific conditions within their community and labour markets. While there are programs that have been applied by all LLENs, such as SWL and SBAT, others directly respond to local conditions and issues, presenting innovative approaches to ameliorate engagement and unemployment issues.

Third, there is a greater need for program review. While the LLENs annual reports provide some insight into program uptake and outcomes, there is lack of formal review to determine what works in developing successful pathways to employment. Given the extended period of time that LLENs have been in operation and the scant research interest in recent years, a detailed qualitative and quantitative investigation into key programs would provide useful material for the development of youth-focused employment programs in other regions. Of note also is how successful LLEN programs are at engaging with specific community groups, and what are the factors that determine program uptake and outcomes. The data and findings from program review should also encourage greater collaboration and engagement between LLENs, sharing of experiences and program materials and developing joint activity.

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