

The data

- Each year in the Grampians Region over 250 young people (15—19 years) leave school prior to completing Year 12 or its equivalent, and do not proceed to further education and training or employment with structured training.

The challenge

- To decrease the numbers of young people leaving any education and training provider without successfully completing Year 12 (VCE or VCAL Intermediate or Senior) or Vocational Education and Training Certificate II or above.

Youth Options Guarantee

Every young person in our Region matters

The Grampians Education Partnership was formed out of a shared commitment by education and training providers to support all young people in the Grampians Region to complete 12 years of worthwhile learning, the acknowledged minimum education required for active participation in life and work in the 21st century.

Education and training providers in each of the four LLEN areas have signed Memoranda of Understanding agreeing to provide:

- **Inclusive education provision arrangements** to engage young people in learning to Year 12 or its equivalent.

- **Supportive intervention** for those students identified as potential early leavers to prevent early leaving. Education and training providers and other agencies working with young people have also agreed to provide:

- **Transition support** for early leavers to and between educational and training providers or employment with structured training.

- **Reintegration support** for early leavers, who have disengaged from formal learning.

Transition Teams have been set up in many schools and the University of Ballarat's TAFE division. These Teams, along with the Community-based Teams which have broad representation from the education, health and youth sectors, are providing the structures which will assist more young people to complete Year 12 or its equivalent in the Grampians Region.

Health professional appointed as Chair of the Moorabool Community Reference Team



Moorabool Community Reference Team Chair, Andrew Connelly (right), with Robyn Hunter, Principal, Bacchus Marsh College and Barry Wright, Highlands LLEN Executive Officer, at the February Team Meeting

At the December 2006 meeting of the Youth Options Guarantee Moorabool Community Reference Team, Andrew Connelly, Finance Manager of the Djerriwarrh Health Services (DjHS) in Bacchus Marsh offered to chair this

Team in 2007. As DjHS has a holistic approach to “helping people of our community to better health and well-being”, Andrew feels that DjHS shares the vision of the Grampians Region's Youth Options Guarantee. Some of the

barriers faced by young people who do not complete Year 12 or its equivalent are related to issues concerning their health and well-being, and these are matters of concern to the DjHS.

The February Team meeting agreed on final forms of the Terms of Reference for the Community Reference Team and also to the Protocols to be adopted by partners in the Moorabool Youth Options Guarantee Memorandum of Understanding. The idea of using ‘blended stories’ to consider issues facing young people was raised and it was agreed that this was an appropriate way to ensure their privacy was respected in any Community Reference Team discussions.

Transition teams in place and referrals for various sources coming into the Central Grampians LLEN

According to David Wheaton, CEO of the Central Grampians LLEN, the Youth Options Guarantee is off to a sound start. He says, "While it's early days, I am especially pleased that our partners are on track to meet their commitments under the Guarantee."

Ararat Community College, Stawell Secondary College, Lake Bolac College, Marian College and the University of Ballarat are all convening Transition Team meetings for the first time during Term 1. These teams will be accountable for identifying students at risk of early leaving and addressing their individual needs. To support this work, CGLLEN's Local Community Partnership Program Manager, Belinda Healy, attends Transition Team meetings to add value to the process and assist schools to make linkages with outside agencies.

David Wheaton feels that the most pleasing aspect of the

Guarantee's implementation has been the commencement of a new referral protocol, *On Track Anytime*. With the LLEN's LenZone! Youth Resource Centres in Stawell



LenZone! Ararat Coordinator, Francesca Suffield discusses options with Stacie Thorne, who returned to school this year to complete Year 11 at Ararat Community College

and Ararat now well established, the LLEN Board was convinced that LenZone! would be the perfect hub for the Guarantee's referral and tracking process.

LenZone! is now in its third year of coordinating a Community VCAL program to young people who have found the traditional classroom environment unsuitable to their

learning styles and needs. Since its commencement in 2005, enrolments have more than doubled to 30 this year.

From conception, LenZone! was intended to work with young people who have become disengaged from education and training.

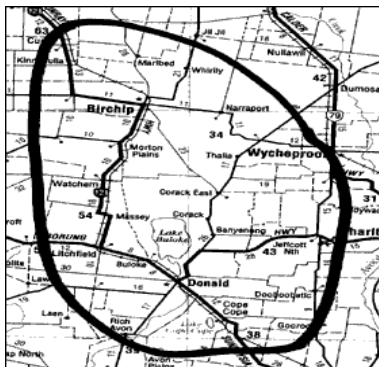
LenZone! began accepting referrals of early school leavers during December 2006. In addition to referrals from schools, several young people have heard about the Youth Options Guarantee and have self-referred.

Once a referral is received, arrangements are made for the young person to meet face-to-face with a LenZone! youth worker, either Geoff Wake or Francesca Suffield. Geoff and Francesca spend time with each young person to discuss their circumstances, assess their individual needs and work with them to get their education back on track.

... the most pleasing aspect of the Guarantee's implementation has been the commencement of a new referral protocol, *On Track Anytime*.

David Wheaton
CEO, Central
Grampians LLEN

North Central LLEN—Youth Worker in the Buloke Shire



Map Courtesy of the Buloke Times

The recent appointment of Marc Cox as Buloke Shire's Youth Development and Wellbeing Officer has been welcomed by members of the North Central LLEN, which is assisting in the implementation of the Youth Options

Guarantee. Marc Cox grew up in the Buloke Shire and then studied Human Movement and Management at the University of Ballarat. He moved to Bendigo to work in Sport and Recreation with the Bendigo Student Association. After gaining experience in this field he has returned to work with young people in a region he knows well. Marc is passionate about young people and is looking forward to working with a range of stakeholders to promote positive outcomes for young people in the Buloke Shire.

The extended drought and the multiple effects this is having on families and young people

in its rural communities led the Buloke Shire, with assistance from the Department of Victorian Communities and Donald Uniting Church, to create the position of Youth Development and Wellbeing Officer. Jerri Nelson, North Central LLEN Executive Officer, said her Board of Management is delighted that Marc will have the capacity to act as a point of referral and be able to link young people with services. He will also work with agencies providing support to young people to identify the issues that are impacting on young people and work in partnership with these agencies to develop strategies to address these issues.

Increased options for young people in the Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN region

When the Youth Options Guarantee was initially developed, it was recognized that young people in some areas in the Grampians Region have access to a much broader range of education and training options than in other areas.

For example, since 2005 there has been a learning program called LinkUp, which is available for students in Ballarat, who are unwilling or unable to access mainstream education. In LinkUp student programs are organised through a Personal Learning Plan.

In 2007 a program developed on similar lines to LinkUp commenced operation in Horsham. This program, ConnectEd, has broadened the education and training options available to young people out

of education in Horsham. To date 25 young people aged 13—16 years, who have been out of school from 10 months to 4 years, have enrolled in ConnectEd. The program is primarily being delivered at NEXUS and offers Literacy and Numeracy classes and a range of activities including art, cooking, guitar lessons, boxing, Tribal Youth, and 'Choices, Decisions, Outcomes'. The Program Coordinator, Naomi Malcolm, arranges a 10 minute appointment with each student each week to assess progress and to provide a time for students to raise any concerns they may wish to discuss with her. Lessons and activities are delivered with the assistance of two part-time teachers and two integration aides.

Some students also undertake

voluntary work assisting at one of the local Primary Schools.

Naomi says students are enjoying the program, attendance is high and students text her to advise of the few times when they will not be attending.

In addition to ConnectEd, a Community VCAL program is being offered for the first time in Horsham in 2007, with an enrolment of 12 students. Elements of this program are delivered at the University of Ballarat TAFE (Literacy and Numeracy), NEXUS (Personal Development) and Wimmera Hub (Work Related Skills). In addition, some students are accessing VET programs through the VET Cluster at University of Ballarat TAFE and the Wimmera Hub.

“ConnectEd and Community VCAL have expanded the options available to young people in our Region.”

**Jo Devereaux
Wimmera Southern
Mallee LLEN**

Hepburn Community Team learns about Daylesford Secondary College's plan for its Transition Team



From left, Mark Mittel and Bronwyn Barlow, Daylesford Secondary College, Georgie Frawley, Youth Pathways, Stephanie Goetz-Thies, Daylesford Neighbourhood Centre and Max Watson, Hepburn Community Health at the February Youth Options Guarantee Community Team Meeting

On Thursday 22nd February the Hepburn Youth Options Guarantee Community Team met in Daylesford Town Hall's Council Chamber.

Mark Mittel, Student Welfare Coordinator at Daylesford Secondary College reported on the College plan to expand the Pathways Team to include Student Welfare and Year Level

Coordinators as outlined in the Youth Options Guarantee Memorandum of Understanding signed by the College, agreeing to establish “a key group in the school accountable for addressing the needs of individual students, identified as at risk of early school leaving, by a holistic curriculum-welfare approach,

and where necessary, a managed transition process to ensure that students who do leave school early go to another education or training program or full time employment with training, or are referred to an agency which can support them on a pathway to these.”

The delivery model to be adopted by Centacare's Transition Workers was outlined and an explanation provided about how it will interface with the Youth Pathways initiative and the MIPs program.

As the Transition Workers are expected to commence their new roles during March, Community Team members will meet them at the next scheduled Community Reference Team meeting.

Important role of School Transition Teams in the implementation of the Youth Options Guarantee



To create a collaborative social network, whose members together provide an **integrated** and **seamless** support and referral system that ensures young people are not lost to, or within, the education and training system in our Region.

The success of the Youth Options Guarantee, will revolve around the effectiveness of education and training providers in:

- offering a relevant and flexible curriculum appropriate to the needs of students
- ensuring that there are robust support processes within the school or provider for young people at risk
- ensuring effective support for transition to work or to other forms of education or training
- offering flexible and creative options to re-engage young people (who do not have year 12 or equivalent qualifications) into education or training.

School Transition Teams have the potential to play a critically important role in the success of the Youth Options Guarantee. If

established as high status teams, operating effectively in every school, they should have a big impact in achieving the objective of increasing the proportion of young people who attain year 12 or equivalent qualifications in the Grampians Region.

The School Transition Team will be involved in 4 different processes:

- 1) **Identification of students at risk by school transition team** (Ongoing Internal Process) to identify these students and address their needs.
- 2) **In school case conference** (Occasional Internal Process) to discuss students for whom, over a period of time, the interventions put in place to meet their needs, do not appear to be succeeding.

3) **External transition option A**—Transferring of the responsibility for the student's educational pathway to another provider or to an employer.

4) **External transition option B** - where the student is not ready for external option referral to described above, schools can refer the at risk student to the LLEN. This referral option represents the "safety net" when all else fails and is provided to prevent as many students "falling through the cracks" as often happens presently.

Note: Schools have adopted different names for their Transition Teams— Pathways Team and Student Health Advice & Careers (SHAC) Team are two names used by schools for their 'transition teams'.

What's in a name? Changing language to change perceptions

When students leave school prior to completing Year 12, in most cases schools require the students to complete an **Exit Form**. This form serves a number of purposes, for example to ensure that any outstanding matters such as the return of library books, are finalized prior to exit. Ballarat Secondary College Pathways Leader, Sue Mills, reported to the December 2006 meeting of the Ballarat Community Team, that her school had decided that the term 'exit' can give some early leavers not only the perception of 'ending school' but also of 'ending learning'. The school's Pathways Team members decided this was not an appropriate perception to be giving

those early leavers about whom they have most concerns. For these students the staff felt it is more important to provide a strong perception that leaving school was making the transition to the next stage of education and training or employment with training, rather than a perceived end to learning. All students complete a **Pathways Plan** while at the College and at the time of leaving Ballarat Secondary College, this Pathways Plan becomes the focus of discussion, rather than completion of an Exit Form. By abolishing the



Ballarat Secondary College helps to change the young person's focus on leaving school early

Exit Form and focusing on the student's pathway, Ballarat Secondary College is hopeful of changing early leavers' perceptions, so that these young people are more likely to understand that leaving school is a move towards another phase of their learning journey, rather than the end of it.

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