24 INSPIRING STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE AND THEIR CAREER PATHWAYS
Following are 24 inspiring stories about people from South West Victoria who have pursued a variety of interesting pathways into their careers.

‘Why Year 12?’ will show you that no matter what it is that you want to do, there is a pathway to get you there. You will read about the importance of completing a Year 12 or equivalent qualification and pick up some handy information about the different ways that Year 12 or its equivalent can be achieved.

We hope that reading the stories in ‘Why Year 12?’ will help you to better understand how the completion of Year 12 or an equivalent qualification is important in influencing what options are available after schooling is completed. We also hope that it will inspire you to think about what education and career pathway you, your children, friends or students might like to follow.

It’s never too early to start thinking about the future and what a young person can do to influence the pathway that they take. In fact, in the early years, even before secondary school, a number of factors can influence how a young person will learn, engage in education and be empowered to make choices about their future. It is a changing world out there. The needs of the workforce have changed and we need to ensure that young people are well equipped to meet these needs and that they are not left behind. Year 12 or its equivalent is the launching pad!!

Please enjoy this booklet and don’t forget to take the time to ask yourself the question - Why Year 12?
The completion of Year 12 or an equivalent qualification is an important achievement for any individual. The workforce is changing. There is much evidence that demonstrates that if you make this achievement you will benefit greatly in later life. You will have a greater chance of getting a job, keeping your job for longer and/or being able to move onto further education and training after school and during your future in the workforce.

Links have been made between the level of education that you complete and the amount of money that you can earn when you get a job. What this means is that completing Year 12 or equivalent may help you to increase your earnings once you are in the workforce.

When entering the workforce it can really help if you have completed a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. This is because it can help you to develop important skills that employers look for such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self management and learning and technology skills.

Completing Year 12 or equivalent is also important for more reasons than just helping you to get a job and earn money. Over time it is being increasingly understood that it can influence other factors in your adult life such as how healthy you will be and what your living circumstances might be like.

There are many different ways that you can complete a Year 12 or equivalent qualification and the skills and experience that you pick up from doing so will place you well to succeed in your adult life. It will equip you well to deal with challenges as they arise and will broaden the opportunities that you have access to.

WHAT IS YEAR 12 OR EQUIVALENT?

There is more than one way to complete a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. Some people may stay at school until Year 12 to complete the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) while others may follow pathways which provide them with a qualification that is equivalent to Year 12.

In Australia the equivalent of Year 12 is recognised as completion of a nationally recognised training course at a Certificate II level or higher.

Some of the pathways that are available to complete a qualification equivalent to Year 12 include Australian Apprenticeships, Vocational Education and Training in School (VETIS), School Based Apprenticeships, Traineeships or completion of a Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). This variety of pathways means that you can choose a learning pathway that is best suited to your needs and goals.

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Explore a world of opportunity at Deakin University.
Visit deakin.edu.au/health/nursing
*2011 and 2012 Australian Graduate Survey.

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BUILDING A HEALTHY CAREER TAKES DEDICATION

Visiting a sick cousin in hospital and seeing up close the work done by medical professionals helped to convince Asha Dalton to pursue a career in nursing.

The 2006 Emmanuel College graduate had some motivating tips from another cousin Kate, who completed a nursing degree at Deakin University’s Warrnambool campus.

“Just talking to her about nursing and all that it involves really made me interested,” she said.

“The other main thing that made me want to become a nurse was when I was doing VCE one of my other younger cousins became sick, and we made visits to Melbourne to see him in hospital and watching the nurses working is really what made me decide it was exactly what I wanted to do.”

Asha deferred her nursing studies in 2008 to work full-time in administration at a human resources firm and complete a Certificate IV in Business Administration but her motivation to complete a nursing degree saw her return to complete the course in 2011.

As part of her degree, she is now two years into a three-year role as an Indigenous Nursing Cadet at South West Healthcare in Warrnambool.

“I love working up here, its great! I work in the Aboriginal Health Team - they are all fantastic and very supportive of my studies. I have a lot of support around me,” she said.

“Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand.”

- CHINESE PROVERB

“ Ideally, I’d love to stay working at South West Healthcare. I would also like to move up to Darwin or Queensland for a year or so, just for something different and work with the Aboriginal Communities up there.”

Her advice for other young people wanting to get into a medical career is, “If you want it bad enough, then you will achieve it. As long as you commit to it, whichever way you go about getting to uni doesn’t really matter.”

“There are many avenues you can take at uni if your ENTER [ATAR] score isn’t high enough. Never give up - you might not be able to take the straight path into the Bachelor of Nursing course, you might come back as a mature aged person.

“The main thing is to keep working towards your goal, always doing something, always working towards achieving your outcome.”

Asha said students should not be scared off by the idea that TAFE or university can take years to complete.

“Three years might sound like a long time at uni. I thought it would be too, but it goes so quickly,” she said.

“As you’re always learning something new, or going on placement, before you know it you are half way through.”
HELPING YOUNG STUDENTS STAY ON TRACK

Glenn McKenzie has the perfect answer for students who come to him seeking reasons to continue their education: his own experience shows that it can pay off.

The 33-year-old from Portland made the leap from an unrewarding factory job to studying for a Community Services Diploma and is now much happier in a youth work job in Warrnambool.

In his current role in the Youth Connections team at Brophy Family and Youth Services (BFYS), Glenn deals with clients who have disengaged or who are at risk at disengaging from education.

“I first seek to build a rapport with the young person and then help them achieve their goals in education and training,” he said.

“I also offer emotional support and link the young person to other relevant services both at BFYS or elsewhere.”

Glenn found his later years of high school difficult, finishing Year 10 at Portland Secondary College and struggling with family issues that stopped him from successfully completing Year 11.

He enrolled in courses in general education and welding at South West TAFE but only discovered real motivation to study after completing a traineeship with Glenelg Shire Council in Youth Work.

“I spent the next three and a half years working a factory job which I didn’t find as rewarding as youth work. This realisation motivated me to return to study,” Glenn said.

He completed a short course in counselling at South West TAFE and was then advised to enrol in a two-year Diploma of Community Services.

“I was happy with myself in completing the Diploma as it was like a closure to the fact that I didn’t complete my VCE,” he said.

“When I was at school as a teenager I didn’t feel like I wasn’t capable of doing the work, it was just that I didn’t have the motivation and focus.

“I have the opportunity to help others in the exact area where I was disengaged from education.”

A 12-month position at Community Connections was followed by a Youth Worker/ Counsellor job for Cobden District Health Services, which led to his current role at Brophy.

“I really enjoy my job at BFYS as it’s a really nice place to work. There is a good culture within my team and the agency, there is lots of variety from day to day and my working life contributes to society positively and assists young people in overcoming challenges,” Glenn said.

Sharing the challenges of his job with family members has also been helpful – Glenn’s sister Angela has a similar qualification and is a school chaplain in Melbourne while another sister Fiona is working towards creating a school program addressing bullying.

“Angela and I often get into lengthy discussions about the social/welfare work field and she regularly informs me about good training she has attended”, he said.

While Glenn can see that he progressed to a rewarding job without finishing Year 12 whilst still at school, he recommends that young students should “always try your best and see things through the first time round if possible”.

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“LIVE BY YOUR DECISIONS, NOT YOUR FEELINGS.”

- UNKNOWN
90% OF SOUTH WEST TAFE'S 2013 GRADUATES ARE TODAY EITHER EMPLOYED, OR UNDERTAKING FURTHER STUDY.

WHEN YOU FINISH SCHOOL, WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS?
You won’t actually be job-ready for anything other than unskilled work.
And that’s unlikely to keep you satisfied or in demand.
So you’ll need to decide what type of work would interest you.
Then, get some real qualifications.

IF YOU LOVE PEOPLE, make a career out of working with the community.
IF YOU'RE GOOD WITH NUMBERS, develop some real financial skills.
IF YOU’VE GOT A CREATIVE STREAK, find a path that will make the most of it.
IF YOU'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT AGRICULTURE, join the industry.
IF YOU’RE A CAR FANATIC, make automotive your mission.

Helping her clients achieve a new look is one of the most satisfying parts of the job for Warrnambool hairdressing apprentice Melinda Brown.

As well as studying for a Certificate III in Hairdressing at South West TAFE, Melinda also competed TAFE courses in spray tanning and makeup artistry.

Melinda completed Year 12 in 2011 at Warrnambool College and began her apprenticeship with another training provider before switching to the TAFE program at Warrnambool stylist Glossart.

She has also gained additional hairdressing industry training at her own expense through her attendance at the Sydney Hair Expo, Salon Melbourne Expo, GHD equipment training and Mercedes Benz Fashion Festival. Her commitment to the industry was recognised with a Hairdressing Apprentice of the Year award from South West TAFE in 2013.

“My apprenticeship has flown by and it definitely doesn’t seem like I have been studying hairdressing for two and a half years,” she said.

“My studies are a large percentage hands-on and less theory-based which definitely helps to keep you interested and not lose motivation.”

The dedication to her studies and career is motivated by her desire to progress to working as a stylist on fashion shoots and runway shows.

“In the future I would like to work backstage on runway shows or on the photography side of the hairdressing industry.”

“Anybody considering doing an apprenticeship whether it be hairdressing or another trade should definitely give it a go. It’s a great opportunity for people who are passionate about getting involved in a trade, and you are making an income while learning something you love.”

“Let’s go out and do something to make the world a little better than it was when we arrived.”

- MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
KEY FACTORS IN A CHILD’S SUCCESS IN EDUCATION

Families play a critical role in their child’s development and learning.

Research provides strong evidence that parents and the home environment are extremely influential forces in positively shaping children’s early learning.

The responsiveness of parents to their children, and the manner in which parents talk with and teach their children are important to a child’s later wellbeing and development.

While a majority of children and families are doing well, circumstances for families who are raising young children are changing. Parenting has become more complex and challenging - extended families tend to be smaller and more spread out; single parent families are more common; and many workplaces lack family-friendly policies that can offer support to parents. Some useful websites are suggested later in this booklet that provide information on the importance of families engaging in a young person’s education.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

The years before a child starts school are highly important in shaping how they develop and how they will function and learn when they are at school. Providing children with support to learn during their early years can help to make their transition to school more effective and can set them on a strong pathway in both their primary and secondary schooling.

If families access the support that they need to help their child’s early learning needs it can have a significant bearing on the child’s likelihood of completing a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

The decision about whether or not to complete Year 12 or equivalent often comes at the end of a long process. It is not a single act or event but the culmination of many years of interaction between a young person, his or her parents, teachers, the school and the community.

Some of the things that can contribute to a young person leaving school early can include underachievement, poor academic motivation, a lack of stimulation at school causing disengagement and poor relationships with their peers. It is important that young people are able to access support that can help them to remain engaged in their education and to make decisions about their future pathway.

LOCAL APPROACHES

In the Great South Coast region, low rates of Year 12 or equivalent attainment have been identified as a significant community challenge. Priority has been placed on improving these rates and a number of stakeholders in the community are working in partnership to create improved outcomes for our young people.

This work is happening because the Great South Coast community recognises how important it is that young people in the region have access to the best opportunities in life and that completing a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, will provide them with better access to these opportunities.

JOINING THE DEFENCE FAMILY BROADENS CAREER OPTIONS

Moving to different army base towns around Australia as a child helped prepare Matt White for a travelling military career.

Matt attended several schools in country Queensland before the family moved to Victoria.

The 19-year-old’s parents and two brothers served in the army and Matt enlisted during Year 12. He was accepted before the year ended, so decided to forgo final exams at Cobden Technical School.

“I got to Year 10 with every intention of finishing Year 12, as that’s what I wanted to do. My dad was in the defence force so I always knew that was an option, however I didn’t want to just rely on getting in the army as a career option,” he said.

“I made the decision on my own but there was a lot of talk about how good the opportunity of being in the army was. Not many people come out of school (and start with) such a great salary and there’s so many opportunities I can look at, like studying, and Defence will help with that.”

While he is enjoying his current posting in Perth, Matt said he was looking ahead to a career after his army service and will begin a telecommunications degree this year in Melbourne – another move inspired by his family.

“My eldest brother was a telecommunications technician and my other brother is studying to become an electronics technician,” he said.

“They were positive about it and that’s what attracted me - go to the army, do it for a couple of years, do some study and maybe move on to something else.”

“There are a lot of jobs out there that require the skills I’ll have learnt in the army, so I might go into working for a business like Telstra or Optus. With the qualifications that I’ll have, you can get a pretty decent job.”

The shift back to Victoria will also bring him closer to family, as his parents are still living in Cobden.

Following the three-year telecommunications course, Matt will be committed to the army for a further four years - during which he will be posted to Brisbane, Townsville or Darwin.

“An overseas posting is also highly possible. There is a lot more deployment as a telecommunications technician than in some other positions,” he said.

The next five years in the army will require more travelling but having grown up shifting schools and states, it’s something Matt looks forward to.

“Life is an adventure - if you stay in one spot your whole life, you’re not really going to see the world,” Matt said.

“TRUE SUCCESS IS NOT ABOUT WINNING EVERY POST. IT’S ACTUALLY THE WISDOM OF DISCOVERING THAT THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT PATHS TO YOUR GOALS AND REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL.”

- TIM COSTELLO
Westvic Staffing Solutions has over 30 years of experience supporting young people in their career choices.

We work with parents, students, career advisors and employers, finding solutions to employment and training needs.

During your VCE you can be making some smart decisions which will set you up for a fantastic career, and give you a chance to test trial career choices. School based apprenticeships and traineeships allow you to complete an industry accredited qualification whilst still completing your VCE.

**Westvic Staffing Solutions will:**
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- Assist you in finding an employer
- Work with your school to ensure a suitable timetable is agreed upon
- Manage your employment and training
- Ensure you receive correct entitlements and working conditions
- Assist with transition from school to work

Our service doesn’t stop there. We prepare you to not only achieve the most out of your employment and training but also to advance your personal management, Occupational Health and Safety skills.

Westvic Staffing Solutions is active in a wide variety of industries; helping you to commence careers in fields such as hospitality, tourism, automotive, engineering, construction, business services, retail, childcare, horticulture, sport and recreation and many more.

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**ANIMAL INTERESTS DRIVING JESS TO SUCCEED**

Her family brought her up to have a passion for animals, so it seems inevitable that Jess Reid would head towards a career on the land.

Jess is undertaking a Business Traineeship at the Colac office of Charles Stewart & Co, a livestock and rural property agent.

The 12-month traineeship was arranged by Westvic Staffing Solutions, who provide ongoing assessment and support.

Jess finished Year 12 at Colac Secondary College in 2012. She worked at a local veterinary clinic prior to leaving school and continues to be employed there casually on weekends as well as working full time.

“When I finished school, I knew I wanted to do some kind of work with animals,” she said.

“My partner is a dairy farmer and my whole family has always had a keen interest in animals. My brother also studied zoology at uni.”

While learning the basics of business operations at Charles Stewart, Jess is also studying for a Certificate III in Business and has dedicated time each week to complete her coursework.

“I work in administration. I do a lot of computer work, deal with clients that come in to the front counter and answer phone enquiries.

“It’s different to anything I’d planned to do after school.”

She is unsure yet whether to take her enthusiasm for working at the vet clinic further and study for a veterinary or zoology degree.

“I’m not sure what will happen after this, we will see what the future holds. ‘One day I’d like to own a farm near here.’

The work at Charles Stewart and the vet clinic has shown Jess the importance of gaining work experience and meeting potential future employers.

“It’s who you know and not just what you know,” she said.

“It’s important to talk to people in the industry and they can help you get involved. Some farmers are quite happy to give young people a go and see if they like it.”

Westvic field officer Dale Gaylard said Jess was proving to be a good fit for the business administration role and the traineeship provided Jess with “on the job learning and training and it is tailored to the type of work she does.”

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**WHY YEAR 12?**

**ANIMAL INTERESTS DRIVING JESS TO SUCCEED**

The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.

- B.B. KING

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**WE CAN HELP.**
She has studied Chinese languages in an intensive course at a Beijing University and hiked through Nepal but Lisa Downs believes her most exciting challenges still lie ahead.

As an Adviser to the Premier of Victoria, Lisa provides advice to Premier Dr Denis Napthine on the portfolios of roads, transport, freight, women’s and youth affairs, and works with the relevant Ministers’ offices and departments to ensure they are achieving the government’s goals.

She also assists with issues relating to the Premier’s electorate of the South West Coast.

After completing Year 12 and studying Arts and Commerce at Melbourne University, Lisa said she was unsure what her next step would be.

“I worked casually during high school and uni, and in a marketing company for almost a year before I went travelling around Asia for a year,” she said.

“I spent six months teaching English and studying Chinese in Taiwan, before returning to Beijing to complete my final intensive uni subject.”

She returned home to Hamilton and took up local bar work while studying for a Master of Diplomacy and Trade before her first role in politics - a part-time position as an electorate officer for Wannon MP, David Hawker.

“I had no prior political experience, except volunteer participation in Youth Parliament through the YMCA. But university had taught me how to think and how to write, which was a key skill in a political office, and I enjoy working with people and helping solve problems – which is what electorate offices are all about,” Lisa said.

Working in an electorate office exposed her to a variety of job roles, including that of office manager and media adviser.

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“You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.”

- Wayne Gretzky

Lisa discovered she enjoyed the media adviser role and took a position with an MP in a marginal seat in Western Sydney in 2010, 10 months before the federal election.

“As well as media adviser, I was also campaign manager but I had no campaign management experience, no experience at all of a marginal seat and no local knowledge of the western suburbs,” she said.

“It was exhausting, demanding, stressful and the hours were long – 16-18 hour days were not uncommon, and most weekends involved work. But I had a great team of colleagues and we stuck it out together and made it fun.”

While working in Sydney, Lisa kept in touch with political colleagues back home and was lured back to the south west to work with newly-elected Member for Wannon, Dan Tehan MP.

She was also able to complete her Masters in Diplomacy and Trade and after a successful election campaign with Mr Tehan in 2013, applied for and was successful in getting a position in the Premier’s private office in Melbourne.

“I love what I do because I am always learning something new, I work with lots of different people, it’s exciting and dynamic, and each day is absolutely different,” Lisa said.

One of the advantages Lisa had during her years of education was the support of family members, including a teacher mother and small-business owner father.

“My family could not have been more supportive of me during my years of study and without them, it would have been a great deal more difficult to achieve what I have,” she said.

“My employers David Hawker, Dan Tehan and a few colleagues in particular were also supportive of my studies, which meant I was able to complete them while I worked, for which I am very grateful. They were also happy to give me frank advice – which has really helped me try and improve myself over the years.”

Lisa is enthusiastic about the opportunities that open up for young people who try their hardest at school and also look for relevant work experience.

“Even though you might feel school and some of your core subjects are boring (I hated chemistry), completing high school does create opportunities for you down the track,” she said.

“You can’t often just walk through the door of your dream job, so most often you need to go out there and get practical experience in the industry – I think that’s all about getting dollars in the experience bank.

“Finding a mentor is really important if you can – someone you can go to for advice and who has the right experience to point you in the right direction.”

“Why Year 12?”

You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.

- Wayne Gretzky

“My favourite quote was told to me by a friend’s dad, John Gavens, while hiking in Nepal in November 2012:

If it is meant to be, it is up to me.”
BEGINNING A TRADE CAREER IS EASIER WITH A PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

WHAT WILL A PRE-APPRENTICESHIP GIVE YOU?
A Pre-Apprenticeship at South West TAFE helps open the door to a trade career. By introducing you to a trade and giving you hands-on experience you gain the skills and knowledge that employers seek when hiring an apprentice.

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COOKING QUALIFICATION IS MONEY IN THE BANK FOR BEEAC STUDENT

Beeac’s Bank Gratton plans to complete his commercial cookery apprenticeship and travel to France to learn from the chefs of Europe.

The Trinity College student loves cooking and is putting his passion into practice through a school-based apprenticeship which will enable him to complete a Certificate III in Commercial Cookery.

Bank, who is studying Year 11 through the Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) program, says he spends four days a week at school and works at Beeac’s Farmers’ Arms Hotel a minimum of eight hours a week.

“I want to finish my Certificate III and then do a Certificate IV in Commercial Cookery which will qualify me to be a head chef,” he said.

“Then I’d like to go to France to learn a lot more from the best chefs.”

South West TAFE In Schools Coordinator Susan Pettigrew said VETiS allowed students like Bank to gain a TAFE qualification while at secondary school.

“It provides hands-on industry training that is directly job related,” Susan said.

“In Colac, South West TAFE delivers hospitality programs out of the new trade training facility at Trinity College.”

Students get to experience what it is like to work in a commercial kitchen and serve patrons at special events whilst being guided by industry qualified staff.

“Year 10, 11 and 12 students can undertake VETiS programs while completing their VCAL or VCE,” she said.

“The programs provide a qualification or partial completion of Certificate II or III and are designed to give an overview/introduction to the industry.”

Susan said Colac district students could also choose to travel to Warrnambool by train to complete engineering, automotive, carpentry, fashion, hairdressing, make-up, media, community services, furnishings, plumbing or health VET in schools programs on a Thursday afternoon.

“At South West TAFE our VETiS programs are geared towards giving students the best of both worlds; an industry-recognised VET qualification gained in conjunction with their secondary school experience,” she said.

“Our programs also offer recognised pathways to apprenticeships and further training.”

You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.

- CLAY P. BEDFORD

COOKING QUALIFICATION IS MONEY IN THE BANK FOR BEEAC STUDENT
WHY YEAR 12?

The butchering trade has played a big part in Daniel Byrne’s family life, an inheritance that has inspired his career at a major Warrnambool meat producer.

Daniel’s father-in-law and brother-in-law are butchers, while his parents spent part of their working lives as dairy farmers with his brother continuing on the tradition.

The 36-year-old from Warrnambool completed Year 12 at Brauer College and was accepted into a university computer science degree but deferred to work at The Midfield Group.

“I wanted to stay here (in Warrnambool) and earn some money before I went away, so I deferred for a year,” he said.

Starting in the payroll office, Daniel gradually moved up the ladder.

“Within six months I was in the sales department. I never thought about university after that.”

Having worked his way up from a junior payroll clerk to his current Export Sales Manager position, Daniel said he is now “involved in most areas at Midfield.”

“We travel overseas a lot and some of the places I’ve been to include the United States, Japan, India, Taiwan, Dubai and Germany. We exhibit at food shows and potential clients will come and visit us.”

His team also visits existing clients to look at their showrooms and determine their current and future needs.

Daniel oversees four sales staff and three administrative employees and said the job provided interesting challenges.

“I’ve been here for 19 years or so and I can’t see myself moving on. I thoroughly enjoy work and every day there is a new challenge,” he said.

MEAT WORKS FOR DANIEL

As a recipient of the prestigious Queen’s Scout Award, Sarah White showed she could dedicate herself for long hours to achieve a goal.

The former Terang resident aims to bring the same commitment to her studies as she works towards completing first an undergraduate biomedical science degree at Deakin University, leading on to a medicine/surgery graduate degree.

Sarah said she was very pleased to receive the Queen’s Scout Award in 2012, the highest achievable for a Scouts youth member.

“Many people liken it to the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award although I think it is harder to achieve as it is not done in school hours and is done on your own accord,” she said.

“The achievement of this award requires initiative, community involvement, leadership, teamwork, involvement in physical activities and camps, organisational skills, environmental awareness, self-reliance and most of all dedication.”

Sarah graduated as dux of Cobden Technical School in 2012 and accepted a place in the biomedical science course at Deakin.

BY FAILING TO PREPARE YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL.
- BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

YOU CAN TELL WHETHER A MAN IS CLEVER BY HIS ANSWERS.
YOU CAN TELL WHETHER A MAN IS WISE BY HIS QUESTIONS.
- NAGUIB MAHFOUZ
BUILDING A FULFILLING CAREER

Prestigious awards, praise and even a leadership course in Canberra have rolled in for Colac’s William Bongers during his carpentry apprenticeship.

But ask the 21-year-old what he enjoys most about his work and the answer is simple: “I love being able to stand back after a day, week or a month and see what I’ve achieved on that particular job.”

The Cobden Technical School graduate finished Year 12 while also taking on a school-based apprenticeship in carpentry and is on track to complete a Certificate III in Carpentry, with plans to undertake Certificate IV in Building.

William is now working as an apprentice carpenter at BDH Constructions, employed through Westvic Staffing Solutions.

His job provides a wide variety of work on anything from houses to schools and apartment buildings.

“I work under many different site foremen, doing jobs ranging from erecting framework to swinging doors and installing windows and even doing the odd concrete slab,” William said.

“I’ve always enjoyed my job and am still grateful that I got into this industry because I have also always enjoyed working outdoors and with my hands and this industry is perfect for what I want to do.”

“‘It’s also helped me step out and challenge myself by purchasing a house and I’m currently renovating it which is a great and different challenge in itself.’

His passion for the work has seen him garner nominations for various awards and collect the Chairman’s Award at the Master Builders Awards for the Geelong region and Apprentice/Trainee of the Year award for the Colac and Otway Region.

“My uncle has had his own building business for around 20 years and has also helped me learn more about the industry and give me the opportunities to get into the industry.”

Not everyone has these types of connections though, which is where work experience and a willing attitude is even more important.

“For young people who want to get into this industry I think they just need to show that they are interested and excited about the building industry,” William said.

“Family support can be crucial in helping young people develop their careers and William said his family “have always supported all my decisions to do with my schooling and work life, we can talk honestly and see the positives and the negatives with anything that I want to do.”

Family support can be crucial in helping young people develop their careers and William said his family “have always supported all my decisions to do with my schooling and work life, we can talk honestly and see the positives and the negatives with anything that I want to do.”

“My uncle has had his own building business for around 20 years and has also helped me learn more about the industry and give me the opportunities to get into the industry.”

I believe that education is all about being excited about something. Seeing passion and enthusiasm helps push an educational message.

- STEVE IRWIN

“I also was lucky enough to attend the Today’s Skills, Tomorrow’s Leaders program in Canberra, which was a program for 21 lucky apprentices and trainees Australia-wide to help us work out where we want to go with our work and personal lives and ways for us to get to that destination,” William said.

“My uncle has had his own building business for around 20 years and has also helped me learn more about the industry and give me the opportunities to get into the industry.”

Not everyone has these types of connections though, which is where work experience and a willing attitude is even more important.

“For young people who want to get into this industry I think they just need to show that they are interested and excited about the building industry,” William said.

“When coming through the later years of high school, they should try do as much work experience as possible and at different places to get your name out there and when a job comes up, your name might be top of the list.”
WHY YEAR 12?

Motherhood, travelling the world and trying a variety of careers has helped prepare Rebecca Riddle for a new challenge: returning to study.

The 39-year-old from Warrnambool is working her way through a Bachelor of Arts (Journalism) degree at Deakin University, completing two subjects per trimester on-campus.

With two children aged five and three years old at home, managing childcare arrangements and part-time work around study has been difficult at times but Rebecca said she was committed to making a career in journalism.

“It was always in the back of my mind that I would go back and study. When I was 15 I did work experience at a local newspaper and I did it again when I was in Year 12,” she said.

“After that, I went off travelling and then with getting married and having kids, study was always in the back of my mind. I’ve always loved writing and journalism and I thought this was the time to do it.”

Rebecca has worked in administration at Warrnambool’s Lady Bay Resort for the past 18 months and also runs her own business as a marriage celebrant.

“Now I understand how easy study would have been in my twenties,” she said.

“Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?”

- ERICH FROMM

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Australian Apprenticeships [often referred to as apprenticeships or traineeships] offer opportunities for you to train, study and earn an income at a variety of qualification levels in most occupations as well as in traditional trades.

Australian Apprenticeships are available to anyone of working age. You do not need a secondary school certificate or other qualification to be able to do an Australian Apprenticeship.

You can do an Australian Apprenticeship if you are a school-leaver, re-entering the workforce or as an adult worker simply wishing to change careers. You can even begin your Australian Apprenticeship while you’re still at school finishing Years 11 and 12.

When you finish your Australian Apprenticeship, you will have a nationally recognised qualification that can take you anywhere in Australia and one that is held in high regard in many overseas countries as well.

WHAT IS A SCHOOL-BASED APPRENTICESHIP?

School-based Apprenticeships can allow you to get a head start on your career by beginning an Australian Apprenticeship while you are still working towards achieving VCE or VET. They are a great way to start training for a vocational qualification and earn a wage while completing your schooling.

An Australian School-based Apprentice can undertake training in a traditional trade or other occupation at the Certificate I, II, III, IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma level and it can take from one to four years to complete.

Some Australian School-based Apprentices will be able to complete their training when they finish their secondary schooling, while others will need to finish their training after they graduate from secondary school.


LIFE EXPERIENCE HELPS IN MODERN DAY STORY-TELLING

“Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?”

- ERICH FROMM
Her own brand of shoes may one day be worn by catwalk models or celebrities on the red carpet and Nicole Everett knows the hard work that has already gone into achieving that goal.

The 21-year-old from Timboon started her footwear business last year while learning the ropes of the competitive industry as a designer at Pacific Brands.

While her career is only just beginning, Nicole has made the most of opportunities that have come her way so far - including a short stint assisting her former university after she graduated.

“I studied Custom Made Footwear at RMIT full-time in February 2011 and in the course we designed the shoes, made the patterns, did sewing, stitching, absolutely everything to make that shoe,” Nicole said.

“After that I was asked by RMIT to work as a technician after my course finished. I was a student one year and a teacher the next and I worked there while applying for footwear industry jobs.”

It wasn’t a straight path for Nicole from high school to university but she credits her initial passion for the industry as keeping her going over the years.

“When I was in Year 11, I did work experience at a ‘fashion incubator’ in Melbourne. We went for a tour at the Brunswick RMIT campus and I fell in love with the footwear room and I knew that was what I wanted to do with the rest of my life,” she said.

“In order for that to happen, it was easier to get into that course as a mature-age student or someone who wasn’t straight from school. My whole Year 12 Studio Arts folio was based on footwear and that was my folio to get into the course.

“After Year 12, I decided to take a gap year overseas and live in the Netherlands working as an au pair. That gave me the opportunity to travel and to see what footwear trends were in Europe at the time.”

The mix of practical and theoretical experience helped her secure the Pacific Brands job after university, where she has worked on Julius Marlowe and Versace brand shoes.

“I assist with designing, with technical issues. I do the catalogues, the cost summary and computer-aided design,” she said.

“It’s been one hell of a learning curve and in the process I’ve learnt a lot about mass production in the industry in China and how footwear is made in that industry.”

Nicole is keen to fit in some more overseas travel and then develop her own business in Australia.

“There is a good niche in Melbourne for custom made footwear and we’re more willing to pay good money for one-off pieces rather than the mass-produced shoes that come from China every day,” she said.

“Attitude is tremendously important in chasing success - in any field of endeavour. That’s why I believe talent alone will get you very little in this world.”

– JIM STYNES, HEROES: A GUIDE TO REALISING YOUR DREAMS
RIDING THE SHEEP’S BACK ON A WORLD TOUR

Travelling around Australia and the world competing at festivals and sharing his passion for shearing is always an enjoyable challenge, says Roger Mifsud.

The 48-year-old completed Year 10 at Warrnambool College but said he unfortunately didn’t enjoy his time at school. “I was good with my hands, my trade skills and sport but the academic stuff wasn’t for me,” he said.

“I was an apprentice carpenter for about 14 months and I ended up working in a school as a maintenance carpenter. I had to go back to school once a week but didn’t like that side of it so I left (carpentry).”

He worked as a farmhand at several properties around the Warrnambool and Moyne Shire region and was 22 by the time he explored shearing as a profession.

His love for the industry has led to work as a shearer trainer, for which he had to complete a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and first aid qualifications.

“Being a trainer is not a job that they advertise - they come and get you when you’re ready,” Roger said.

“We train anyone from school kids to professional shearsers - anyone who wants advice on how to improve.”

Along with other trainers from the Shearing Contractors Association, Roger helps run up to 15 training days a year and finds a variety of people are attracted to the industry. “There are young ones who come from farms. A few come from employment agencies. There’s no specific person who ends up doing the job and you either like it or you don’t.”

Trainers are also finding interest from the corporate sector, with business people putting aside the suit and tie to build teamwork in the shearing sheds.

“We’ve taught accountants and a couple of years ago we taught a fairly high-end solicitor, whose son was interested in shearing, and they loved it.”

Roger said the training opportunities came about through his exposure to judges and audiences at state, national and international competitions.

“I’ve been lucky enough to represent Victoria [at competitions] on three occasions and been state champion once. I’ve won four Australian titles here in Warrnambool and a Victorian State Title, so it’s been pretty good to me,” he said.

“If I hadn’t been doing what I was doing in terms of shows, it probably wouldn’t have lead to shearer training.”

As part of the Australian team, Roger helped bring home the Trans-Tasman Cup and other silverware during the Golden Shears shearing and woolhandling championship in February 2014. Roger said he sometimes has doubts about his teenage commitment to schoolwork and stressed that shearing - as with many trades - was not an ‘easy option’ but took serious commitment to succeed in.

“What is VCE?

The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is awarded to students who successfully complete 16 units of work across Year 11 and Year 12. It is recognised internationally, and provides pathways to employment as well as to further study at university, TAFE (Technical and Further Education).

The VCE is usually completed in Years 11 and 12, but can be started in Year 10. About half of Year 10 students undertake some VCE units. VCE can also be studied by adults and completed in one year.

Within the VCE, students can undertake vocational education and training (VCE VETiS); this can be via School Based Apprenticeships or at a training organisation.

At the end of the VCE you may choose to receive an ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) score which many university courses will require for enrolment. However, if you do not apply for or achieve the ATAR required for your chosen course, these days there are many other ways in which you can enter university and TAFE courses.

WHAT IS VCAL?

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a recognised senior secondary qualification. It is an equivalent certificate to VCE. Students who complete VCAL are likely to be interested in exploring particular interests or passions, undertaking training at TAFE, doing an apprenticeship or traineeship, or getting a job after their Certificate is completed.

The VCAL’s flexibility enables students to design a study program that suits their interests and learning needs. Students select accredited curriculum components from VCE studies, Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications, Further Education (FE) and VCAL units. There are four compulsory strands in VCAL:

- literacy and numeracy skills
- work related skills
- industry specific skills
- personal development skills.

Students who start their VCAL and then decide they would like to complete their VCE, are able to transfer between certificates. Any VCE studies successfully completed as part of the VCAL program will count towards the VCE.

http://www.vcaai.edu.au/Pages/vcal/students/compulsorystrands.aspx

"EDUCATION IS THE ABILITY TO LISTEN TO ALMOST ANYTHING WITHOUT LOSING YOUR TEMPER OR YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE.

- ROBERT FROST"
From a street artist in his youth to becoming a respected Aboriginal Education Officer, **Nathan Leitch** has made a colourful start to his career.

The former Warrnambool resident struggled with the structure of formal schooling, dropping out midway through Year 11 at Warrnambool College and completing VET Retail Certificates I and II while working one day a week in a local shop.

From there Nathan took on a TAFE Visual Arts course coupled with student support work as an integration aide for painting classes. His mother had seen his skills as a young graffiti artist and encouraged him to pursue an art career.

"Through my artwork I gravitated towards screen-printing and eventually moved to Melbourne to pursue that career. It lasted a few years, then I got sick of being in a factory all day and went looking for something more meaningful," he said.

Nathan then changed tack, gaining work as a full-time carer and house-parent at Worawa Aboriginal College in Healesville and undertaking Koorie Education positions at a Ferntree Gully high school and the Catholic Education Office.

He has spent two years at Melbourne’s Austin Hospital and is enthusiastic about the diversity of his current roles.

"I’m the Aboriginal Education and Project Officer which means I’m responsible for the development and delivery of cultural awareness training. Last year I trained roughly 1000 people," he said.

"My other role is with Respecting Patient Choices, where I have developed a health promotion booklet for advance care planning in the Aboriginal community (pictured below). The project has been a long process of thorough consultation and development, and will shortly be out of pilot and become a state-wide program."

Nathan said the training program was a “positive and supportive” approach for health care professionals.

“We cover five points; yarning, family, history, identity and healing. These encourage people to look at the individual (in care) and practice more holistic methods and attitudes.”

As an Aboriginal person, Nathan feels lucky to be in a workplace where he can express his cultural identity and teach others what it means to be an Indigenous Australian.

"Being an Aboriginal identified professional allows me to be who I want to be without compromise, which was always my problem with formal and/or bureaucratic environments," he said.

While he has only limited involvement in the street art scene these days, Nathan said the experience gained in that area was still useful in his future formal employment.

"I think the medical field is so dependent on people with good self-awareness and confidence that young people should invest in themselves and develop their personality before entering the workforce (or studies)," he said.

"I spent several years in the art world honing my skills and learning about the world and my personal relevance to it before I felt like I was ready to go and help people. I guess I’m saying people shouldn’t rush to become ‘something’ if they can’t be sure they’re the right ‘someone’."

"IF I COULD GIVE A MESSAGE TO YOUNG AUSTRALIANS, IT WOULD BE THAT SUCCESS COMES FROM BEING ABLE TO PLACE YOURSELF IN A POSITION WHERE YOU HAVE THE FREEDOM TO DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO. THERE IS A GREATER CHANCE OF THIS HAPPENING IN AUSTRALIA THAN VIRTUALLY ANY OTHER COUNTRY IN THE WORLD..."

- DICK SMITH
Twilight Marson is enjoying some joie de vivre in her first year at university, an impressive feat after dealing with complications from a difficult physical condition during high school.

The Colac Secondary College 2013 graduate has a condition known as Larsen Syndrome, a genetic disorder characterised by numerous joint dislocations at birth, flexible joints, and a distinctive appearance to the face, hands and feet.

“I’ve got dislocated hips and knees and a cleft palate which affects the roof of my mouth,” she said.

Hospital and rehabilitation visits impacted on her final years at school.

“In Year 11 I had five orthopaedic surgeries and I missed about nine weeks of school,” she said.

“At one point one of my teachers told me I was so far behind I would not pass the subject. They told me to drop the subject but I didn’t and I passed them all and got okay marks.”

During her limited time at school, Twilight discovered dual passions for theatre and accounting.

“I had a really good accounting teacher, the class was a lot of fun and I was getting high marks in tests and I thought it would be a decent career,” she said.

“Since I did very well in my accounting class and because I like the idea of theatre and drama, I applied to do a double degree in Arts and Accounting. La Trobe was my first preference and I got in.”

As part of the Arts subjects, Twilight is studying French and one of her long-term goals is to spend time in that country improving her language skills.

“I want to be a Certified Practicing Accountant when I finish but it’s very exciting doing the other theatre and French stuff as well. I hope to spend some time in France - I travelled to France for a school trip and I’d love to go back.”

After undergoing operations on her legs and hips and needing to walk on crutches for long periods during high school, Twilight hopes she will have time to focus on her studies before needing any further surgery.

Life experience and the willingness to work hard at school and on the job is key to a fulfilling career in the police force, says First Constable Nick Roberts.

Nick finished Year 12 at Warrnambool’s Brauer College in 2003 and the 28-year-old has been stationed at Warrnambool since graduating from the police academy in October 2011.

Academy training took 33 weeks to complete and Nick said the lessons learnt through that experience increased his resolve to have a successful police career.

“I always wanted to join the police force - I like the idea of turning up to work each day and not knowing what I am going to do each shift,” he said.

Some of the benefits included a "good variety of work, good secure job and being able to make a career out of it".

“I am currently working in the uniform section which is also referred to as general duties policing.”

The role allows him “to respond to the various situations where the public require our assistance” and “provide the community with a safe environment to go about their daily business.”

Emergency services careers can involve varied hours and changing working conditions and Nick said family support had been vital to completing formal training.

“The academy was a testing time being in Melbourne for nine months and having the family at home,” he said.

“Shift work/night shift is good and bad for family life. At times the job can be quiet stressful so having a family that is understanding of the job and its requirements is beneficial.”

While reasons for entering the police force varies with individuals, Nick said a common thread to a fulfilling career was the development of life skills and building confidence in dealing with all types of people.

“I would advise anyone of school age that intends to join the police force to go and get as much life experience as possible before joining,” Nick said.

“Being exposed to as many different environments, whether that’s work/travel/people... or sporting clubs.”
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DEAC SUPERMUM JUGGLES PARENTING, FOSTER CARE AND STUDY

A 21-year-old carer of five children is proving parenting at a young age is no barrier to pursuing a career and following dreams.

Colac’s Sophie Johnson became a mother just after her 20th birthday and also is foster parent to four primary-school-aged children.

But the young mum has also completed a business traineeship, with a Certificate IV in Business and a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs to her credit, and returned to work in September 2013 after 12 months’ maternity leave.

“My son Jordan is 10 months old and I have four in foster care: my three half siblings, twins Jack and Lucy who are seven, Hermione who’s eight, and Nikita, who’s my niece and she’s five,” Sophie said.

“I left school after Year 11 and started a business traineeship at Don McKay Farm Supplies which included a Certificate IV in Business through The Gordon.

“I stayed on in a full-time job after the traineeship and then I fell pregnant and took maternity leave and now I’m ready to go back to work.

“I’m really lucky because my partner Jamie works to support us but he’s going to stay home when I go back to work,” she said.

“I feel better about returning to work because Jordan will have his dad looking after him and it will be easier because the other kids all need to be dropped off and picked up from school.”

But Sophie admits last year was a challenge after taking in four children while juggling study for two tertiary certificates.

“They were in two foster care homes before they came to me but once they found stability they’ve been better. I’d been in foster care myself and I have an understanding of their behaviour which made it a lot easier to find out what I could do to help them.”

Sophie said that in less than 12 months she had gone from being pregnant at 19 and “wondering what was going to happen” to caring for five children, with the South Australian Government recognising her with an award for her foster efforts.

“I want other young mums to know that their age isn’t a barrier, it’s about knowing what’s out there, what courses they can do to make it happen,” she said.

“YOU EDUCATE A MAN;
YOU EDUCATE A MAN;
YOU EDUCATE A WOMAN;
YOU EDUCATE A GENERATION.”

- BRIGHAM YOUNG

Article courtesy of the Colac Herald.

WHY YEAR 12?

35
Samara Riley (known as Mara) is on the right track to a successful business career but the Colac resident did not have an easy time at school.

She moved several times around Victoria during her school years before moving to Western Australia to live with her mother in Year 9. “I was getting homesick so I moved over there. Because the schooling is different there I went up a year which put me in Year 11 without doing any of my Year 10 subjects,” she said.

“It wasn’t that the school was bad but I went downhill and had a rough patch.”

Around the same time, Mara was also involved in a car accident and dealt with emotional trauma for months relating to the crash. “I went a bit rebel and took a really wrong path, ending up leaving school and moving around again. My grandma was not well at the time so I moved back to Victoria to see her. I decided to stick around and met a few people in Colac and they made me really happy.”

By chance she met Rachel Wood from South West LLEN’s Colac office, who encouraged her to complete Foundation VCAL studies at Otway Community College. “I really enjoyed it and I am very proud of myself to finish. A year ago, when I was thinking that I didn’t have any ambitions, it’s a big change to now,” she said.

“All thanks to Rachel – I would never have got back on track if I didn’t have that sort of support.”

Mara has now completed her senior VCAL studies and will soon finish a Certificate II in Business Studies.

She has also gained some valuable work experience as an office assistant at Colac Otway Shire Council last year, which she hopes will lead to paid employment.

Her aim now is to take on another business course and apply for temporary office assistant positions in Colac, building her confidence and her resume as she goes.

As a single parent of two primary school-aged children, Warrnambool’s Jac Tucker already had practical experience to draw on during her part-time course in Early Childhood Education at South West TAFE.

Good time management and people skills - as well as keeping those in her care occupied and entertained - have also been vital in her work placements for the course, which she hopes will lead to a long career in teaching children.

Ms Tucker, whose children are in Year 1 and Year 4, admits she had some nerves about returning to formal schooling. The former Emmanuel College student finished Year 12 in 2001 and said she never thought she’d go back to study “because school and I hated each other”.

“It wasn’t an option for me to leave school. I think it’s a fair effort if children complete Year 10 and then want to go out and study (a VET or TAFE course) because by the time they finish, they’re 18 years old and the world is at their feet and they can make their own decisions.”

Ms Tucker, 30, has wanted to work in education “since I was a little girl” and after completing a Certificate III, plans to progress to a Diploma in Early Childhood Education next year.

“Doing the diploma gives me the opportunity to be a room leader and room supervisor, not just a worker. I’d like the challenge of organising the weekly routines at a centre.”

One of the most satisfying parts of the course has been the work placements at childcare centres, which helped to change her original goal of primary school teaching to working with younger children. It has also revealed the need for expansion of the childcare sector in the growing Warrnambool area.

“I’d love to own and run a centre in the future. There’s definitely a market for it here – there are long waiting lists and carers wanting to go back to work and there’s not the places for them,” Jac said.

“Disappointment and adversity can be catalysts for greatness. There’s something particularly exciting about being the hunter, as opposed to the hunted, and that can make for powerful energy.”

- Catherine Freeman

“Being a single parent, I wanted to wait until my youngest went to school to give me the time and opportunity. “For me at this stage in my life: I want a career, I want to go places and be proud of what I do. The only way I’m going to get anywhere in life is if I study.”

The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don’t tell you what to see.

- Alexandra K. Trenfor
Some dream jobs are the result of fulfilling a childhood fantasy but Robbie Lowe insists he “fell into” his ideal career after various unsatisfying jobs.

The Warrnambool resident completed Year 11 at Brauer College and then finished short accredited courses at TAFE in dairy cattle yard construction, rural studies, automotive and welding while searching for meaningful work. Sport interests, social and practical subjects were the main drivers for his engagement and continuing attendance at secondary school, as academia was not one of his strengths.

As an adult, Robbie completed a four-year panel beating apprenticeship with Ballarat School of Mines and said “as soon as I completed my qualification, I got out of the industry. I was breathing in too much dust, and losing my hearing.”

“After this a colleague at TAFE suggested I make a radical change and take up a temporary position mentoring Koorie teenagers on the benefits of TAFE vocational courses, similar to the role I’m doing now. I applied and was successful and thought I’d have a go at it,” Robbie said.

That initial position and his subsequent role at the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development as a Koorie Engagement Support Officer, gave him the confidence to pursue further study and complete a Certificate IV in Education Support with Swinburne University.

Robbie is a father to two teenage daughters, one of whom is studying at Melbourne University and the other in Year 8 with aspirations to also pursue tertiary studies. “It was a proud moment for me to have them attend my graduation,” he said.

Robbie has now worked for the Department of Education for over 10 years, empowering young Indigenous children and their families to participate and stay within the school system and improve student pathway opportunities for Koorie students.

“We used to work with kids and go into classes as teacher’s aide but that role has changed in recent years. It’s evolved into a more professional role so now part of what we do is go in and set up Koorie curriculum for schools. This has to be localised and culturally relevant to the area. We work with the community, Elders, teachers and other support staff to teach them to understand (what being Koorie means),” he said.

“I love this job, particularly getting more involved in changing the curriculum. It’s a pretty big step for the schools to take it on. Teachers that I used to give a hard time when I was a student sit and listen to me now!”

The support officers have also engaged with fourth-year Deakin University teaching students, delivering cultural awareness training in preparation for their placements in country and outback communities.

Part of Robbie’s job has also involved encouraging Aboriginal Elders in the south-west to share traditional stories with a wider, young audience.

“Elders were taught when they were young that if another Elder teaches you a story, you can only pass it on to an Aboriginal person,” he said.

“Today, we don’t want the old stories to get lost in history and a few Elders, like my dad, are now going into schools to teach those stories to all the kids.”

“The only way to break down racism and people not understanding our culture, is to teach it to everyone.”

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Some quotes from the article:

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” - Nelson Mandela
WHY YEAR 12?

EARLY RISERS MAKE ALL THE DOUGH

Starting work before sunrise would not deter Brandon Kerr from pursuing his dream to become an apprentice baker or chef.

The 19-year-old is in his second year of a three-year structured workplace learning program at Warrnambool business Tasty Plate, which provides catering services and trains staff who have a diverse range of abilities.

Brandon studied Certificates I to III in Hospitality at South West TAFE and came to the attention of Tasty Plate staff after taking part in a work experience placement during his studies.

Aside from the chance to gain employment, the Warrnambool College graduate said putting his passion for the kitchen to use was a rewarding part of the job.

“I just like cooking. I like those sorts of shows [MasterChef, My Kitchen Rules] and wanted to try that,” Brandon said.

“When the program finishes, Tasty Plate staff will assist me to find somewhere else to work.”

As for the idea of early starts at a bakery, Brandon said he enjoyed getting up early for work and was very keen to try his hand as a professional baker.

“I like making pastries, sausage rolls and all that.”

His former TAFE teacher is also employed at Tasty Plate as a catering manager, lending further support to the staff as they learn the trade.

Helen Ridgwell from Tasty Plate said the business designed specific transition plans for participants such as Brandon as part of the training program.

“This will assist Brandon to get a job in open employment and we would support him in that position for a period of time, so that he not only gets a job but keeps a job,” she said.

“There will be other external training opportunities as part of that transition plan that he will take part in.”

GETTING BACK ON TRACK

Cobden’s Georgia Dickinson was inspired by a relative who worked with Australian Olympic cyclists and the desire to help others in her quest to gain a sports science degree.

The Cobden Technical School 2010 graduate did not gain the marks she hoped for in her final exams but found an alternative path to university through an associate degree at Deakin University’s Warrnambool campus.

The Associate Degree of Arts, Business and Sciences is a two-year, full-time (or part-time equivalent) course introducing school leavers and non-school leavers to university study. It is part of the Deakin at Your Desktop initiative, aimed at giving rural and regional students increased access to higher education.

Georgia said completing the degree smoothed the way for her entry into the Human Movement and Sports Science course at the Ballarat Federation University campus (formerly University of Ballarat).

She aims to complete the three-year course in 2014 and work in rehabilitation.

“My dream job is to work in the rehabilitation wards in hospitals with people who have come out of car accidents, lost limbs etc. I complete various different placements throughout the year which are helping me choose the path I want to go down,” she said.

“My family have supported me throughout all my studies; in fact it was them who encouraged me to do the associate degree at Deakin in the first place. I have a great uncle who is a sport scientist. He has done very well as he designed the Australian bikes that were used in the most recent Olympics.”

The 21-year-old part-time lifesaver said it was important for young students to remember they had different options to look at if they were not performing as well at school.

“If you don’t get good enough marks there is a way around it. I did not get the marks needed (in Year 12), which is why I completed the associate degree.

“There is also a course at Ballarat called the FAST (Foundation Access Studies) program which is very similar to the course I completed. I feel this helped me a lot as it helps you with academic writing and referencing and I still use all these skills in my course today.”

Australia must prioritise education spending. It is not a question of whether or not we have the money, it is a question of how we choose to spend it.

- BOB BROWN

Sport...teaches life’s lessons. But there’s no substitute, in my book, for education, because that gives you choice.

- PROFESSOR FIONA WOOD

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A love for computers is spurring on Warrnambool’s Michael Tickner in his studies, which he hopes will one day see him working at Google or Facebook.

The 19-year-old finished Year 12 at Hampden Specialist School in 2012 and a two-year VCAL course at Cobden Technical School, where he completed two information technology units.

He is now working through an Advanced Diploma in Computer Technology at South West TAFE.

Study has not always been an easy task for Michael, as he has had difficulties with traditional schooling but his motivation to learn has helped overcome most obstacles.

“I have autism and a mental illness. It is hard to do school work but I keep going,” he said.

“I need help (with schoolwork) because I have trouble understanding some things and meanings of words.”

Michael has not let his disability affect his career goals. He said his dream was to work for a prominent online or software company and has started a website [www.mrcomputerguydoctor.com] to showcase his talents.

“I would like to work for Google, Facebook or Microsoft. I love working with computers and I have been studying Cisco networking, programming, server and web development.”

One of the advantages Michael can see from working with computers is their constant presence in everyday life.

“There’s computers everywhere like at supermarkets, workplaces and schools. I think being an information technology technician would be a busy job.”

Michael is now living out of home, though he jokes that he has to help his family when it comes to understanding computers, and he is confident that sticking with his passion will provide a successful and enjoyable career.
THE WORLD’S A STAGE FOR RUBY

Former Timboon resident Ruby Clementson is setting the scene for a promising career producing stage musicals.

Her passion for the arts was influenced as a child by her mother, who took Ruby to see as many theatre productions as she could, and also during a student exchange program in France.

“I suppose I've always enjoyed watching films and theatre productions, but the reason I ended up moving into theatre specifically was musicals,” Ruby said. “My mum always made sure that I had the opportunity to see the new shows that were showing or touring.”

The 2009 Cobden Technical School graduate took a gap year after Year 12 and joined the Education First (EF) exchange program, gaining an insight into French language and culture by living with a host family and attending a local high school.

On her return, Ruby completed a two-year diploma in Costume for Theatre at Swinburne University. The initial diploma lead to further opportunities in theatre production.

“Working on our end-of-year show led me into the current course I am studying, Technical Production for live events. I am learning the skills needed to work as a theatre technician but primarily to become a stage/production manager,” she said.

As with many industries, Ruby has discovered the value of meeting new people and building networks from the various work experience placements and stage productions she has taken part in. She has been given valuable advice on the need to be proactive in developing future work opportunities.

“A career in the arts depends on who you know and what you are prepared to do, as well as good communication skills,” she said.

Ruby said having “a good reputation as a hard working, easy going and reliable person” helped to support the lessons learnt through tertiary education.

“Likewise making contacts is vital to a career in the industry. Work experience is an easy way to start this process. Put yourself out there! Getting a diploma or a degree isn’t a guarantee of success.”

The experience living in France has also given her the travel bug but Ruby said her current focus was to finish her current course and find suitable jobs close to home.

“Melbourne is a great area for theatre work so it’s a great place for me to start building my career. However, I'd love to travel and hope to do so soon!”

“EDUCATION IS NOT THE FILLING OF A PAIL, BUT THE LIGHTING OF A FIRE.”

- W.B. YEATS
South West Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. (South West LLEN) is a not-for-profit community organisation whose mission is to facilitate partnerships to maximise successful learning and employment pathways for all young people in the South West region of Victoria.

We foster and lead a strategic, whole of community approach to supporting young people’s learning and development and in particular the completion of Year 12 or its equivalent.

South West LLEN is one of 31 LLENs across Victoria that fulfills the following key functions:

- LLENs support young people at risk of disengaging, or who have already disengaged, from education and training and are not in meaningful employment. They focus on increasing participation, improving educational attainment and transitional outcomes as well as increasing young people’s career aspirations to build a generation of work ready young people.
- LLENs also facilitate and support a range of initiatives, through partnerships and collaboration with and across stakeholders as well as provide local advice on statewide policy and program issues and serving as an active platform for joining government initiatives with local education and training systems.

For more information and contact details please visit www.swllen.net.au

South West Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. is proud to produce the Why Year 12? publication working with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

USEFUL WEBSITES

- **Australian Apprenticeships**
  www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au
- **Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)**
  www.aracy.org.au
- **Deakin University**
  www.deakin.edu.au
- **Department of Education**
  www.education.gov.au
- **Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**
  www.education.vic.gov.au
- **Department of Human Services**
  www.humanservices.gov.au
- **Early years**
  www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au
- **Great South Coast**
  www.greatsouthcoast.com.au
- **Kids Help Line**
  www.kidshelp.com.au
- **LifeLine**
  www.lifeline.org.au
- **My Future**
  www.myfuture.edu.au
- **Parenting Research Centre**
  www.parentingrc.org.au
- **Playgroup Victoria**
  www.playgroup.org.au
- **Rotary International**
  www.rotary.org.au
- **Rotary Club of Warrnambool East**
  www.clubrunner.ca/warrnambooleast
- **South West Institute of TAFE**
  www.swtafe.vic.edu.au
- **South West Local Learning and Employment Network**
  www.swllen.net.au
- **Youth Attainment and Transitions**
- **Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority**
  www.vcaa.vic.edu.au
- **Westvic Staffing Solutions**
  www.westvic.org.au