

TAKING A STANCE ON FAIRNESS

South West LLEN has led a strong regional campaign against the Federal Government's changes to Independent Youth Allowance eligibility criteria. The campaign culminated in a public forum at the Warrnambool Entertainment Centre on June 3 which attracted more than 300 people.

Fifty eight of those in attendance were young people who had deferred their studies in 2009 and now fear they will not be able to afford to attend university next year.

The campaign is continuing with petitions and letters being sent to the Federal Government. Two resolutions from the forum called on the Government to:

1. Reconsider proposed changes announced in the Federal Budget to the eligibility criteria for Independent Youth Allowance for the current group of students deferring university,
2. Provide longer-term recognition of regional disadvantage suffered by rural and regional people forced to live away from home for further education.

A panel discussion was led by Deakin University Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) Professor Sue Kilpatrick, Warrnambool College principal Mary Pendergast and expert on the costs of attending university, Vince Callaghan. Mr Callaghan said the disadvantages faced by rural and regional students were not being addressed and changes to the eligibility criteria were "insensitive and wrong".

Ms Pendergast called on the Government to give rural and regional people a "fair go" and allow fair access for all students to the course of their choice. "This policy takes away the capacity of our kids to have a pathway of choice." Professor Kilpatrick said she feared the changes would make it more difficult for regional students to return to further study and for universities to reach their student number targets.

South West LLEN CEO Toni Hancock said the forum gave people facts about the extra costs and direction on how to protest against the eligibility changes.

People seeking more information or details about how to protest against the changes can visit www.swllen.net.au or email reception@swllen.net.au. **See page 2 for profile story**



More than 300 concerned students and parents filled the Civic Hall on June 3rd in outrage against the Rudd Government's proposed changes to Youth Allowance.



Year 7 Learning Community at Colac Secondary College

LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT PUTS A FOCUS ON OPPORTUNITIES

Lighthouse Schools recognise best practice and encourage innovation in school career education programs through providing funding to schools. The Local Community Partnership has provided ongoing commitment to support the integration of essential learning and generic skills that are designed to further equip young people to effectively participate in their community and workplaces.

The Lighthouse project has supported Colac Secondary College with the introduction of digital portfolios and pathways planning into the Year 7 and Year 8 Learning Community. Colac Secondary College staff members are involved in a two day professional learning workshop which will provide the foundation for teachers to support their students' journeys from portfolios to student led interviews.

The intention is to increase awareness of pathways and pathways planning for students and parents.

THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Three new members were welcomed to the Board at the South West LLEN Annual General Meeting on March 24.

- Suzanne Armstrong is the Principal of the Colac Specialist School and brings a different perspective to the principal category. Her experience will be invaluable as SWLLEN moves to improve employment pathways for young people with disabilities
- Professor Sue Kilpatrick is the recently appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) at the Warrnambool campus of Deakin University and is passionate about higher education access for rural and regional students and lifelong learning.
- Philip Hoggan is the Local Government representative. As the projects manager of the Skills for Growth area of the Warrnambool City Council's Business Support Unit, he has extensive knowledge of local employers and skills shortages.

Retiring members Matthew Farrow, Chani Hawksworth, Tom Lindsay, Philip Morison and Anne Waters are thanked sincerely for their contributions.

AN AUSSIE FAIR GO?

Gladys* is a grandmother of two students who did VCE in 2008. One lives in the Warrnambool region and the other in a Melbourne suburb.

Both aspired to further education as they realised tertiary qualifications were essential for their career options.

In 2006, the rural-based student, 'Natalie', started working during school holidays and weekends to save for university.

A conscientious student, she did extra subjects in 2007 to ensure a high score, while continuing to work part time.

The effort paid off and her ENTER score in 2008 was in the top 10 per cent of the state, giving her acceptance into virtually any Melbourne-based university.

However, her family was unable to afford this and so Natalie planned to go to Geelong where she could study a similar course (but not her course of choice) while living more cheaply.

In 2009 she deferred and got a full time 12-month contract job with the aim of being eligible for the Independent Youth Allowance

Natalie also kept her weekend work to help for next year, as the job could be transferable to Geelong as she realizes she will need to work while studying.

She also completed a short hospitality course at South West TAFE to help with job seeking for next year.

Natalie's parents are downsizing their home so extra money will be available to support her but with the budget decision to change eligibility for the allowance she will now have to find another job in 2010.

This means it will now be two years before Natalie can start on career path and she will still have to cope with the work/study/self sufficiency environment of living away from home on limited resources.

Meanwhile, her city cousin 'Jody' completed the minimum subjects for VCE in 2008 and started a part-time job. He had intended to defer university and work for part of year and then travel in 2009 but he did not obtain the ENTER score needed for his university course so instead enrolled in a TAFE course.

He is living at home, not paying board and working part time for pocket money. His biggest problem is getting used to catching a train into the city each day.

Jody is already on his career path which will enable him to transfer to University at a late date. All support and financial help is coming from home. Jody continues with his local sport and social life and his parents are looking to buy a holiday home.

To Gladys, these contrasting examples show the inequality and stress the Government policy is having on rural based families compared to those living in the city.

In two years these families will be faced with same decisions for two more children.

"Please tell me why rural families have such unequal opportunities?" Gladys asked.

This article is based on information supplied to SWLLEN by a Warrnambool district resident concerned about the changes to the Independent Youth Allowance eligibility criteria. False names have been used.

To support the campaign:

Vote for the Resolution

www.swllen.net.au

MEGAN FINDS A BETTER WAY

School Based Traineeships are a great way to get out and experience the workplace first hand and still stay in school to complete year 12 or equivalent. Doing my SBA last year at RMIT University was one of the best things to ever happen to me. It made me realise how a busy company that runs in more than one location works. Whilst I was working I was also able to continue with school at Monivae College. In six months, with help from my supervisors, I successfully completed my Certificate II in Business. This was a great help in gaining employment after I left school as I already had the knowledge of a 9am to 5pm job behind me and a certificate. I am now doing a year long full-time traineeship along with Cert III in business. My SBA made me realise University is not the only way to get a qualification.

By **MEGAN IRVING**



CALLING ALL MENTORS

Older Australians have a lot of expertise and wisdom to share with younger generations.

A new pilot program, *Mentors for our Students*, provides an ideal opportunity for people with skills in maths, science and engineering to mentor young people in secondary schools. It's about something simple – two people of different ages and backgrounds talking together and learning from each other.

The Federal Government Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations is funding 25 Local Community Partnerships to pilot the new program.

The South West Local Learning & Employment Network Local Community Partnership has been selected to pilot the mentoring program in the Warrnambool area.

The program matches students in years 9 -12 with recently retired tradespeople, as well as professionals and paraprofessionals who have skills, qualifications and experience in the areas of maths, science, and engineering.

The pilot aims to improve school retention rates and the transition of young people from school, by sparking their interest in those occupations experiencing skills shortages in their local communities.

The areas of identified skill shortage include:

Trades: metal machinist, toolmaker, pressure welder/welder, sheet metal worker, motor mechanic, auto electrician, panel beater, vehicle painter, air conditioning mechanic

Professional & paraprofessional careers:

computing professional, registered nurse, registered midwife, registered mental health nurse, pharmacist, physiotherapist, medical diagnostic radiographer, and sonographer.

The aim of the program is to inspire young people, broaden their horizons, encourage them to stay on at school, and help them make informed career choices. Business owners who are operating in these areas of skills shortage and are experiencing difficulty in recruiting potential staff are strongly encouraged to consider participating in the Mentors for our Students program. It is an opportunity for older Australians to invest their past in the future of young people in their community. Mentors will be trained and supported by the Local Community Partnerships team.

The time commitment for the Mentors for our Students Program will be: Two half day training sessions, then one hour per week with your student over a 12-week period (July 13 – October 23). The program will then conclude with a closure and presentation ceremony.

We are now looking for committed and caring people to join the Mentors for our Students Program. For more information about this program or to register your interest in becoming a mentor please contact:

Donna Willoughby
Program Coordinator
Phone: 5561 0047

South West LLEN Aim:

To facilitate and support collaborative partnerships with stakeholders to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people in the South West region.

Scholarship Finds Future Leaders

The Future Leaders of Industry Scholarship Program was adopted by Portland Aluminium in 2005. The program offer a scholarship for further educational purposes s to 20 young students from local schools who display leadership qualities. By developing this program Portland Aluminium aimed to help its future recruitment of employees. The qualities that they sought were both academic and general leadership involvement in community based areas such as voluntary work, membership and roles in sporting groups, mentoring young students, helping run youth orientated activities etc. The program has seen a steady increase in the number of major sponsors coming on board. Each business provides a mentor for the student who is assigned to them and they work in a close relationship providing one to one guidance to gain understanding of the business and its operation.

The goals of the program are:

- To provide an opportunity for young people to engage in education, employment and training opportunities in the local (regional) community
- To identify opportunities for young people in regard to schooling and careers in the local (regional) community
- To provide access for young people to participate in education and training and the opportunity to develop their employability skills
- To build community capacity

Businesses involved have felt that the program "gives them an opportunity to better understand young people, their views, values and expectations of the workforce."

Student feedback was very positive. While this format has existed in the past years, it is being reviewed and adapted in relation to the current expectations of businesses, schools, parents and the economic climate.

YOUTH COUNCIL MOVES CLOSER TO REALITY

The formation of a Corangamite Youth Council moved closer to reality when four representatives of the 2008 School Summit group met with new Shire Development Activities Officer Cindy Jenkinson on April 27. The students took the opportunity to press for the implementation of a raft of recommendations which they originally took to a Corangamite Shire briefing last year.

"We're well on the way to achieving our aims," James Lenehan of Mercy Regional College said. "We asked for a youth development officer and Cindy has already been appointed to that role. If we can get a youth council up and going, it will make it easier to work on our other recommendations."

Cobden Technical School's Caitlin Browning said the Summit group was pursuing the establishment of a communications network specifically for young people in the shire.

"If we can keep Corangamite youth in touch with one another via all the electronic technology and media that's available to us, then we have more chance of keeping everyone connected and supporting functions and events that are designed for us," she said.

Other recommendations included building on the current transport system, providing more music functions and establishing a youth centre in the shire.

The 2008 Corangamite Summit process was co-ordinated by Local Community Partnerships facilitator Kelvin White who accompanied the students to their meeting with Ms Jenkinson.

"It's an exciting time for young people in the shire," he said. With the appointment of Cindy and plans for a youth council, there are new opportunities to make a real difference by putting sustainable programs in place. The shire's encouragement and support throughout the process is appreciated by the Summit members.

Photo: Setting up the future – Ben Lawlor (left, Terang College), Cindy Jenkinson (Youth Development Officer), Andrew Pegg (standing, Cobden Technical School), James Lenehan (Mercy Regional College) and Caitlin Browning (Cobden Technical School).



YOUTH COMMITMENT – Have you signed on??

If you are a member of the South West LLEN, you already made the commitment to young people. By signing onto the South West Youth Commitment you can make a further pledge to help the region's youth find the right direction in life and get support they need to remain in education, training or meaningful employment.

The South West Youth Commitment aims to empower individuals and businesses to ask, "What can I do to help?" when they see a young person who is "at risk" of not continuing in full-time education, training or employment, or who is already disengaged. The initiative provides useful resources to assist you to refer a young person "at risk" to an appropriate service. To find out more or to sign on to be a Youth Commitment signatory visit www.swllen.net.au/youth-commitment



Life's good when working on the farm

A DVD highlighting career opportunities in the Colac region's dairy industry has been launched.

The Colac Otway Shire Dairy Industry Training Reference Group successfully implemented a project in 2008 that highlighted the local dairy and associated industries. In March the launch of the 'Life's Good on the Farm' DVD and resources was held at COPACC. The resources support the careers education initiative and Agriculture and Horticulture VET programs within schools in the region and highlight the array of pathways for young people within this sector.

"The commitment of the stakeholders is an indication of what can be achieved when working in partnership to benefit the industry and the future opportunities of the young people in the region," said Cr. Chris Smith.

During 2009 it is planned to build on these outcomes and increase the number of young people undertaking work experience, increase the numbers of students undertaking studies in agriculture, horticulture, science or associated studies at VET and VCE level and increase the knowledge of our prospective employees in the Dairy Industry.

PHOTO: At the launch of the project are Kerri Bauer Barwon West LCP, Darren Cheeseman MP, Maria Zaluski Regional Industry Career Advisor



WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER WORK OUTCOMES

Local Community Partnerships and schools in the Hopkins region are working together to maintain a strong and accessible structured workplace learning program for their VCAL and VET students.

A very positive meeting of SWL teaching staff took place in Terang on March 19 when five schools – Cobden Technical School, Terang College, Camperdown College, Mercy Regional College and Mortlake College - discussed their methods of preparing students for their placements.

Timboon P-12, which is showing interest in offering a VCAL program in 2010, also attended the meeting.

A further get-together is planned during term two primarily to share resources but also to look at adopting a more consistent approach to structured workplace learning across the region.

All schools expressed a strong belief in the viability of VET, VCAL and SWL as valuable learning activities for their students. "It is obvious that schools want to commit resources to these successful programs to ensure they meet the needs of their students," according to LCP facilitator Kelvin White.

Local Community Partnerships also convened a student and parent 'It's all about SWL' meeting at Cobden on March 25 to assist students about to embark on their work placements.

LCP manager Paul Atack provided relevant background information about structured workplace learning and discussed the need for good documentation while Kelvin White emphasised the benefits of making the best use of placements.

General discussion centred on what parents could do to support their young people, and the issue of work readiness was taken up by local employers Kathy Hall of Hair Avenue in Camperdown and Cobden plumber and gasfitter Evan Savage.

Both Kathy and Evan provided sound advice to the young people attending the evening. They were very positive about the SWL concept, describing it as an opportunity for both employer and potential employee to achieve great outcomes.

BRIDIE'S MESSAGE OF HOPE

Bridie Hudson had a clear message for those attending the South West Local Learning and Employment Network's Annual General Meeting – disabled people need to know their rights and what options are available to them. Bridie, 23, attributed her success to supportive teachers who encouraged her ambitions and to an invaluable piece of advice that one of them gave her 'that nothing you ever do in life is a waste of time.'

Bridie, who has cerebral palsy, is completing her Honours degree in psychology at the University of Melbourne. She also works for a women's health organisation and is a steering committee member for the Youth Disability Advocacy Service – Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic).

She is passionate about integrating all disabled students into mainstream schooling by providing the appropriate support to meet their needs. She claimed that while tertiary providers focus on educational needs, personal care is often overlooked. "It's hard to go to uni if you can't go to the toilet or eat your lunch."

However, Birdie said the greatest barriers to participation were in the area of employment. Discrimination and lack of awareness lead to examples like a teacher graduate who was denied a job because she could not write on the blackboard; a situation Bridie says can easily be overcome using a combination of motivation and technology. She also spoke of the other major disincentive to prospective employers; the time lapse of up to four months between the job offer and implementation of the occupational therapist's assessment. She also noted a presumption that disabled people with qualifications would work in the disability area rather pursuing a range of goals.

COACHING FOR SUCCESS...

We know that when a young person has a plan, they are more likely to be successful and move through life stages more smoothly. Coaching Young People for Success is a fantastic tool that can be used to help students explore their strengths and develop goals as well as strategies to achieve them.

Local Community Partnerships facilitated a training day in Hamilton where schools from the Southern Grampians, Glenelg and Colac Otway regions attended. Teachers from eight schools participated in day one of the Coaching Young People for Success training which focussed on the three core programs, Life Coaching, Career Coaching and School Performance. All schools have or will introduce the program into their curriculum to assist with student transitions and planning. Day two of the training, Advanced Coaching Skills, will be offered in early Term 3, with the date and venue to be announced. Thank you to all the participants and Robyn Chellew for a wonderfully successful day

VCAL UNDERWAY AND TASTING GOOD!

Community VCAL is underway for 2009 with a total of 28 enrolments. This year there are three senior students who have progressed through the foundation and intermediate stages of the program. The preparation, cooking and serving of a daily lunch will form the basis of the VCE Food and Technology units being undertaken by the students. This experience will be put to good use when they run a fundraising barbecue at Bunnings in Warrnambool with the proceeds going to the end of year camp and a paintballing expedition

SHIRE PROMOTES LOCAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Southern Grampians Shire Council is keen to raise the profile of jobs within local government and improve awareness regarding the vast range of occupations that are available. In partnership with Careers Advice Australia, a school excursion was organised where 26 Baimbridge College students were able to hear from a civil engineer, human resources and contracts manager, operations coordinator, events coordinator, tourism manager, local laws officer and a town planner.

Small groups of students rotated around the presenter tables in a "speed dating" type format and were provided with detailed information about their roles, day-to-day activities, likes and dislikes, study pathways and opportunities for further advancement. Feedback from students indicated they appreciated the opportunity with all attending reporting that they had found the experience very worthwhile.



Deakin @ Your Doorstep is an innovative project to deliver an Associate Degree program specifically designed for students who do not satisfy the usual university entry requirements. Due to commence in 2010, the course will be delivered on campus at Deakin Warrnambool and using leading edge technology at six Learning Centres located at TAFE institutes across the state. Give Alistair and his team a call if this applies to you or someone you know

Cows may create careers but it's Alistair McCosh, the south-west's first regional careers advisor, who is quite literally moving on to greener pastures. Alistair has accepted a position as senior project manager of the Deakin at Your Doorstep program and will be based at the Warrnambool campus of Deakin University. Over the past three years Alistair has actively promoted the Careers Advice Australia initiatives across the Glenelg-Southern Grampians, Hopkins and Warrnambool City LCP areas.

He cites his achievements as bringing new programs to the region such as Beacon Foundation and Coaching Young People for Success and conducting careers expos particularly in rural areas like Terang and Mortlake.

Paul Attack, Local Community Partnerships Manager, praised Alistair for his strong networking skills across secondary schools, TAFE and industry sectors. He highlighted the success of activities such as expos for students and business breakfasts for employers.

We thank Alistair for his support, companionship and endless good humour in the mission to secure better outcomes and opportunities for the young people of the south west

South West LLEN Board 2009

Suzanne Armstrong
Colac Specialist School

Joe Piper
South West TAFE

Peter Macdonald
Otway Community College

Sue Kilpatrick
Deakin University

James Dennis (Chair)
Victorian Farmers
Federation

David Mathison
DM Truck Centre

Barrie Baker
Industry

Marie Bird
Janah Administration

Philip Hoggan
Warrnambool City Council

Georgina Ryder
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