

## YOUTH PARTNERSHIPS

### ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION OPTIONS PROJECT REPORT

# MAINSTREAM +

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Report from Wynbay LLEN

For

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Bayside P-12 College  
Hoppers Crossing Secondary College  
Laverton P-12 College  
Manor Lakes P-12 College  
Point Cook Senior Secondary College  
Tarneit Senior College  
The Grange P-12 College  
Werribee Primary School  
Western English Language School  
Woodville Primary School  
Wyndham Central College  
Karingal Create Youth  
Wyndham Community and Education Centre  
Williamstown Community and Education Centre  
The Link Centre  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Local Learning and Employment Network (WynBay LLEN) was commissioned by the North West Metropolitan Region office of DEECD to undertake the Youth Partnerships – Alternative Education Options Project. This was an initiative of the Victorian Government.

The aims of the project were to:

- Research and document existing local alternative education models and settings;
- Research and document similar regional, state-wide and worldwide models and settings to identify best practise; and,
- Benchmark existing alternate education models against best practice.

The purpose of this work is to inform and advocate for improved support, resources or funding for local providers in the context of challenges faced in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay. The project complements the existing work of the WynBay LLEN and helps advance the strategic goals of the LLEN in relation to improved re-engagement of vulnerable young people.

The project has utilised existing models and investigated others that are appropriate for different age groups within the 10-18 cohort based on consultation with local stakeholders. It recognises the differences in need and response between a 10-14 year old and 15-18 year olds.

This report provides the following evidence:

- a review of relevant research and policy literature
- a scan of the current arrangements for provision of alternative education in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay, including a custom survey of all stakeholders
- ten local and international best practice examples
- the findings from the Working Group convened for this project

This evidence has informed the development of the conclusions, recommendations and the business case that is presented at the end of this report.

The Literature Review identified policy and practice issues that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency with the aim of providing an outreach-based, inclusive, holistic and flexible suite of options for students. The provision of flexible learning approaches is essential if 'all children and young people [are] to have access to the most appropriate learning environment to enable them to complete Year 12 or equivalent and transition into meaningful future pathways' (Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence (BSL), 2009:4). The Literature Review outlined conceptual foundations and principles that were commonly observed in the organisations profiled throughout the report. It also provided context and evidence for benchmarking and decision making for this project.

The review of the current settings in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas discovered that the numbers of students disengaging from school prior to completing Year 12 are higher than the state average. With an expected significant population growth over the next 15 years, particularly in the Wyndham LGA, it is predicted that these numbers will increase by 20 to 25 per cent. Schools surveyed reported between 3 and 17 per cent of students were currently at-risk of disengagement and they expect the demand for re-engagement programs to increase. The review of current provision found that the services in the area are unable to meet demand due to a lack of appropriate space and resources.

Review of local and international best practice examples around the areas of: The Learning Environment; Supporting the Young Person; Teaching Strategies and Approaches; and, The

Curriculum and Qualifications, provided strong evidence that was considered in the formation of the recommendations and the Business Model proposed.

Recommendations developed as a result of this project are based on evidence presented in this report as considered through a series of extensive working group as well as one-on-one consultations undertaken by WynBay LLEN. The working group has reached a consensus on 2 different models for each of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas. Both are based on findings that the most appropriate alternative education options would be outreach, inclusive, holistic, place-based support services based on continuum/expansion of existing programs provided within as well as outside school settings.

- Model 1
  - Age group 10 to 14 years
  - Outcome – transition back into mainstream schooling
  - Tier 3 flexible learning options within school setting to be short-term, intensive programs
- Model 2
  - Age group 15 – 18 years
  - Outcome – transition back into mainstream schooling wherever possible or into further education, training or employment
  - Tier 4 flexible learning options outside school setting to be long-term ongoing programs

Extensive and detailed recommendations to support the development of these models are outlined. A Business Case has also been developed to facilitate the realisation of these recommendations for the young people in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas. It is recommended that upon further feasibility study, a detailed *business plan* be developed on the basis of this business case.



## INTRODUCTION

This is a report of the Alternative Education Options Project undertaken by Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Local Learning and Employment Network (WynBay LLEN) for the Youth Partnerships initiative of the Victorian Government. The following summarises the purposes of the Youth Partnerships initiative, and therefore the broad purpose of this project.

As some young people face barriers to stay in or re-engage with school or training, they may be in touch with a wide range of providers of education, health and social services. However, it has become clear that many of these services do not operate as a system, meaning responses for young people can be fragmented, complex and services may be difficult for vulnerable young people and families to navigate. Youth Partnerships is a whole of Victorian Government initiative that will design and test new ways for services to work together more collaboratively to provide the necessary holistic support for vulnerable young people aged 10 - 18 years so that they may achieve positive life outcomes.

Youth Partnerships (2013)

The key goals of Youth Partnerships are to:

- improve engagement in education and training; and
- reduce the escalation of problems for individual young people.

### Demonstration Project in Western Metropolitan region

Seven demonstration sites are currently being established, to trial new approaches to delivering services to make sure young people receive coordinated and holistic support. Each demonstration site is governed by a local, cross sectoral committee. The demonstration sites are based on groupings of Local Government Areas.

In the Western Metropolitan Region the demonstration project covers the Local Government Areas of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay. The project is administered by a Local Governance Group (LGG) and a Youth Partnerships project officer has been appointed to manage the project and a Youth Partnerships Advisory group convened to support the project officer and to present options to the LGG. Broader sectoral feedback has been sought from established networks within the local area. A Project Working Group was established to coordinate and deliver the project. The Wynbay LLEN is represented on the Governance Group, the Advisory Group and the Alternative Education Options Project Working Group.

### WynBay LLEN

WynBay LLEN is an incorporated association of members who are stakeholders interested and involved in the education, training and employment advancement of young people in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay. In every partnership that they help broker, they are guided by the principles of Trust; Equity; Mutual benefit; and Value adding. As they are not service providers there is no vested interest, nor scope to gain from this project other than achieving better outcomes for young people.

WynBay LLEN is a network comprising of nearly 230 organizations representing schools, business and community. The main stakeholders of the Western Metropolitan Region component of the Youth Partnerships Local Governance Committee, Youth Partnerships Working Group and schools in the area are members of WynBay LLEN. Consequently they have developed strong relationships with all key players and have facilitated their commitment to this project. WynBay LLEN is strategically placed to deliver the kind of structural and process reform to ensure sustainability and on-going systematic change beyond the life of this project.

The Alternate Education Project within Youth Partnerships builds on and complements the efforts of WynBay LLEN in this field since 2005. WynBay LLEN has been a broker and

facilitator of the Alternate Education programs in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay and in particular the Community VCAL and VET programs in Wyndham.

In summary, WynBay LLEN represents a unique entity ideally placed to undertake this project and deliver lasting outcomes for the following reasons:

- It is an independent Not-For-Profit incorporated association of members; including Alternate Community Education Providers.
- The Alternate Education Project is aligned with the Strategic Objectives of the WynBay LLEN as stated in the current Strategic Plan 2010-2013 and complements existing strategies being employed to achieve higher re-engagement rates in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay.
- Sustainability of the core aims is achieved under the auspices of the LLEN.
- They are neutral cross sector brokers;
- They are fully-funded Commonwealth and State initiatives;
- They do not compete with other members or stakeholders on funding, products or services as LLEN's are not service providers;
- They are local experts, comprised of and managed by local stakeholders.
- WynBay LLEN is currently contracted by DEECD to deliver the Partnership Brokers initiative under the COAG Youth Attainment and Transition Agreement.

In addition the Wynbay LLEN have been contracted to undertake the Youth Partnerships In School Support Project. Wynbay LLEN employed a part-time project officer to support this project and there were efficiencies gained in joining this position with the Alternative Education Options Project Officer position, as recommended by the Youth Partnerships Local Governance Group.

## **Project Aim**

The aims of the project were to:

- Research and document existing local alternative education models and settings;
- Research and document similar regional, state-wide and worldwide models and settings to identify best practise; and,
- Benchmark existing alternate education models against best practice.

The purpose of this work is to inform and advocate for improved support, resources or funding for local providers in the context of challenges faced in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay. The project complements the existing work of the WynBay LLEN and helps advance the strategic goals of the LLEN in relation to improved re-engagement of vulnerable young people.

The project has utilised existing models and investigated others that are appropriate for different age groups within the 10-18 year age group based on consultation with local stakeholders. It recognises the differences in need and response between a 10-14 year old and 15-18 year olds.

## **Project Activities**

The WynBay LLEN Alternative Education Options Project has used the following activities to inform this report and meet the requirements of the project:

- Facilitated the WynBay LLEN Network of local stakeholders with an interest in alternative education to provide a platform for work in this area over the longer term.
- Built knowledge and understanding of various alternative education models with those key stakeholders to inform the future delivery of alternative education locally.

- Utilised this network to develop a consensus approach to what is needed in the local area by conducting a SWOT Analysis of currently available services and proposed future delivery
- Investigated world best practice options for alternative education options for young people aged 10-18 years of age
- Consulted widely with local schools and health and community services to establish the need and potential local level interventions.
- Commissioned a Literature Review and research support to further develop understanding of the Alternative Education Options sector and best practice.
- Developed a final report including a business case outlining recommendations for enhanced support for Alternative Education models and a agreed model/s for broader implementation.

## Report Overview

This report presents the findings of the Alternative Education Options Project. It provides the following evidence:

- a review of relevant research and policy literature
- a scan of the current arrangements for provision of alternative education in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay, including a custom survey of all stakeholders
- Ten local and international best practice examples

This evidence has informed the development of the conclusions, recommendations and business case that is presented at the end of this report.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Alternative Education

‘Alternative education’ describes the range of responses and intensive supports provided to children and young people who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to access, participate or remain within mainstream schooling. These young people are at high risk of disengagement or have already disengaged from learning, and have high levels of school refusal and absenteeism (DEECD, 2010). As such, providers of alternative education are focused on changing the kinds of teaching and learning that these young people can access and engage in. Alternative education providers, including Learn Local organisations (LLOs), are an important feature of the educational landscape in many countries (McGregor & Mills, 2011), including Australia.

A wide variety of alternative educational programs exist across Australia. A national scan of alternative programs carried out in 2011 found that there were approximately 33,000 young people participating in 400 programs in 1,200 locations. These programs were described as ‘aimed at disenfranchised young people who are not served well by more conventional schooling’ (Riele, 2012:17)

### Disengaged Students

In an educational context, the term “disengagement” is used to describe the detachment from school of those children and young people for whom school attendance is compulsory. In Victoria education is compulsory for students until the age of 17 unless specific exemption is sought (Riele, 2012). Children and young people are at risk of disengaging from school “when their life circumstances, learning experiences and/or behaviour impede learning, reduce school success and discourage participation” (DEECD, 2010: 7).

It has frequently been found that young people become disengaged due to a complex mix of reasons, all of which are closely interwoven (Borrell, Binion, Deur, Lister, Schroeder & Vogdanis, 2011; Brader & McGinty, 2005). Davies, Lamb and Doecke’s research (2011) identified the key factors contributing to disengagement as relating to four main areas: access, achievement, application and aspiration:

Table 1 - Key factors contributing to disengagement (Davies, et al., 2011: iv)

Access	Poor knowledge of study options No interest in finding out Low aspirations and confidence Constraints on access (distance, time, financial)
Achievement	Poor prior experience of learning Early school leaver Long periods without study Language, literacy and numeracy needs
Application	Income support needs Family commitments Disability/health problems Poverty English language needs Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), Indigenous, Refugee status Living circumstances
Aspiration	No careers plans Limited networks Poor information on work and opportunities Lacking careers advice or planning

Increasingly, disabilities, learning differences, mental health, peer relationships and drug, alcohol and substance abuse are making it more difficult for students to access mainstream education. Anxiety and depression are the most common forms of mental health issues, while the emergence and prevalence of cyber-bullying is a rising trend that sees young people turn to alternative educational providers, including Learn Local Organisations. These young people, notably, are typically from Anglo-Australian backgrounds (Ellum & Longmuir, 2013).

Disengagement from mainstream education also appears to be occurring earlier, with many young people by the ages of 12-14 either continuing without access to education or being educated in alternative settings (Borrell et al., 2011). The Adult and Community Education (ACE) Report of 2003 (Marr, Hauka, Beever & Keating, 2003) found that enrolments amongst 15-19 year olds had risen within ACE over a period when Year 12 retention rates in schools also had risen. The implication is that there was a link between the increase of the school-leaving age to 17 and the rise in demand for alternative education programs (Marr et al., 2003).

## Policy Directions

In Australia, the relationship between non-completion of secondary education and unemployment is currently stronger than in many other OECD countries (McGregor et al., 2011). Young people who do not complete Year 12 spend less time employed, earn less, are twice as likely to be unemployed at the age of 24, have less access to on-the-job training and are less likely to engage in lifelong learning (Melbourne Citymission).

The policy objectives of the Victorian government with regards to the provision of education and training, youth pathways and improved levels of participation were articulated in the *Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria* (2000), also known as the Kirby Report. This report highlighted the difficulties that many students faced with the more academic Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), and identified the need for more flexible approaches to link students to tertiary, training and employment destinations (Myconos, 2011). In response, the Victorian Government created the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), trialled in 2002 and rolled out across the state and independent school sectors in 2004.

Despite the successes of the VCAL program in catering for disengaged young people in mainstream schools, it became apparent that school-based VCAL had limited ability to cater for students who had consistently negative experiences and perceptions of formal education. This led to the emergence of Community VCAL (CVCAL) programs, whose defining feature was its physical separation from the mainstream school environment. Providers of CVCAL for school aged students maintain relationships with nearby schools through administrative arrangements that are often prescribed by Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs). MOUs outline respective parties' ongoing responsibilities, including the transfer of government funds earmarked for the students referred (Myconos, 2011).

During 2009 the DEECD commissioned a review of alternative education programs to inform the development of a consistent and evidence-based policy framework for flexible learning options (DEECD, 2010). The development of a policy framework was intended to initiate a longer-term change process to move from the current system of flexible learning option provision to a stronger, consistent and more coordinated approach to addressing student disengagement. It was acknowledged that this would require a collective approach across government, involving both the education and community sector (DEECD, 2010). The policy framework that was developed included:

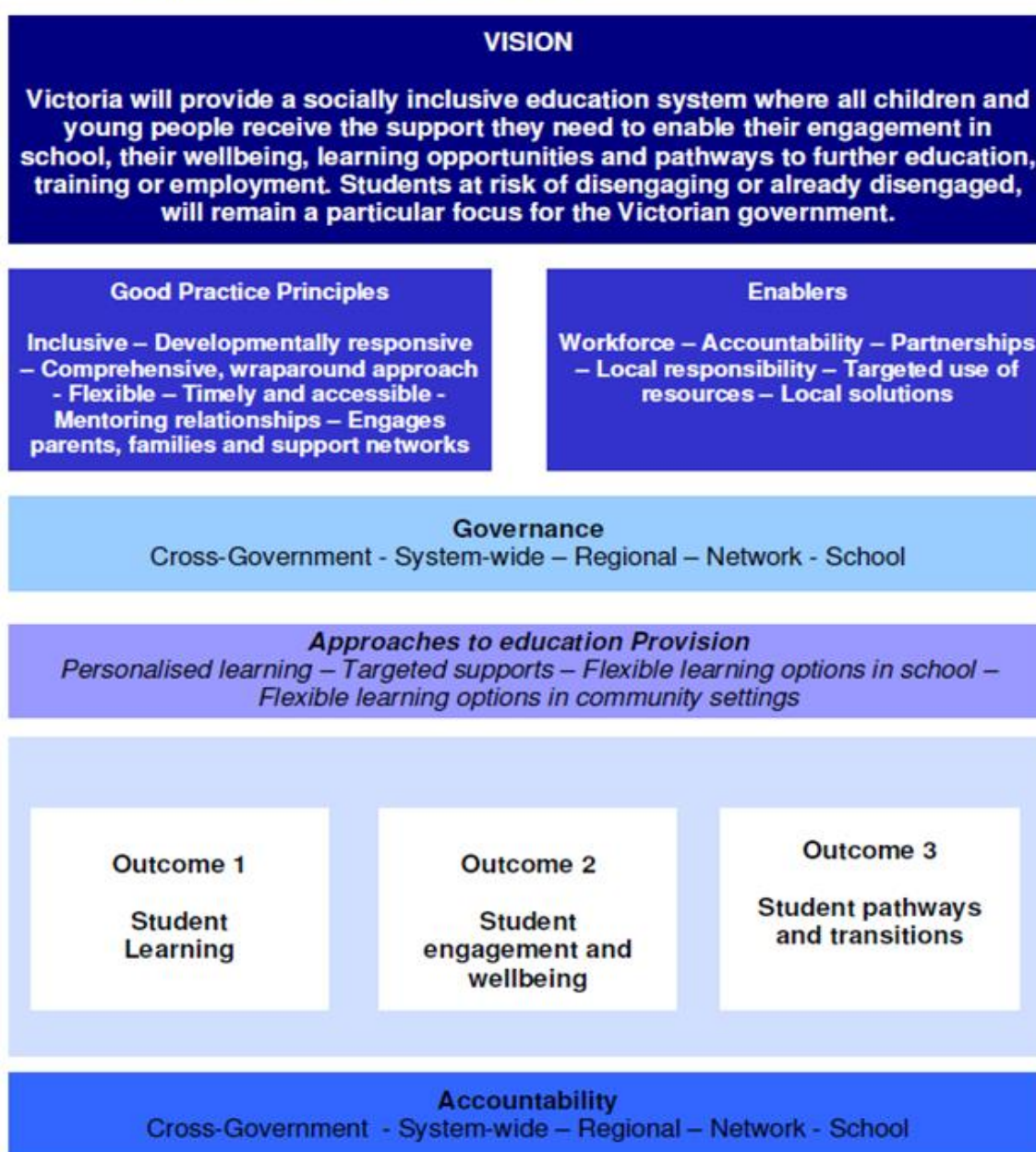
- A shared vision about the value and purpose of providing flexible learning options;
- Clear links between the provision of flexible learning options and the key elements of school and network strategic planning;
- Good practice principles to inform the provision of flexible learning options;



- An outline of five key focus areas that enable effective provision of flexible learning options – a skilled workforce, accountability, local solutions, partnership, appropriate targeting of resources;
- A clearly described continuum of flexible learning options both within schools and in other settings;
- Clear governance arrangements for flexible learning options;
- Accountability mechanisms that will promote transparency and ensure accountability for achieving student engagement wellbeing, learning and student pathways and transitions outcomes;
- A consistent funding approach;
- Timelines and processes for review and evaluation.

(DEECD, 2010: 5-6)

*Framework for the future (source: KPMG)*



More broadly, however, research highlights that those socio-economic factors that shape the life circumstances of young people have a significant influence on schooling experiences

and educational success. Significantly, students with a lack of social and cultural capital experience an achievement gap that widens over time, perpetuating issues of disengagement inter-generationally (McGregor et al., 2011). The recognition of the broader social factors that often contribute to early school-leaving mean that many students must be provided with the conditions that enable them to access education.

## Programs

Alternative education programs are defined as operating at off-site settings (Beck, 2010), and generally aim to enhance social skills, student self-esteem and nurture personal growth, providing small class sizes with a strong focus on individual needs.

There are currently a number of options available in Victoria to support disengaged young people. The most common provider of alternative education programs are Learn Local Organisations (LLOs) overseen by the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) board of the DEECD. The programs offered and the relationships between programs and organisations can be complex and may include: VET; Community VCAL; distance education; or re-engagement programs based on partnerships with non-government organisations that are registered and non-registered training organisations (DEECD, 2010).

Additionally, many schools across the State have developed or partnered with programs off-site, usually LLOs. Children and young people maintain their enrolment in their home school, with the associated SRP funding being directed to the alternative program through MOUs.

Data from Ellum and Longmuir (2013) show that Learn Local organisations (LLOs) are effectively providing a range of flexible programs to young people in their communities. Generally, these LLOs offer qualifications-based programs such as the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) and VCAL. These are alternative ways for young people to achieve educational outcomes that provide a basis for further study, apprenticeships or traineeships or employment. Other programs include “engagement” programs which are offered, sometimes in partnership with schools, to support students at risk of disengagement or as a first step for disengaged youth to reconnect with learning. Ellum and Longmuir found that such partnerships play an important role in supporting complex needs of young people. They advocate that more effective partnerships, particularly with schools and wellbeing support services, would be beneficial for Learn Local organisations and the young people they serve.

## Funding

Alternative education programs are funded through a combination of sources including the Commonwealth Government, State Governments and community welfare organisations. In Victoria, funding for alternative education programs is available through ‘per student’ monies either from the Higher Education and Skills Group (HESG) or from MOUs with schools which re-direct Student Resource Package (SRP) funds (Ellum and Longmuir, 2013). The source of funding depends on the age of the student and the program they are engaged with. Each of these funding bodies is sourced from the DEECD.

There are three potential options for revising the funding model for education provision for children and young people at risk of disengaging or disengaged:

1. Individualised – funding determined and allocated to each child or young person based on need
2. Place / Package based – schools/school networks are funded for a given number of places/packages, differentiated by intensity (e.g. very high, high, medium, low), with unit prices and notional volumes for each level of intensity
3. Service-type based – schools/school networks are funded for a range of service responses, with unit prices and notional volumes/targets for each type of service response/service type.

An additional element could include the establishment of a discretionary or brokerage funding pool within each region. This would give regions the flexibility to allocate additional, discretionary funds to schools or school networks to fund additional supports in areas of particularly high need, or even for individual children and young people whose needs may not be able to be met from within regular allocations of funding.

Many programs are also supported by resources and/or funding provided through partnerships established with other organisations (Ellum and Longmuir, 2013). Often these are non-profit, philanthropic funded entities, or non-profit government funded programs. The collaborative approaches that are nurtured with these organisations are reported as very important to the provision of essential services and support for these young people (Ellum and Longmuir, 2013).

### **Successful Current Practices**

Much current research agrees on effective program design factors that engage students in alternative education (see for example, Bielby, Judkins, O'Donnell & McCrone, 2012; Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence, 2009; DEECD, 2010). The following outline some of the key relevant literature that informs successful practice for alternative education.

The Kildonan UnitingCare report (Borrell, et al., 2011) outlined the following principles that should inform programs for disengaged youth:

1. Providing a welcoming, safe and secure space where there are clear and agreed on rules and boundaries.
2. Wrapping together learning and recreational activities in a fun and non-threatening way, with a need to focus on literacy, numeracy, living skills and personal development.
3. Having flexibility and choice within a structure informed by goals, with staff being willing to adapt and change service delivery and activities with needs and aspirations.
4. Keeping the group small as well as safe and secure.
5. Utilising a respectful adult learning approach wherein participants are treated as intelligent decision-makers.
6. Building relationships and support and modelling respectful treatment of others.
7. Creating achievable goals and opportunities for success and provide incentives and rewards.
8. Having a holistic, whole person approach, with a focus in getting to know the young person and supporting them in their needs and aspirations.

(Borrell, et al., 2011: 34-35)

In South East Queensland, recent research into five diverse flexi-school centres further attests to the importance of environment, programmes and teaching as factors in retaining, engaging and motivating students who have disengaged from mainstream schooling (McGregor et al., 2011). McGregor et al. (2011) described the flexible pathways approach that was a key recommendation of a report commissioned by the New South Wales Department to Education and Training published in 2005. The report emphasised the need to provide flexible pathways and enable students to exercise greater control over their own learning, and also argued for a more holistic approach to education through partnerships of government agencies, industry and community. The report emphasised the fundamental role of a supportive web of relationships among staff and students, which encourages student reconnection to learning, especially for students in middle years (McGregor et al., 2011).

The importance of relationships with trusted adults has been demonstrated as crucial to maintaining participation in education. A positive relationship with even one teacher can make a difference to how 'at risk' young people engage with learning (Bielby, et al., 2012)



The provision of inclusive learning environments and the need for flexibility in programs, especially in relation to learning requirements aligned to specific, individual needs was emphasised by Randall, Morstyn and Walsh (2012) in their report for the Victorian Youth Council. Ellum and Longmuir (2013) found that the success of Learn Local programs for young people depends on establishing productive working relationships between education providers and the various health, welfare and community agencies which often support these young people. The ACE Report of 2003 (Marr, et al., 2003) identified a unique characteristic of alternative educational programs as being that they are grounded in a philosophy of 'social justice', underpinned by understandings of a pedagogy appropriate for an adult learning environment.

Research has also demonstrated that successful outcomes cannot be achieved or sustained without creating and maintaining links with other local schools and local agencies which can support young people (KPMG, 2009). This highlights the need for effective partnerships in addressing issues such as housing, youth justice, mental health and drug or alcohol-related issues. Support required for these issues is often beyond the experience and capabilities of teaching staff. Partnership-based approaches enable access to a broader range of resources for young people, such as specialist advice, counselling and secondary consultation.

In their review of national and international literature, Davies et al. (2011) identified four key dimensions across which disengaged learners required targeted support in order to promote re-engagement, alongside a number of related strategies. The four categories that constitute the conceptual foundations of effective programs are (1) outreach, (2) learner wellbeing, (3) pedagogy and (4) pathways. As illustrated in Table 2, this summary of the foundations of effective programs is a comprehensive synopsis.

Table 2 - Conceptual foundations of effective programs (Davies et al. 2011: 21-38)

Category	Strategy
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing easily accessible information</li> <li>Bringing learning to the learner</li> <li>Targeting high needs groups</li> <li>Establishing lasting meaningful relationships</li> </ul>
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intensive support through guidance, counselling, monitoring and follow up</li> <li>Taking a client sensitive approach to wellbeing</li> <li>Developing beneficial relationships within the community</li> <li>Hubbing of services</li> <li>Providing whole community or familial interventions</li> </ul>
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making learning applied or hands-on</li> <li>Providing flexible learning options</li> <li>Addressing literacy and numeracy skills development needs</li> <li>Offering programs that integrate technologies</li> </ul>
Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embedding pathways in the intervention program</li> <li>Establishing connections with community and other institutions</li> <li>Using intermediate labour market approaches</li> <li>Integrating work based learning programs with other supports</li> </ul>

## Issues of Concern

Research points to a number of issues related to the alternative education landscape. These are primarily concerned with provision for funding, MOU arrangement, support and professional development for trainers, and provision for students in the under 15 category.

### *Provision for Funding*

Ellum and Longmuir (2013) found that Learn Local Organisations do not have access, through standard funding sources, to funds for anything outside the per student money. Unlike schools, they are not eligible for grants and extra allowances for things such as facilities. This means that, in alternative education settings, facilities and resources are covered from the per-student monies or are drawn from resources in other areas of the organisation if available and appropriate. This provides challenges with staffing as often the funding sources are attendance and attainment-based making it difficult to plan ahead. In their report to the Southern Metropolitan Region, they suggested that consideration needs to be given to an equitable model of funding for Learn Locals, and that students who access alternative education need to be resourced equitably in the same way as their mainstream school counterparts (Ellum and Longmuir, 2013).

This is supported by research conducted in 2003 and provided in the ACE Report (Marr, et al., 2003). This report found that provision for youth in ACE is mostly delivered on a limited budget, despite the fact that these young people often had more intensive learning and support needs than most mainstream students. This lack of adequate funding was seen to have major impact on two aspects of provision: the scope and quality of current program delivery and retention of staff for future planning and ongoing development of the program. Funding was also needed for other vital aspects of the education program, including weekend camps or physical and adventure activities (Marr et al., 2003).

This lack of funding poses challenges not only for the learning of students, but also for those who are employed at alternative education sites. As the ACE Report (Marr et al., 2013) found, the staff who cater for this youth cohort face a lack of funding resulting in poor working and employment conditions for teachers and coordinators. Further, they have inadequate funds for professional development, and encounter planning difficulties due to the short-term funding arrangements. Such financial stress can lead to challenging employment conditions including constantly working in an under-resourced environment, sessional and part-time employment, no holiday / sick pay, lack of career path, increasingly large groups of students with very complex needs in the same room and unpaid support work. This is supported by Volkoff (2009) who found that difficulties securing adequate funding impacted on CVCAL provider staff and programs in a variety of ways including employment of under-qualified and inexperienced teaching staff; qualified teaching staff being paid at lower than appropriate rates; teachers and coordinators working unpaid for considerable proportions of their work time; program dependence on volunteer staff; lack of necessary resources including operational computers and internet access; lack of relevant teaching and learning materials; and reduction or elimination of excursion, camps and social activities so vital to effective delivery for this cohort. These practices were likely to impact on both the quality of provision and its sustainability. An additional issue identified by Volkoff was that the absence of indicative funding disadvantaged these programs and placed their capacity for planning, promotion and quality improvement and their sustainability at risk.

In its 2009 report to the DEECD, KPMG outlined the following key funding issues in the field of alternative education:

- in most cases, not all of the funding allocated on behalf of the student in the SRP follows the student from the school;
- there is substantial variation in the level of funding between schools/providers;

- there is broad agreement across stakeholders, despite their differing funding amounts, that there is a funding shortfall for quality provision estimated to be in the vicinity of 20-30%;
- given that the Youth Guarantee funding is inconsistent per student, there is contradictory pricing in that no CVCAL student is funded at a comparable rate from the SRP;
- the low funding rate means that in some cases either not sufficiently qualified teaching staff are employed OR fully qualified teaching staff are employed, sometimes as Coordinators on much lower rates of pay than they would receive teaching in a school;
- in the absence of indicative funding, CVCAL providers are sometimes unable to provide continuity of employment for staff;
- CVCAL students are sometimes asked to pay fees by providers to supplement the funds, despite the fact that most of these students come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recently, Skills Victoria and DEECD have agreed on a set of funding principles that need to underpin resource allocation in Victorian education and training (Davies et al., 2011). The principles demand that funding should

1. Target identified learning and development outcomes;
2. Support effective, high quality and efficient services;
3. Encourage partnerships between providers and pathways for clients;
4. Create equity and social inclusion;
5. Support the clients' choice of providers.

### *MOU Arrangements*

Volkoff's examination of MOUs between schools and CVCAL providers (2009) revealed that MOUs varied considerably between schools. Most MOUs were incomplete in relation to their documentation of the range of required accountabilities. Additionally, there was often incomplete implementation of the documented arrangements. There was also inadequate monitoring by some schools of student attendance, their curriculum, learning materials, assessment and hours of attendance, the adequacy of physical facilities and resources, the adequacy and relevance of staff qualifications and experience and regular checks under the Working with Children Act, 2005, and quality assurance practices. Further, the engaging school receives funding for students through the Student Resource Package (SRP) even if the student never attends the school, thus raising the need for an appropriate level of funding to be transferred from the school to the non-school provider, which unfortunately does not always occur.

### *Professional Development*

The need for professional development on youth program development and delivery was reported by both Ellum and Longmuir (2013) and Marr et al. (2003). Professional development was seen to be essential to strengthen providers' capacity to re-engage the vulnerable young people. Suggestions have been made about mentoring or working alongside experienced teachers, and an urgent need for opportunities to network has been identified so that trainers can talk about their own work, share ideas and debrief, offering mutual encouragement and support for a job that is difficult and stressful with sometimes very little reward (Marr et al., 2003).

Further, concerns about cyber safety and privacy, along with the reticence of some trainers due to a lack of confidence or awareness of the professional and educational benefits of ICT, may prove to be barriers to the use of ICT in alternative educational contexts. In such settings, this may be exacerbated by a lack of access to resources, as well as a lack of training for those who may come from youth work or social work background rather than from educational backgrounds (McKeown, Mitchell & Cornish, 2012). This is a further area of

inequality given the significant funding provided to educators in mainstream schooling to increase digital literacy and to equip them for its delivery in classrooms.

### *Provision for Under 15s*

Another major concern highlighted in the literature was insufficient catering for the under 15 cohort, whose demand for alternative education has increased over the years (Marr et al., 2003). Schools are obliged to exercise reasonable 'duty of care', including protection from injury or abuse by other students or teachers whilst in the school's care. Duty of care issues carry implications for insurance cover and employment of teachers with appropriate qualifications and registrations required to teach in secondary schools. ACE providers do not necessarily conform to these regulations because they have traditionally been teaching adults. (Marr et al., 2003).

This concern is highlighted by Beck (2010), who found that much of the research focuses predominantly on youth aged 15 and over, with a gap in current literature and data for this age group. Australian Bureau of Statistic figures collected on school leavers only provide statistics on youth aged 15+ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a).

Adult and Community Education (ACE) also provides programs for youth, however generally there is a degree of confusion expressed by providers as to whether youth under the age of 15 can attend an ACE setting. Similarly, there are a number of community programs that are designed for youth, but the majority are only able to assist 15 year olds and above. This is a common finding in other parts of Australia; research conducted by Youth Affairs Network of Queensland found that 15 to 17 year olds are relatively well serviced compared to both younger and older age-groups, with 14 year olds having access to 37% fewer services than 15 year olds and 12 year olds having access to 55% fewer services (Beck, 2010).

In its response to the *Vulnerable Youth Framework*, the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) argued that extending the categorisation of "youth" from 12-25 years olds to a 10-25 year age bracket is not appropriate as 10-12 year olds need a specific response tailored to their development stage and needs. They acknowledged that those in the age range of 8-12 years are missing out on support as they fall between policy and service delivery that relate to the early years (up to age 8) and the youth services that typically work with adolescents. They advocate that early interventions for the 10-12 age group need to:

- have a strong emphasis on working effectively with families;
  - work effectively with schools, promoting partnerships between primary schools, secondary school and services to support the primary to secondary transition of a child;
  - encourage partnership and coordination between children's and youth services in the planning and development of support for children aged 10-12;
  - develop programs with the input of children's services, youth services and schools to better support the transition from primary to secondary school.
- (YACVic, 2008: 15)

### **Re-engagement: the way ahead**

Brader and McGinty reviewed Australian and international educational disengagement policies and found that the phenomenon of decentralised decision making power and the inherent complexity of educational systems have manifested in institutional responses that are often disparate but also similar on some fronts when responding to youth disengagement. Their review suggests that 'we should be concerned about the way certain constructs of youth engagement attract and sustain funding, whilst others do not. Clearly, we require flexible services for all young people' (Brader and McGinty, 2005:18).

The DEECD report, *Pathways to Re-engagement* identified the following seven major challenges in the provision of flexible learning options:



1. *Responsibility* – A systemic approach is required to plan for and provide education for children and young people at risk of disengagement. This approach must be based on shared understanding and clear agreement about the respective roles and responsibilities of various parties. Currently, approaches to alternative education vary among regions and schools.
2. *Program equity and effectiveness* – The effectiveness of existing programs is difficult to determine and local evidence of what works and what does not work requires strengthening. There is a need for verifiable evidence of the educational outcomes achieved by students and the overall effectiveness of programs.
3. *Demand and utilisation rates* – More extensive data is required to quantify the number of children and young people accessing or seeking to access flexible learning options. Schools and community members report that there is increasing demand for programs catering for children and young people at risk of disengagement however the availability and suitability of programs is currently difficult to assess.
4. *Eligibility of programs* – Determining eligibility for flexible learning options is a complex process and there is a need for consistent guidance about eligibility criteria.
5. *Workforce skills and supports* – Work with disengaged students can be demanding and requires specialist skills. Issues faced by staff may act as disincentives to continuing work with disengaged students and a deterrent to potential new staff members.
6. *Governance arrangements* – A consistent state-wide, regional and/or network governance framework is required to oversee the provision of education to children and young people at risk of disengaging or disengaged from education. This would support collaboration with community service organisations involved in educating disengaged children and young people, as well as promoting partnership between schools and across regions.
7. *Accountability* – Consistent allocation of and accountability for funding is required.

(DEECD, 2010:19-20)

## Literature Review Conclusions

It is important that these identified policy and practice issues continue to be addressed as a matter of urgency with the aim of providing an inclusive, holistic and flexible suite of options for students. The provision of out-of-school, flexible learning approaches is essential if 'all children and young people [are] to have access to the most appropriate learning environment to enable them to complete Year 12 or equivalent and transition into meaningful future pathways' (Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence (BSL), 2009:4).

The evidence presented in the following sections demonstrates that many of conceptual foundations and principles are observable in the organisations profiled. This literature review provides context and further evidence for benchmarking and decision making for this Alternative Education Options Project.

## LOCAL SETTINGS

### Local Setting Scan of Data

This review of the current situation in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Local Government Areas (LGA) includes an analysis of data drawn from 2011 Census, LGA population forecasts, a custom-designed survey of local schools and alternative education providers, and summaries of four Learn Local organisations in the LGAs

Drawing on data from the 2011 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2013b), OnTrack 2013 (DEECD, 2013a and DEECD, 2013b) and local population forecasts published by Hobsons Bay and Wyndham councils (.id, 2013a; .id, 2013b), it has been possible to construct a picture of overall youth engagement with and disengagement from education. This found that more than one in five young people leave school early, with associated negative effects on further education, training and employment. The findings of a targeted survey of the schools and alternative educational providers in the WynBay LLEN LGAs are then presented.

This substantive evidence to illustrate the current settings for young people in Wyndham and Hobsons Bays suggests that whilst there are a number of programs available to assist young people to re-engage with education and training, the fragmentation and small-scale nature of these programs means that they cannot meet the growing need without significant expansion.

### Data Sources and Limitations

The analysis below is based upon a number of publicly available sources. Population projections have been drawn from reports commissioned by the Hobsons Bay (.id, 2013a) and Wyndham Councils (.id, 2013b). Data on current population and numbers of early school leavers amongst 15-19 year olds were taken from the 2011 Census and is available by Local Government Area (LGA). The OnTrack survey, carried out yearly by the government is the best source of information on destinations of school leavers. The data used in this report come from the 2012 OnTrack (Underwood and Rothman, 2012) (the most recent available) and has been broken down to the level of individual LLENs and LGAs.

Data from OnTrack and from the Census may be used to estimate numbers of young people leaving school at different stages and their destinations by cross-referencing percentages given by OnTrack to population numbers from the Census. Both sources, however, have their limitations. The Census tends to underrepresent those young people living chaotic lifestyles, in particular those who may be homeless or transient; such young people are also more likely to be early school leavers and disengaged from education, employment and training. This means that numbers of early school leavers are likely to be slightly underestimated.

The OnTrack Survey only takes account of early school leavers who leave school in Year 10 or after, meaning that it does not capture those students who disengage from school at an earlier point. Young people who have left school early are also less likely than Year 12 completers to respond to the survey with around 40% being un-contactable. These young people are less likely to be in secure employment or education or training programmes, meaning that proportions of young people who are Not in the Labour Force, Education or Training (NILFET) or Looking for Work are likely to be under-reported.

All of the above means that the figures presented below represent “best-case” scenarios for the situations of young people within Wyndham and Hobsons Bay. An error margin of up to 10% must be allowed for when reading these figures.

## Education and Employment of Young People in the WynBay Area

The geographical area served by WynBay LLEN is a major population growth area, particularly along the transport corridor linking Geelong and central Melbourne. As can be seen from Figure 1, the population of young people in Hobsons Bay and Wyndham is due to grow by over 30% between now and 2030, with the number of young people in Wyndham expected to almost double in that period. These figures show that engaging young people in education and training will continue to be a significant task in the short, medium and long term, requiring an expansion of services and funding in order to keep pace with the growth in population.

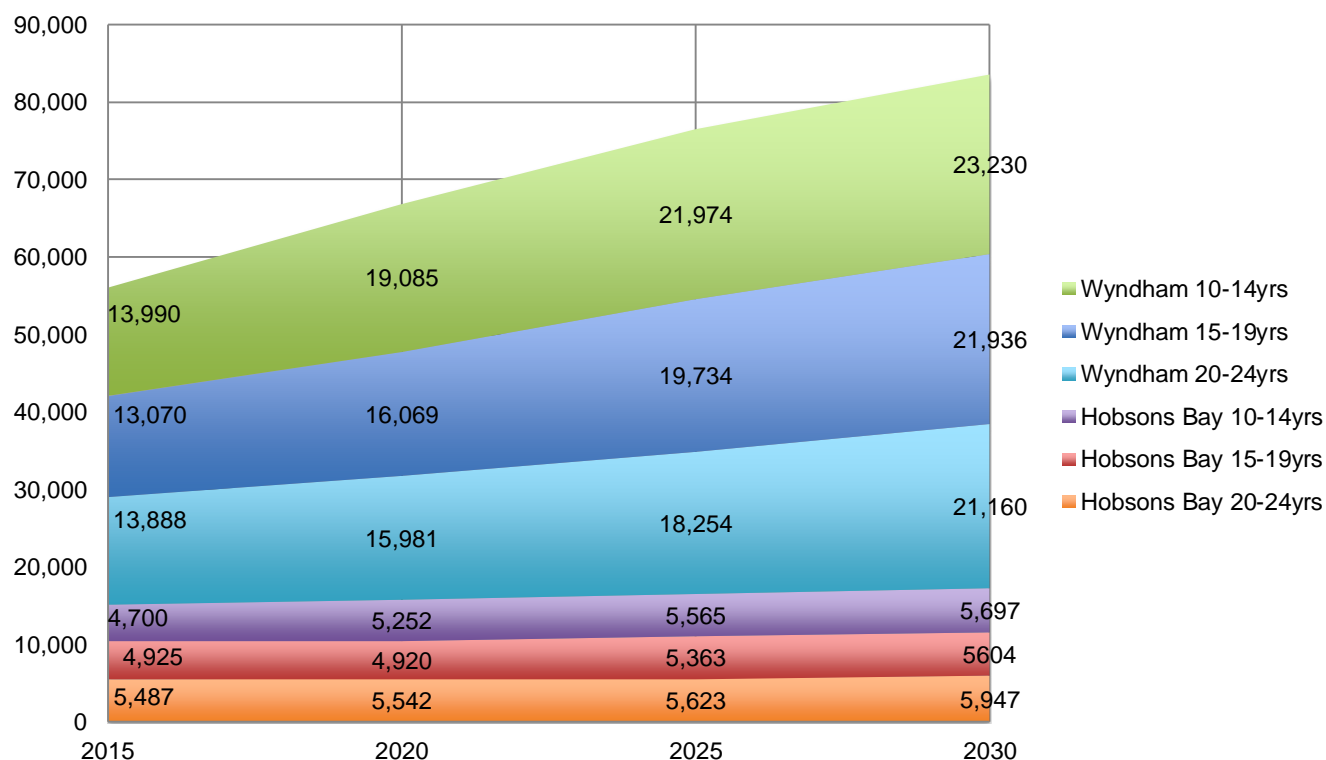


Figure 1 - Predicted Population aged 10-24 years, WynBay LLEN 2015-2030 (based on .id, 2013a & .id, 2013b)

Figure 2 illustrates that currently more than one in five 15-19 year olds in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas are early-leavers, leaving school before completing Year 12 or equivalent. Of these, almost half (1,491, 9.6%) left school without completing Year 10 or equivalent. This indicates that a large number of young people are disengaged from school-based education and that disengagement starts much earlier than most provision acknowledges.

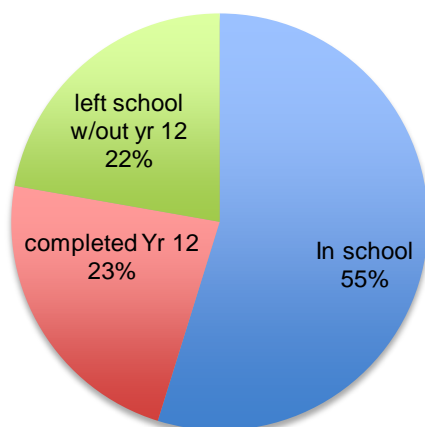


Figure 2 - 15-19 year olds in WynBay LLEN area (based on Census, ABS, 2013b)

These data do not compare favourably with the rest of Victoria. Figure 3 compares high-school completion rates in the WynBay area with Victoria as a whole and against other geographical areas. As can be seen, year 12 completion rates in the WynBay area are almost 2% lower than the Victorian average and only regional areas have a lower overall rate of Year 12 completion.

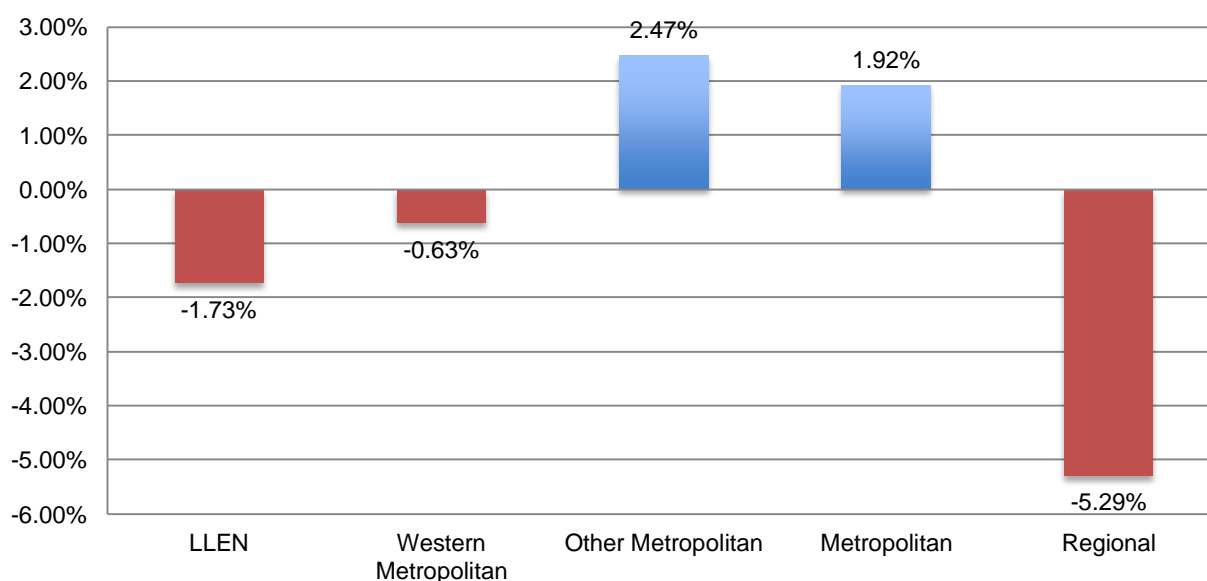


Figure 3 - Yr 12 completers, comparison to Victorian Average

Early disengagement from school-based education tends to lead to a reduction in employment and earning potential for young people in both the short- and long-term and is also often associated with non-participation in the labour market.

These differences can be seen in Figures 4 and 5 which use OnTrack 2013 data (DEECD, 2013a and DEECD, 2013b) to compare the destinations of Year 12 completers and Early-Leavers in the WynBay area. Two significant differences between the groups stand out, firstly that almost 50% of students who complete Year 12 progress to university, as compared to 0% of non-completers. Secondly that, whereas only 6.5% of Year 12 completers are either Not in the Labour Force, Education or Training (NILFET) or Looking for Work, 26.4% of Early Leavers fall into those categories.



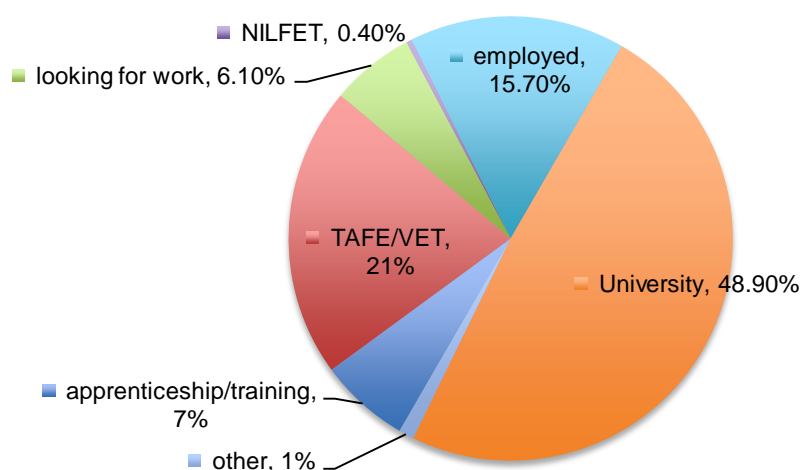


Figure 4 - Destinations of Year 12 completers (DEECD, 2013a and DEECD, 2013b)

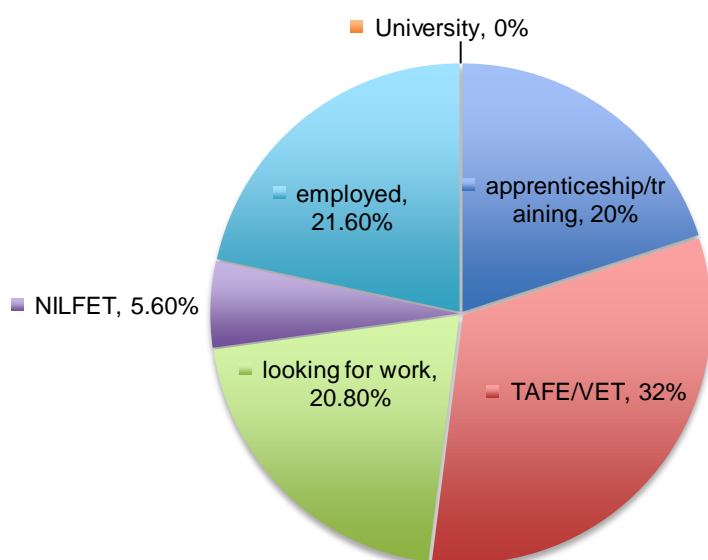


Figure 5 - Destinations of early leavers in WynBay LLEN (DEECD, 2013a and DEECD, 2013b)

Using data from both OnTrack (which provides data on school-leavers' destinations) and the Census we can therefore estimate the distribution of 15-19year olds' activities in Hobsons Bay and Wyndham.

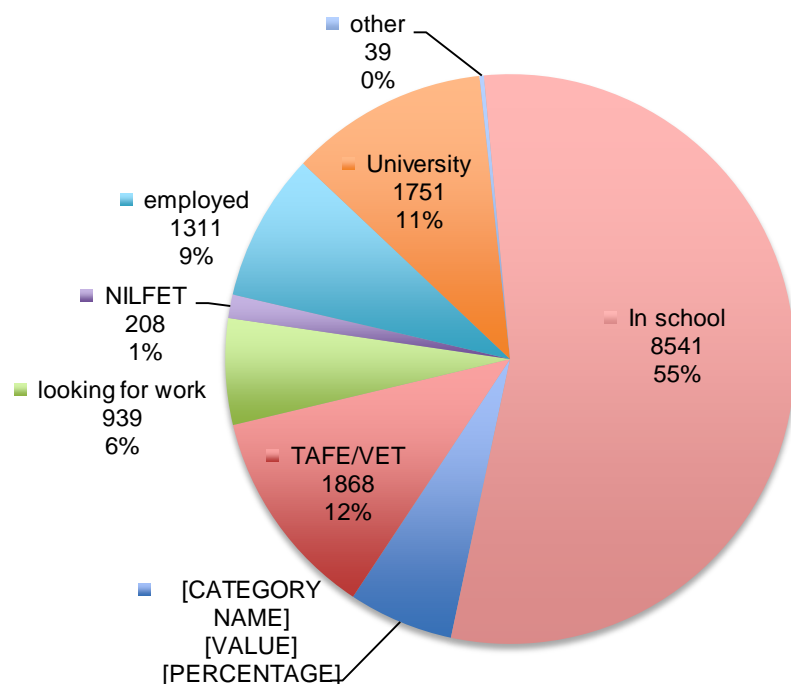


Figure 6 - Estimated occupations of 15-19 year olds in WynBay LLEN area

This suggests that out of a total population of 15,586, 15-19 year olds recorded in the Census, around 7% or 1,150 are either NILFET or Looking For Work. This number is likely to be an under-estimate given that OnTrack data does not cover young people who leave school before Year 10 and that over a third of early leavers prove to be un-contactable once they have left school (Rothman and Underwood, 2012), possibly due to chaotic lifestyles which are likely to be associated with unemployment and disengagement from education.

Comparing this to the state average, as illustrated in Figure 7, the WynBay area has significantly higher than average numbers of young people who are out of work but actively Looking For Work, but has lower than average numbers of young people who are NILFET.

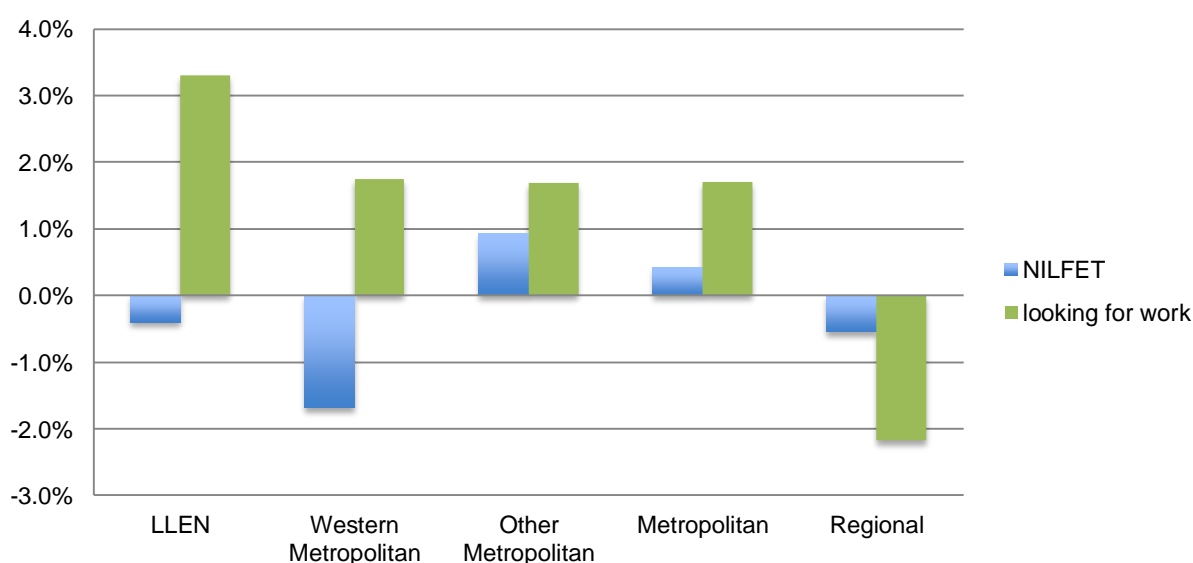


Figure 7 - 15-19yrs olds NILFET and looking for work, comparison to Victorian average

Even though this presents, in some ways, a more positive picture, changing economic structures and the impact of this upon the predominantly industrial and trades focus of employment in the Western suburbs of Melbourne may well lead to an increase in young people who are unemployed and unable to find work in the future.

Even if the current proportion of 15-19yr olds who are NILFET or Looking For Work remains stable the projected population growth in the WynBay area means that their actual numbers will increase as illustrated in Figure 8.

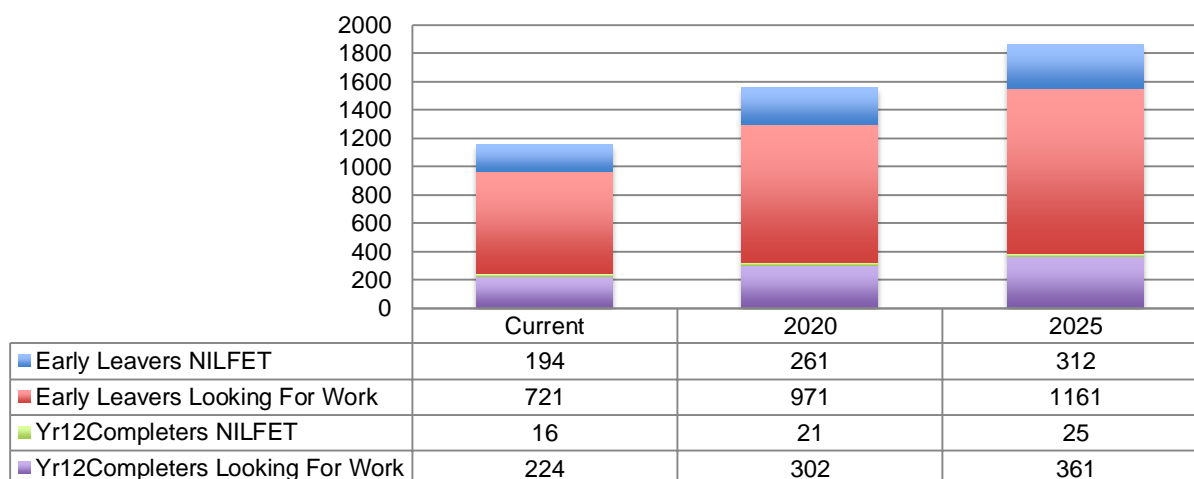


Figure 8 - Predicted numbers of 15-19yr olds NILFET or Looking For Work

Figure 9 illustrates that this suggests that by 2025 there will be around 5,500 young people who have left school early, of whom around 1,500 will be either NILFET or unemployed.

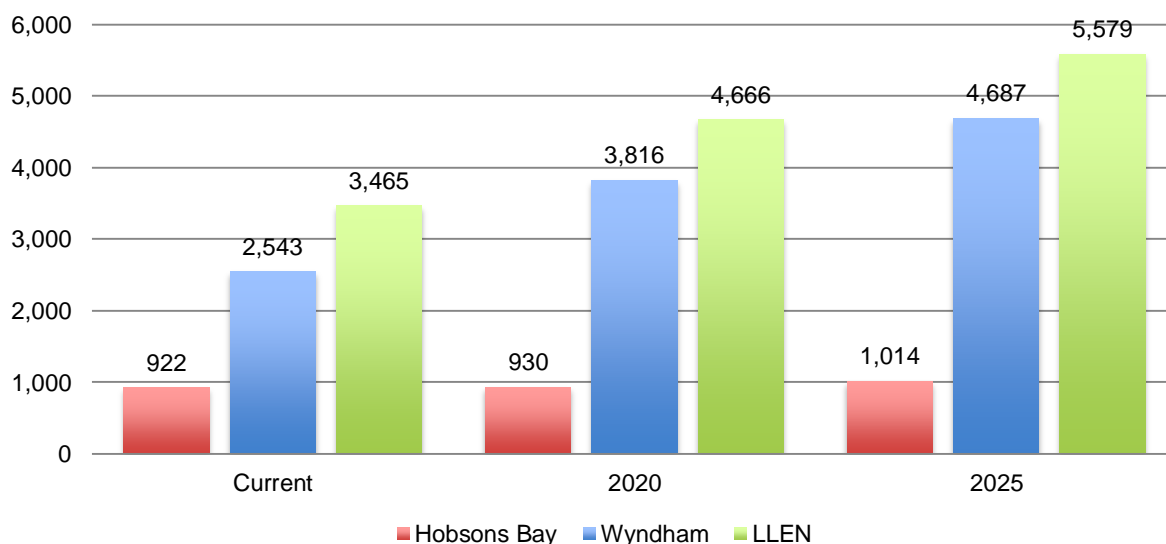


Figure 9 - Predicted Numbers of 15-19yr old early leavers

### Disengagement, Re-engagement in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay

Three online surveys were developed and distributed using an online survey tool. These surveys consisted of a range of questions gathering both quantitative and qualitative data about education provision for students who have disengaged from schools or are at-risk of

disengagement. One survey was for primary schools, one for secondary schools and one for community-based education providers. Respondents were requested to complete the survey within three weeks. The initial request was followed up with two reminder emails to non-respondents.

The sections below examine the data gained from survey responses from Alternative Education Providers and schools.

### Alternative Educational Provision in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay

Of the 14 alternative education providers surveyed seven responded, giving a response rate of 50%. One of these providers (Williamstown Community and Education Centre) does not run any specific re-engagement programs.

Three providers ran multiple programs. Of the eleven programs for which details were provided, eight (73%) were full-time programs, offering over 20 hours of contact time per student per week. Two of these programmes were short-term, with the Brotherhood of St Laurence offering a Certificate II in General Education and WCEC's re-engagement programme offering a Certificate I in vocational preparation. The rest of the full time programs were long-term, between 12 and 36 months in duration, offering students the opportunity to gain an accredited qualification such as VCAL or a Certificate I or II. Programs at the Certificate I or II levels, and those that did not offer accredited qualifications, tended to focus on employment readiness and learning skills, with the aim of preparing students for the workforce or for progression to TAFE. VCAL programmes covered a variety of vocational areas, with hospitality and construction being particularly common options. Other re-engagement programmes are running in and around the WynBay area, including sports-based programmes such as those run by SEDA and by the Western Bulldogs' community engagement initiative. There are also specialised programmes such as the UCan Cafes run by Yooralla to provide training and employment opportunities to those with disabilities.

Table 3 - Student numbers by providers and programs

Provider	Program	FT/PT	10-14yrs		15-19yrs		20+yrs		Total # students
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
Outlets	Cert I	PT			3	0	7	4	14
	Job Search	PT			0	1	3	0	4
	Computer Training	PT					4	0	4
Brotherhood of St Laurence	Connecting young people to real jobs	FT			5	5	5	5	20
The Link	Year 10	FT			13	12			25
River Nile	Young Women's Re-engagement	FT			0	10	0	8	18
Karingal Create	VCAL	FT			24	17			41
	CGEA	FT	12	3					15
	Create Your Future	FT	2	0	1	1			4
WCEC	VCAL	FT	0	2	42	54	5	1	104
	Re-engage Wyndham	FT	0	2	5	7			14
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>263</b>

Table 3 shows the numbers of students enrolled in programs and whether the programs are full- or part-time. There does not appear to be a particular predominance of either male or female students. These providers currently have a total of 263 students enrolled with the data suggesting that there are somewhere under 1000 places available in re-engagement

programmes within the WynBay LLEN. Given the significant numbers of early school leavers, including the numbers of 10-14 year olds disengaging from education this demonstrates a significant under-provision.

Two key patterns emerge from these data. The first is that the majority of provision (more than three-quarters) is aimed at young people aged 15-19yrs, with relatively little provision for younger students, as can be seen in Figure 10. Given that the figures above suggest that almost half of disengagement from education takes place prior to the end of Year 10, this suggests that there is a significant gap in provision for young people aged 10-14 years.

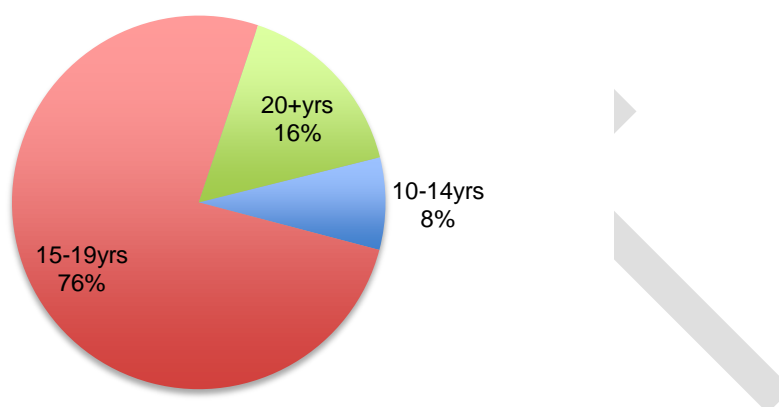


Figure 10 - Age distribution in Alternative Education Provision

The second pattern from the survey respondents is one of small-scale programs with the majority of programs (73%) having 20 or fewer participants and only the Wyndham CEC VCAL programme having over 50 students. This ties in with research that suggests that disengaged young people value the opportunity to build identity and relationships within small-scale re-engagement programmes (Ross and Gray, 2005; Smyth and McInerney, 2013), however it also highlights the often fragile nature of such small-scale enterprises and the fragmented nature of re-engagement provision (te Riele, 2007).

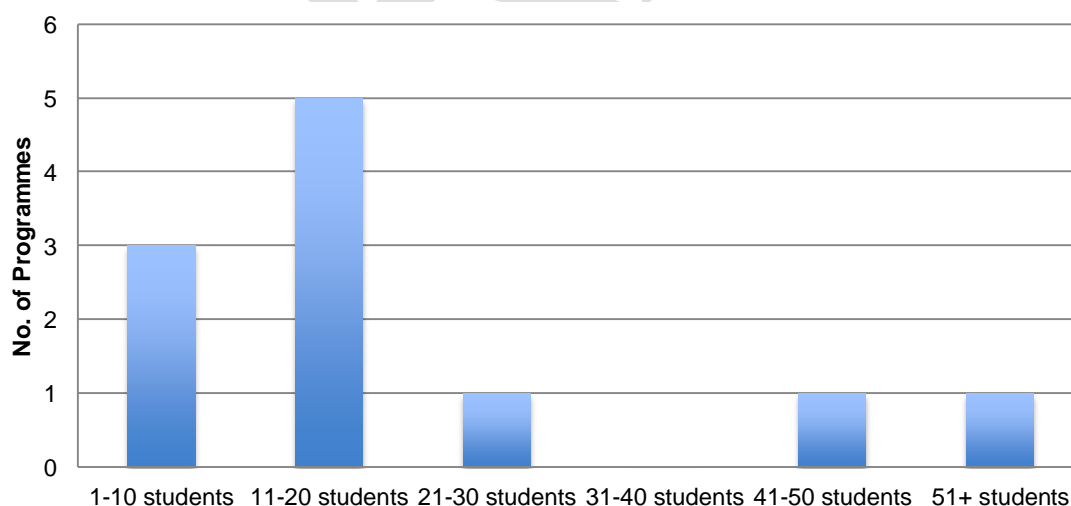


Figure 11 - Alternative Educational Program Sizes

All programs were expecting student numbers to remain the same or increase over the next two years, with eight of the eleven programmes expecting their enrolments to increase by more than 10% over that period.

All providers draw their students predominantly from their local areas, apart from River Nile which is an out-of-area provision specifically targeting young refugee women who face barriers in integrating into mainstream schooling. Funding for programs comes predominantly from the DEECD through the Higher Skills and Education Group (HSEG), although Student Resources Package (SRP) monies accessed via Memorandums of Understanding with schools are important for both Karingal and The Link.

Information on the ethnicity of students taking part in re-engagement programs was imprecise, with respondents showing a sometimes limited understanding of the concept. "Australian" being the most common response, presumably denoting Australian-born students, but further understanding of these dynamics is important and suggests that a more structured question would be appropriate in any further surveys.

Figure 12 demonstrates that the effect of gender is unclear from such a small sample. The data suggest there is little consistent difference between numbers of boys and girls enrolling in re-engagement programmes.

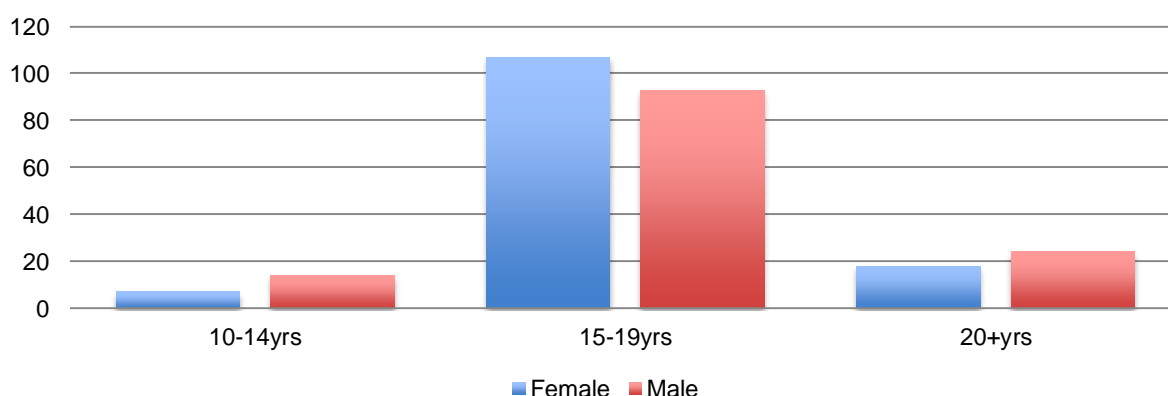


Figure 12 - Enrollment in Alternative Educational Provision by Gender

In terms of disability and special needs provision, although only four programmes reported having students who were receiving disability funding, providers estimated that between 40% and 100% of students enrolled in re-engagement programs had some form of learning difficulty.

## In-school Re-engagement Initiatives

### Primary Schools

Eighty-one schools with primary provision were surveyed, of whom only five responded, three of which were P-12 providers. With such a low response rate (6%) it is difficult to draw any evidence-based conclusions about re-engagement initiatives in the primary sector. The low response rate does however suggest that re-engagement initiatives are not common among primary schools in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas.

### Secondary Schools

The response rate for secondary providers was significantly better than that for primary schools, with nine out of 24 providers responding (38%). Of these it is to be noted that the majority of responses came from government schools, with only two responses from Catholic schools and none from other independent schools. Talking to school representatives following the surveys it became clear that a reluctance to respond to the survey may be explained by a number of reasons. Firstly, schools were evidently wary of criticism and of their image and were therefore reluctant to quantify numbers of disengaged

students. Secondly, this reluctance was enhanced by a sense that the chaotic nature of many students' lives meant that engagement or disengagement with schooling could be a transitory or cyclical phenomenon. Alongside this, the complexity and variety of students' issues meant that a case-by-case approach was needed rather than a standardised re-engagement programme. The poor response rate may therefore come as much from these reasons as from lack of interest in the issue of educational disengagement. The figures gathered below also need to be read in this light, with a sense that many more students may be at risk of becoming disengaged should fragile circumstances change.

As can be seen from Table 4 below, rates of disengagement vary from school to school, with Laverton College experiencing rates approaching 20%, whereas Williamstown High School's Pasco St campus reported rates of around 3%. School size does not appear to be linked to disengagement rates or to the existence of in-school re-engagement programs.

Table 4 - Student numbers and % of students at risk of disengagement

School	# students enrolled (male)	# students enrolled (female)	Total students enrolled	% students identified as at risk of disengagement			School re-engagement program?
				Male	Female	All students	
	200	190	390	15.00%	18.40%	16.70%	Yes
	700	600	1300	7.70%	5.50%	6.70%	No
	370	313	683	5.70%	6.10%	5.90%	Yes
	266	119	385	5.60%	5.00%	5.50%	No
	602	573	1175	4.70%	4.70%	4.70%	No
	120	80	200	4.20%	3.80%	4.00%	Yes
	1200	800	2000	5.80%	1.30%	4.00%	No
	675	825	1500	3.00%	3.00%	3.00%	No
	900	900	1800	n/r	n/r	n/r	Yes

Figure 13 shows, as with demand for community-based alternative educational provision, that there appears to be no identifiable gender-based patterns relating to rates of students at risk of disengagement.



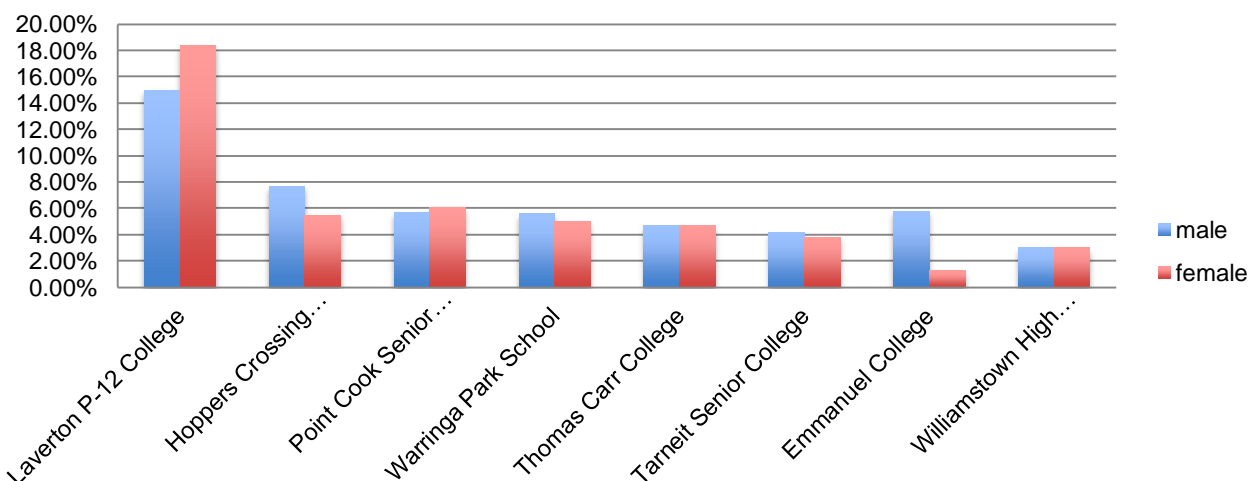


Figure 13 - % of students identified as at risk of disengagement by gender

Although very few students enrolled in school re-engagement programs received any disability funding, schools estimated that between 30 and 100% of those students experienced some form of learning difficulty, indicating that there is a gap between students' needs and the government funding available to meet those additional needs.

In terms of desired outcomes for students participating in re-engagement programs, schools aimed for either a reintegration into mainstream schooling or a progression to TAFE study, although Laverton College also offered students the opportunity to gain Certificate III qualifications with the aim of providing students with the opportunity to continue to further education.

Laverton College was the only school to offer re-engagement programs to students aged 10 to 14, offering a three hour per week programme for Year 8 students. Of the programs offered to 15-19 year-old students, two were part-time, offering 2 or 3 hours per week, and two were full time programs. The numbers of students identified as disengaged or at-risk of disengagement at Laverton College is likely to be higher than the other secondary colleges in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay as their programs attract students who identify in this way. As described on page 27, Laverton College administers the Link Centre, a program designed for disengaged 15 – 17 year olds.

Although schools seem to expect numbers of disengaged pupils to remain stable in 2014, of the four schools that run re-engagement programs, three expected numbers to increase by more than 10% in the next two years.

All eight schools that responded reported that they referred students on to external alternative education providers where needed, with seven of the eight schools appearing to have providers that they used on a regular basis. However, numbers referred onwards were small, with no schools reporting referring more than 10 students this year. The responses from the two Catholic schools indicate that these schools rely predominantly on specifically Catholic provisions provided outside the LLEN area and these may be worthy of further investigation. Numbers of students referred to outside agencies did not appear to be linked to whether or not the school provided its own re-engagement program.



Table 5 - Schools use of Alternative Educational Providers

Alternative Education Provider	No of schools referring students
WCIG	2
CREATE	5
Wyndham CEC	16
Youth Connections	3
St Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre	1

The data suggest that there is no consistent approach from schools to re-engaging students in education and that external referrals are based on local knowledge and relationships. Two schools also stated that they would like more information about providers of alternative education and that information about programs was not readily available. There is no centralised hub for information on alternative educational provision, meaning that understanding of the alternative options available is fragmented.

### Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Alternative Education Providers

The Current Settings Scan information discussed above has illustrated the situation of disengagement and risk of disengagement in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Local Government Areas. Provided below is greater detail of the provision of education services by four of the significant Learn Local Organisations across the two LGAs. These summaries further illustrate the provision of current alternative education options in the areas serviced by WynBay LLEN.

#### Wyndham Community and Education Centre Incorporated – in Wyndham

Wyndham Community and Education Centre Incorporated (WCEC) serves the fastest growing Local Government Area (LGA) in Australia. WCEC is a not-for-profit incorporated organisation governed by a Board of Management elected annually. The centre was established as Werribee Community Centre in 1974 and now operates out of 15 locations across Wyndham. WCEC is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and a registered Senior Secondary Provider. The centre offers educational programs for students from 15 to 64. WCEC tailors courses to meet the needs of the community with strong emphasis on disadvantaged youth, refugee and humanitarian entrants, and other new and emerging communities. Participants at WCEC come from over 74 different countries and speak 68 different languages.

#### *The Students*

Students enrolled in alternate education programs at WCEC are aged from 15 to 21 years old. They come from diverse cultural backgrounds and have diverse learning needs. In 2013 there just over 100 students enrolled in VCAL courses across six groups, two senior VCAL groups, two intermediate VCAL groups, one foundation VCAL group, and one combined ESL VCAL group. There are a further 50 students enrolled in VET courses.

#### *The Learning Environment*

The WCEC classrooms are based on adult learning and youth development principles. Programs are delivered face-to-face in the classrooms and computer labs. They also make

extensive use of community settings, such as the Saffron Kitchen, a community enterprise café staffed by WCEC students and volunteers. Where possible, students are also able to experience work place settings.

Class sizes are small, maximum of 18 in VCAL courses, and there is a focus on providing secure and welcoming learning spaces that help each individual have safe and positive learning experiences.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

Young people at WCEC are supported through relationships and connections with their educators. Teachers and trainers are available for students outside of scheduled class time including during term holidays. WCEC has pathways and transitions support in place, including careers counselling that advises students on options facilitating good decision making. WCEC runs complementary community programs including settlement services, and support programs. There are also significant partnerships in place with outreach services including youth workers, psychologists, lawyers, police and other counsellors that are available to support students with a wide range of educational, social and wellbeing needs.

Learning approaches are flexible and individualised. Specialist ESL teachers and bilingual aids support students with non-English speaking backgrounds.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

An integrated and applied approach to learning is implemented at WCEC. Programs such as assisting in a local primary school, life skills learning, drug and alcohol programs, Arts and sport programs, volunteer and work placement and youth forums are all incorporated into the curriculum. A holistic approach to student learning gives young people a voice, fosters positive relationships and broadens horizons. An emphasis is placed on avoiding 'stigmatising' students by adopting positive learning approaches. This includes provision of a secure and welcoming learning environment and negotiating learning with the student.

WCEC's approach is characterised by flexible programming, a willingness to develop partnerships and to explore options to support young people. This approach reflects the principals of social justice and social inclusion that underpin all activities at WCEC. Teachers at WCEC are employed full or part time and are fully registered educators.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

WCEC offers a variety of programs. Programs that are alternatives to mainstream school enrolment include Foundation, Intermediate and Senior VCAL and VET courses. The VET options include Certificate II to IV courses in Community Services, Children's Services and Business Administration. WCEC also runs English Second Language courses at a variety of levels up to Certificate IV. WCEC also offers a Diploma level qualification in Children's services which provides a pathway from VCAL and the Certificate III qualification.

Pre-accredited pathways courses are also offered including a preparation course for VCAL.

FUNDING: Higher Education Skills Group

DEECD funding for Community VCAL (MOUs)

Extra student services and amenities fees are charged

OUTCOMES: 2012 – VCAL completion rate of 99%, VET 97%.

Those completing senior VCAL courses went on to employment or VET courses.

### *Information Sources*

Wyndham Community and Education Centre Presentation to WYNBAY LLEN, 7 August 2013

Wyndham Community and Education Centre Website, [www.wyndhamcec.org.au](http://www.wyndhamcec.org.au) accessed 27 August 2013

Wyndham Community and Education Centre Annual Report 2012, available at <http://www.wyndhamcec.org.au/downloads/reports/AGM%202012.pdf> accessed 27 August 2013.

### **Karingal Create Youth – in Wyndham**

Karingal Create Youth is a non-government, not for profit community service organisation. As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Karingal Create Youth provides services to disengaged young people and young people with disabilities. The Create Youth program is part of the broader Karingal organisation which provides a range of services for people with a disability or mental illness, older Australians and those who are disadvantaged. Karingal started in 1952 with a group of parents organising a play group for their children with disabilities in Geelong. Karingal is now governed by a board of management who oversee over 1500 staff and over 150 volunteers in the Barwon South West and Mornington Peninsula regions of Victoria.

#### *The Students*

Students in alternative education programs are enrolled in either the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) course. The cohort of students in the CGEA course are usually between 14 and 16 years of age and have had periods of disengagement from schooling. Approximately 25% of the cohort have been diagnosed with a disability or behavioural concern and attract additional funding to support their learning. The cohort of students in the VCAL program are aged between 15 and 19 years of age and have either previously disengaged from schooling or at risk of disengagement.

There are significant cohorts of students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Vietnamese, Sudanese and Karen. Many students present with behavioural issues. The students must choose to attend the program in which they are enrolled and make an agreement to meet the requirements of the courses.

#### *The Learning Environment*

Create Youth operates courses in Werribee and Geelong. The program is managed by the Youth and Disability Services Manager and a Re-engagement Project Officer. Approximately 60-70 young people participate each year. Young people are referred to Create Youth by parents, schools or support workers or they can contact the program themselves. Create Youth runs most programs from Karingal's campus at the Werribee Business Centre.

#### *Supporting the Young Person*

Create Youth is committed to providing young people with learning, social and personal support based on their individual needs. The program focuses on providing literacy and numeracy skill development, personal development and social and employability skills that will assist the young person to make positive and informed choices about further education, training or employment.

Support is individualised for each student. Assistance to manage issues that are impacting on engagement in education is available. Areas include family and peer relationships, the legal system, income security, accommodation, recreation, health and wellbeing.

A full-time youth worker is available for the Create Youth program and is an important resource to provide support to overcome barriers to engagement in education. The youth worker uses a client-centred and strength-based approach to assist students with complex issues such as family breakdown, mental health, living away from home, anger management, relationships, and drug and alcohol abuse.

There is also individual pathway and transition planning assistance available to students. Create Youth sees this area of support as a key factor in the future success of young people. Throughout the term students discuss their future plans with mentors and build learning pathways and plans. This may include exploration of further education and training, job preparation and resume writing, and identifying skills and experience.

Create Youth also provides support to young people with a disability who are attending school but require extra support. A variety of programs is delivered for 13 year olds to adults through the Create Your Future program and the EdLinks programs. Create Your Future supports 13 to 18 year olds with alternative and supported education pathways in partnerships with the student, their families and the school. Students in the Create Your Future program can continue to attend school part-time dependent on individual needs. EdLinks provides literacy and numeracy courses for adults with a disability in small group settings which provide optimal support for individual learning needs.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

The staff of the Create Youth program are client-focused and passionate about working with young people. The program employs qualified teachers, youth workers, team leaders and support staff in full-time, permanent part-time or casual roles. The staff must be skilled in behaviour management, conflict and risk management, managing aggressive behaviours and crisis intervention.

Curriculum content is negotiated to build on student's interests and abilities and is delivered in a way that allows students to learn at their own pace. Assessment processes are used to support the young person to achieve positive educational outcomes.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

Create Youth offers the Certificate in General Education for Adults (CGEA) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).

Create Youth have developed a CGEA program that is suited to young people who have behavioural issues and who need basic and intensive support for their learning. The focus of CGEA is on literacy, numeracy and general education skills. This course provides a range of opportunities to assist young people to meet their personal needs and to increase the likelihood of future engagement with their community, further education and training and employment. The course runs for 3.5 days per week and curriculum is hands on and engaging and includes life and work skills as well as activities such as sport, art, cooking and excursions.

The VCAL program is a senior secondary school certificate that emphasises practical work related experience, literacy and numeracy skills and personal skill needed for work and life. Students in this program are interested in going onto further training at TAFE, getting an apprentice or entering employment. The program is delivered over four days each week and includes Vocational Education Training (VET) courses delivered at the Wyndam and North Geelong sites. It is flexible to cater for individual interests while meeting the four compulsory strands of: Literacy and numeracy skills; work related skills; Industry specific skills; and

Personal development skills. The VET courses available through Create Youth include: Construction, Hospitality, Community Services and Retail.

**FUNDING:** Majority of students have MOUs with schools that provide 95% of SRP, any VETiS, MIPs and/or PSD monies available for each student. Skills Victoria funding is claimed for approximately 20% of students.

A fee for service of \$155 for VET courses and \$50/year for other enrolments are charged. Waivers for these fees are granted on a case by case basis.

**OUTCOMES:** 2012 – 6 out of 44 students completed their VCAL (many students will continue on in 2013 with further success). GCEA programs have a 70% success rate.

Karingal Create Youth prefers to measure success in terms of behaviour change and generic life skills.

### *Information Sources*

Create Youth Presentation to WYNBAY LLEN, 7 August 2013

Karingal Website, [www.karingal.org.au](http://www.karingal.org.au) accessed on 19 August 2013

### **The Link Centre – in Hobsons Bay**

The Link Centre, located in Laverton P-12 College campus, is a transition centre. The program exclusively focuses on the needs of local young people who are not attending secondary schooling. The aim of the centre is that each enrolled young person will transition back to mainstream secondary education, or into training or employment.

The Centre operates as an incorporated company and is managed by a Board of Directors. The Centre is located on the Laverton P-12 College grounds. The partnership with Laverton P-12 College is formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding and has provided the Centre with significant resource support.

### *The Students*

The Link Centre caters for students between the ages of 15 and 17 who have disengaged from schooling. The centre can cater for 25 students. Typically these students have not been attending traditional secondary school for a variety of reasons like bullying, family issues, etc.

Students are referred usually through Laverton P – 12 College. Enrolments processes include an interview and pre-enrolment literacy and numeracy testing that informs the development of an Individual Plan for each student. All students are subject of a probationary period of one month after which time satisfactory attendance and commitment will determine continuation in the program. All students are required to agree to obey the rules of the Centre. The Link Centre has a policy of zero tolerance for behaviours that lead to group harm.

### *The Learning Environment*

Classes have a maximum of 12 students. A six to one student teacher ratio is maintained. Students participate in the program from two terms up to one year dependant on their individual progress. Students work individually or in groups towards their goals. The core value in the learning environment is 'Respect'. The Link Centre moved into their new premises at Laverton P-12 College in 2012 and the learning spaces are is purposeful, fresh and welcoming. The new facility provides more space for students, access to a computer for each student, a study room, a lounge area and a kitchen.



### *Supporting the Young Person*

Support is tailored to all the needs of these disengaged young people to assist them to quickly, successfully and lastingly re-engage in life. The agreed goal for each young person attending the Link Centre is to develop their skills so they can choose a pathway into full-time mainstream secondary education, TAFE or an apprenticeship. The support is intended to provide positive intervention as quickly as possible by providing positive social and educational experiences. Long term employability skills are also supported through the federally funded Youth Pathways program with access to individual career counselling and goal setting.

The Link Centre supports young people in the program by:

- guiding each individual to work towards their own personal and academic goals
- emphasising personal and social development and pastoral care
- making young people responsible for their attendance
- supplying all books and equipment
- negotiating Individual Learning Agreements
- fostering parental involvement and support
- connecting with the community to link students with entry points to mainstream education training or employment

The two teachers and one youth worker collaborate to develop relationships and support the individual educational, social and wellbeing needs of the students. Each student is allocated one of these staff members as their key worker. The key worker is responsible for the student while they are at the centre and is the first point of contact for families. Students and parents are required to attend a progress meeting once each term to discuss progress.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

The approach taken is tailored for each individual and focuses on fast-track improvement of all students. Current research and best practice are considered regularly in curriculum planning. The focus of teaching is on literacy and numeracy; health, wellbeing and life skills; and, electronic and personal communication. Learners are provided with realistic challenges and support to meet academic and personal goals.

Using individual Learning Profiles together with Individual Learner Agreements, the Link Centre approach enables focused, accredited development. The staff continuously reflect on the learning outcomes and individual student achievements and progress. The curriculum has been chosen for its flexibility in delivery and assessment which enables a focus on individual learners needs.

The Link Centre provides opportunities for young people to connect with the community, and access vocational training through regional stakeholders. Off-site experiences such as camps, connections with local school and community organisations and excursions are considered important strategies for developing engagement in learning and enhancing life skills and these are often organised by the students. Health and well-being is specifically addressed through focused sporting, self-development and awareness experiences.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

Individual programs include work experience and participation in targeted activities and special interest projects. The Social Development program is an integral part of the curriculum and encourages the young people to develop self-confidence and resilience. The program deals with issues such as anger management; getting along with others; working in groups; healthy lifestyles; and coping skills.

The AusVELS Year 10 curriculum is generally followed through subject offerings such as Mathematics, English, Science, Studies of Society, Physical Education and Self Defence. They utilise the Reading LINK – Decoding Program to develop marked improvements in the

reading levels of attendees. Mathematics and numeracy are extensively covered in the curriculum, together with history and geography. A unique feature of the program is the manner in which transition back to mainstream classes is managed.

**FUNDING:** Students are enrolled through Laverton P – 12 College and funded by SRP funds.

In 2013 the centre has also received major grant from the College, DEECD and philanthropic foundations.

**OUTCOMES:** 92.5% Attendance rate

2012 – out of 29 students: 6 returned to mainstream schooling, 5 went on to employment, 13 enrolled in training or apprenticeship programs and 5 returned to the Centre in 2013.

### *Information Sources*

The Link Centre Website, [www.linkcentre.com.au](http://www.linkcentre.com.au) accessed 28 August 2013

The Link Centre Annual Report 2012 available at [www.linkcentre.com.au](http://www.linkcentre.com.au) accessed 28 August 2013.

### **Williamstown Community and Education Centre – in Hobsons Bay**

Established in 1974, Williamstown Community and Education Centre (Williamstown CEC) has been servicing the community for over 39 years. Programs operate out of two primary locations, Spotswood Community House and Joan Kirner House in Williamstown. The centre aims to provide skill development, social activities and deliver quality adult education programs which reflect the interests and needs of all sectors of the community.

Williamstown CEC offer a variety of courses, programs, support and user groups as well as childcare, playgroups and programs for those with a disability. Williamstown CEC do not run any specific re-engagement programs. It is a registered Learn Local organisation and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and is governed by a Committee of Management.

### *The Students*

Of the 220 or so students Williamstown CEC may have at any one time, 51% of are CALD learners, 21% are disabled, nearly 67% are over 45, 70% are women, 58% are unemployed and 45 % have Year 11 or lower.

### *The Learning Environment*

Both the primary locations are wheelchair friendly, easily accessible and welcoming. Spotswood Community House is a small cosy venue, hosting a range of activities in small groups who meet regularly. Spotswood Community House has a friendly atmosphere and caters to a range of needs. The training room is suitable for up to 10 to 12 participants, depending on the activity. The venue will be undergoing a major upgrade in 2014 in partnership with Spotswood Primary School.

Joan Kirner House is the old Williamstown Court House and has three classrooms including a 'state of the art' computer room. It also has a large childcare facility.

In 2012 a total of six different venues across Altona, Altona North and Williamstown were used as Williamstown CEC undertook to provide programs locally to where students live.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

Williamstown CEC contributes to community health and wellbeing through: engaging with people in Hobsons Bay; providing safe and friendly meeting spaces for local residents; supporting volunteers and new community groups; and addressing personal and community aspects of disadvantage.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

Williamstown CEC endeavours to meet the needs of diverse learners and provides localised, customised personal learning pathways for all learners. Experienced and qualified teachers ensure that classes meet the formal requirements of courses while considering the varying needs of the students. Classes are fun, informative and focused on learning new skills, particularly in relation to the local community and living in Australia.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

In 2012 14 different Foundation level classes in the Certificate of General Education for Adults and English Second Language (ESL) Frameworks were provided.

FUNDING: HESG, DEECD, DHS, Hobsons Bay Council, DIIS RTE, DFHCSIA, ACFE

OUTCOMES: Success is measured in terms of fulfilling community needs and supporting community activities

### *Information Sources*

Williamstown Community and Education Centre Website, <http://www.williamstown-spotswoodcc.org.au> accessed 28 August 2013

Williamstown Community and Education Centre Annual Report 2012.



Table 6 – WynBay Provider Summaries

Name	Location	The Students	The Learning Environment	Support Strategies	Teaching Strategies and Approaches	Curriculum and Qualifications	Funding	Outcomes
Wyndham Community and Education Centre (WCEC)	15 locations throughout Wyndham	15 to 21 YO Diverse backgrounds	Adult learning environments Community settings Max 18 per class	Strong connections with educators Pathways and Transitions support Community services programs	Integrated approach. Life skills, volunteer and work placements. Flexible programming	VCAL VET Cert III ESL	DEECD through HESG	VCAL 99% VET 97%
Karingal Create Youth	Werribee (Wyndham)	14 – 19 YO Disengaged Culturally diverse	Courses offered in community education facilities	Individualised. Support with broader issues, eg. Accommodation and well being. Youth worker	Builds on students interests, abilities and capacities for learning. Literacy, numeracy, personal and social development, and employability skills	CGEA VCAL	Mostly DEECD SRP through MOUs	70% success rate
The Link Centre	Laverton P-12 College (Hobsons Bay)	15 – 17 YO Disengaged	12 student max per class. 1:6 Teacher: student. New facilities at the college	Individualised academic and pastoral care. Youth Worker or teachers are assigned as key worker for each student	Learning Profiles and Individual Learner Agreements individualise programs. Connection with community and vocational training opportunities.	AusVELS Y 10	Enrolled through Laverton College	92.5% attendance rate Most transition to successful pathways
Williamstown Community and Education Centre	Spotswood and Williamstown (Hobsons Bay)	Students of all ages. No specific youth focus – majority being more than 21 YO	Adult learning environment Training room and computer facilities	Focus on supporting whole community	Meets needs of diverse learners.	Foundation VCAL and ESL classes.	DEECD through HESG	Measured in terms of supporting community needs

## Local Settings Conclusions

The WynBay area has a high number of early school leavers, with 22% of 15-19 year-olds having left school without completing Year 12 and 10% leaving before completing Year 10. This is higher than the Victorian average and also indicates that disengagement from education is also a significant issue in the 10-14 year old age group.

Rapid population growth, particularly in the Wyndham area means that, without change, numbers of early school leavers are likely to increase by around 20-25% in the next 15 years. Although numbers of young people who are NILFET is currently low at around 6%, there is substantial unemployment (around 22%) amongst early leavers and a combination of rapid population growth and changing economic structures means that these proportions are likely to grow.

Local secondary schools report between 3% and 17% of their students to be at risk of disengaging from school and around half of these schools run some kind of re-engagement program. All schools refer students to external providers of alternative education. In line with the projected population growth described above, both schools and external providers of alternative education expect demand for re-engagement initiatives to increase significantly over the next two years.

Despite the significant numbers of young people leaving school without completing Year 10, re-engagement programs are primarily provided to students between 15 and 19 years of age, with 92% of students enrolled in such programs reported to be aged 15 years or above. There is therefore a gap in provision for young people under the age of 15 who, once disengaged, are most vulnerable to unemployment and long term negative consequences of a lack of education.

Whilst there are a number of re-engagement programs for young people, these are almost exclusively small, having fewer than 30 students enrolled. Programs are more vulnerable to fluctuations in student numbers and therefore funding. The data suggest that the number of program places available to disengaged young people is significantly less than is required. Re-engagement programs, possibly due to their typically small size, are also fragmented, with schools seeming to rely on local knowledge and relationships for referrals rather than on any central point of information.

The Census and OnTrack data used for this analysis have provided an indication of numbers of disengaged young people and suggested predictions for growth in demand. However, the limitations of these data sets indicate that more detailed research to understand the demand for external re-engagement provision as it compares to the supply would be warranted. The figures from schools suggest that needs vary from school to school and that not all needs can be met within schools. Schools are working in partnership with external providers but comments from schools suggest that these partnerships are formed on an ad hoc basis and rely on personal knowledge of individual programs rather than a coordinated referral process. Such a coordinated process may assist students to be more appropriately referred.

The detailed summaries of the four providers illustrate that there is a limited range of options available, especially in Hobsons Bay.

Given the findings above there are strong arguments that further research into alternative education provision and need across the area is needed. It is however, immediately evident that greater funding, coordination and an increase in provision of alternative education is necessary to increase educational engagement amongst young people in the WynBay area.

## STATEWIDE AND INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE

This section of the report examines evidence from local and international organisations that have been identified as having effective and efficient models of alternative education for young people. Local examples have been taken from within the state of Victoria, with most being from the greater Melbourne region. Therefore these organisations are relevant to this project as they are operating in comparable educational and political environments. The inclusion of three international examples is important as they bring a broader perspective and considerations to the analysis.

The purpose of this section is to highlight common practices that are working well with consideration of the local context and the needs of the young people who are engaged. The examples also assist an understanding of the range of ways that the needs of disengaged young people are being addressed.

Selection criteria for choosing the local and international best practice examples to ensure that they would inform the project included:

- Generalisation - an analytical generalisation in which a previously developed model can be applied to the development of a recommended model for this project
- Validation - evidence must be current and accessible via websites, reports and presentations
- Reliability - recommendations, site visits and consultations to verify the selections
- Authority - permissions have been granted to use the information in this project.

Drafts of the local examples were provided to the organisations for review.

### Summary Structure

The statewide organisations presented here are, with the exception of one, from the greater Melbourne area. The one regional example is from the city of Ballarat. Summaries of the following are provided:

1. Lynall Hall Community School
2. St. Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre
3. Oakwood School and Flexible Learning Network
4. Melbourne Academy
5. Phoenix Community College
6. Prahran Community Learning Centre
7. The Pavilion School

Each summary is organised under the following headings:

- The Students – provides details about the characteristics of the students attending the programs
- The Learning Environment – describes how the physical and non-physical aspects of the environment are structured to support the learning needs of the young people.
- Supporting the Young Person – describes the resources and approaches used to support the young people who often have complex needs.
- Teaching Strategies and Approaches – describes the way in which the organisation structures the teaching and learning of their programs.
- Curriculum and Qualifications – outlines the specific curriculum followed and the qualifications, if any, that students can work towards.

For each summary there is also a description of the source of funding and the outcomes achieved.

These are followed by summaries of three international best practice examples:

1. The Big Picture Education - USA
2. YouthReach – Ireland
3. Montgomery County Public Schools: Study Circles Program – USA

The Big Picture Education and YouthReach are presented in the same format as the Local examples. The Study Circles Program is a community engagement initiative that is having impact on participation and achievement in Montgomery County and a summary of the program is provided as this initiative could inform community and parent engagement practice in Alternative Education contexts in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas.

Tables 7 and 8 present the key information from all the organisations.

### *Information Sources*

All information included in the following reports has been either provided to WynBay LLEN as a part of the consultation processes, or has been accessed from publically available sources, such as the organisation's website. No other research or data gathering has been undertaken and the reports are limited by the information that was made available as described. Much of the content has been taken directly from the sources listed. One summary includes student case studies. These were provided to WynBay LLEN by the organisation. The state-wide providers have been afforded the opportunity to review their summary prior to the publication of this report.

## **STATEWIDE: Lynall Hall Community School**

Lynall Hall Community School (LHCS) is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) inclusive learning setting for students in Years 7 to 12. The main focus of learning at the school's two campuses is to develop the social, emotional and educational needs of the students.

The main Lynall Hall campus is in Richmond. The Island campus in Coburg offers work education programs. In mid-2013 there were 114 students enrolled at LHCS. The school accepts enrolments throughout the year and usually these come from child welfare agencies and distressed families.

### *The Students*

There are currently 14 students enrolled in Years 7 to 9 and these students are grouped together. There are 55 students enrolled in Years 10 to 12 at the Richmond campus and 45 students in Years 10 to 12 participating in the Work Education programs at The Island campus in Coburg.

- 83 per cent of students are registered for Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), the DEECD support for low income families.
- 15 per cent identify as having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural backgrounds.
- 12 of the students have identified as having disabilities and receive further funding through the DEECD Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD).
- Assessment shows that on average, students enrolled at Lynall Hall Community School are at least two years below expected levels in literacy and numeracy.

Many of the students have been disengaged from education for significant periods. They have attended multiple schools and have had significant gaps in their learning. The students come from all areas of metropolitan Melbourne and beyond. Several students travel significant distances to attend LHCS.

Most of the students enrolled at LHCS fall into at least one 'at risk' category. 50 per cent of the cohort present with mental health issues. 35 per cent are, or have been, case managed by the Department of Human Services. 36 per cent have identified substance abuse issues.

42 per cent have been involved with youth justice proceedings and 21 per cent have experienced homelessness.

### *The Learning Environment*

As a DEECD organisation LHCS is a specialist setting for students with severe, behavioural, health or learning needs. The school is led and managed by a principal and staffed by DEECD employed teachers and support staff. The school is funded through DEECD with students enrolled as they would be at any DEECD school.

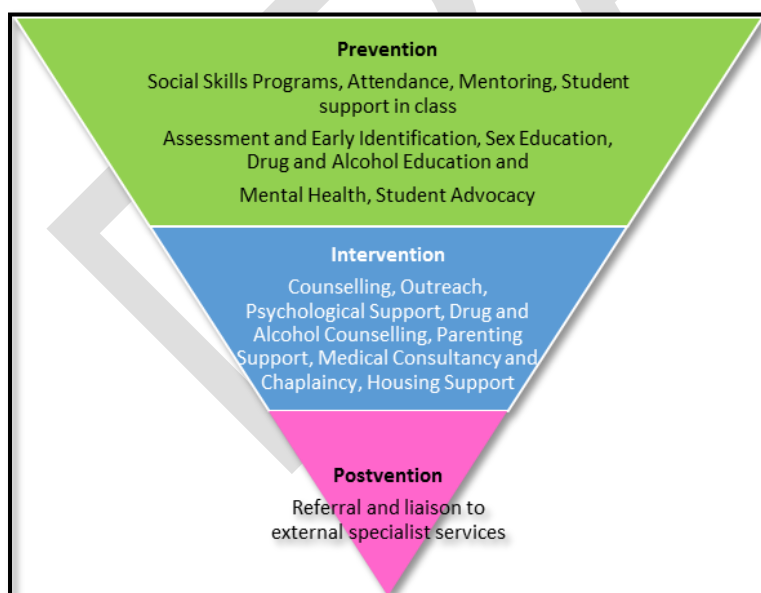
The environment at LHCS is inclusive and supportive. Flexible teaching strategies and opportunities for positive interaction with the wider community are core features. Educators consider appropriate learning intentions, narrative and learning pace to ensure that students are secure in their learning and are willing to take risks within a supportive classroom environment. Students participate in camps, excursions, work experience, and community service activities. They also regularly use local sporting and recreation facilities.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

The students at LHCS have access to a range of support resources. All students undertake specific educational assessments and learning needs are met through individualised learning plans. There are four full time youth workers, a 0.4 Educational Psychologist, a 0.2 Drug and Alcohol counsellor and a 0.25 Chaplain. These support personnel along with the highly skilled teaching staff offer intensive support for student health and well-being needs. This has a direct positive impact on classroom engagement and readiness for learning. Student attendance is closely monitored and reported to families.

Student support services are comprehensively implemented at for Prevention, Intervention and Postvention needs of the students. Figure 1 illustrates the range of programs and supports available to the students at each of these stages of need.

Figure 14 – Lynall Hall Student Support Services



### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

In 2012 LHCS had 31 equivalent full time staff including 3 principal class and 5.5 educational support staff. These staff work on two separate campuses and at the Richmond campus there are separate areas for Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 12. A variety of learning options are offered at LHCS. Students in Years 10 to 12 are able to access units from the Victorian



Certificate of Education (VCE) and/or Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and/or Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects. Options for students in Years 10 to 12 for work skill development and specific vocational education are provided through the schools VET offerings and through partnerships with local TAFEs.

LHCS is an inclusive learning setting where the main focus is to develop the social, emotional and educational needs of students with the aim of providing successful learning for individuals. A culture of engagement in lifelong learning is developed.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

The school provides a broad curriculum encompassing relevant aspects of the AusVELS domains for Years 7 to 10. Students have access to a balanced mix of core and elective studies. The curriculum is supported by broad offerings of extra programs such as sport, music and community connection options. Students in Years 11 and 12 are able to work toward VCE, VCAL and VET qualifications. The Island Work Education Centre offers trade training courses in Automotive, Building and Construction, Furniture Making, Horticulture, and Hospitality. Students have access to pathways support with Managed Individual Pathways planning and careers counselling. Generally the students exit from LHCS into further training in the TAFE sector and to employment.

**FUNDING:** Students are funded through DEECD SRP and where applicable also receive other DEECD funds for PSD etc. Community Partnerships are sought to fund additional programs

**OUTCOMES:2012:**

67% of students satisfactorily completed their VCE

98% of VET units undertaken were completed satisfactorily

33% of VCAL credits were completed satisfactorily

### *Student Case Studies:*

Kylie (16 years old)

- Extreme family circumstances exhibiting in co dependency
- Severe social phobia (diagnosed)- cannot travel to school or enter the building independently
- Academically capable but socially isolated- chronically disengaged from school
- Supported by youth team and teachers to develop goals and individual learning plan - initially attended 3 classes per week and up scaled to 6
- Youth team provided travel training and support in accessing and using public spaces such as libraries
- Participated in Girl's Group (weekly) to encourage positive social behaviours, self-esteem and resilience
- Contact and program maintained when Kylie is not at school

Max (15 years old)

- Referred to LHCS by Victoria Police
- Homeless, high risk drug and alcohol use, escalating petty criminal activity
- Estranged from family
- Supported to re-engage with family
- Referred to the school Drug and Alcohol Counsellor
- Developed strategies to support Max with the student multi-disciplinary support group including juvenile justice worker
- Modified timetable to enable contact with court mandated programs
- Ongoing contact regarding welfare



- Exited school to access support programs on a full time basis

Paul (13 years old)

- Refugee family from Sudan who arrived in Australia from camp. Currently they reside in local high rise housing estate
- Parents separated, large and complex extended family
- No English or formal schooling on arrival
- Extensive language and social support at local primary school
- Enrolled in large out of area mainstream secondary Year 7
- Behavioural concerns began to develop, possible harassment due to ethnicity
- Mid-year entry after suspensions “politely asked to leave” and enrolled at LHCS Year 7
- Speech and cognitive assessments organised and learning support through classroom support teachers at LHCS
- At LHCS no behavioural incidents

John (16 years old)

- In DHS residential care for most of his life
- Has limited contact with mother and sibling who lives in foster care
- Drug and alcohol abuse have resulted in psychotic episodes
- Has been charged with multiple criminal offences and at risk of being removed to juvenile detention
- Supported by 4 agency workers and school youth worker
- Has currently absconded from residential care and is homeless
- Has an ILP to address lack of motivation and behaviours
- Youth worker intervention beginning to build trust and positive behaviours in class

### Information Sources

Lynall Hall Community School Presentation to WYNBAY LLEN, 7 August 2013.

Lynall Hall Community School website, [www.lynallhall.vic.edu.au](http://www.lynallhall.vic.edu.au) , accessed on 16 August 2013.

Lynall Hall Community School 2012 Annual Report to the School Community, available at <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/StateRegister/Provider.aspx/DetailsProvider?AccountID=b4cdb812-ed32-de11-9c94-002185cd8e5c&SearchState=%2526PProviderName%253dLynall%2BHall%2526PPostcode%253d%2526PPostcodeIncludeSurrounding%253dFalse%2526PSuburb%253d%2526PSuburbIncludeSurrounding%253dFalse%2526PUseAdvancedSearchProvider%253dFalse%2526PProviderTypeID%253d%2526PDeliversQual%253d%2526PQualificationType%253d%2526PFieldOfEducation%253d%2526PCacheGuid%253d8b004a63-b0a1-4196-aa01-7e0b466011cb> accessed on 16 August 2013.

Summary of Current and State-wide Alternative Education Settings developed from workshop on 7 August 2013

### STATEWIDE: St Joseph’s Flexible Learning Centre

The St. Joseph’s Flexible Learning Centre, is a registered Catholic Specialist Secondary School within the Diocese of Melbourne. The school is situated in Queensberry Street, North Melbourne and was opened for the start of the 2012 school year. St. Joseph’s operates under the policy and compliance frameworks of the Catholic Education Office Melbourne and

the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). The school is a part of the Edmund Rice Education Australia Youth+ initiative which operates facilities throughout Australia in order to 'respond to the needs of young people disenfranchised and disengaged from education. Youth+ provides a place and an opportunity to re-engage in a suitable, flexible learning environment' (St. Joseph's FLC 2012 Annual Report to the School Community, p. 2)

### *The Students*

St. Josephs FLC works with young people who are vulnerable and experience a complexity of inter-related needs. In 2012 there were 61 students enrolled in Years 8 to 10. 41 males and 20 females. Six of the students had language backgrounds other than English. Nine students identified as having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. 12 students had been diagnosed as eligible for disability funding. 34 students had DHS orders related to their living and care arrangements.

### *The Learning Environment*

St. Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre site underwent a full refurbishment program prior to opening. The site previously housed St. Joseph's College. As a registered school it is led and managed by a principal within the Youth+ initiative of the Edmund Rice Education Australia organisation. There are six teaching staff (5.6 FTE) and three non-teaching staff support the needs of the young people. Class sizes are small and learning arrangements are flexible.

From the outset the school has developed a 'culture of compassionate care' which is demonstrated in daily practices. Examples of these include:

- Morning meetings where all staff and young people come together.
- Breakfast and lunch programs where the whole community shares meals together
- 'Operation by principles' – daily interactions are not governed by school rules but rather by a 'common ground' framework which is intended to share authority and give young people a voice developing responsibility for their actions.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

Each young person at St. Joseph's has two workers that are responsible for them. This is usually a teacher and a youth worker. They establish close relationships with the young person and their role is to monitor their progress, advocate on their behalf, provide advice, direction and support during difficult times and generally support the achievement of personal and educational goals. This team will undertake activities such as:

- in-house mentoring and advocacy,
- maintaining partnerships between the school, student and family,
- Work in partnership with other health, welfare and education agencies,
- Help students to build social and emotional resilience and capacity,
- Support young people with substance abuse and self-harm issues.

Participation and retention are key aims and support and learning is designed to build self-confidence and esteem in students; promotes and optimistic view of their potential and future; and assists them to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enjoy a healthy and fulfilling life.

St. Joseph's use a multidisciplinary, multi-professional approach to provide health, educational, cultural, social and emotional support for young people. Teams of professionals are encouraged to develop supportive relationships with young people and assist them with their basic life needs.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

St. Joseph's approach is based on providing meaningful, socially inclusive educational experiences. The philosophy of St. Joseph's is based on that of Edmund Rice Education Australia and involves a clear commitment to social justice and supporting disenfranchised young people of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds. The philosophy is practically implemented by the application of four core principles:

- Respect: 'self, others and environment'
- Safe and Legal
- Participation: 'have a go'
- Honesty: 'being fair dinkum'

Learning at St. Joseph's is focused on the individual needs of students and progress is carefully documented and monitored. Diagnostic assessment, based on the Compass Testing tool, is utilised to guide personal learning plans.

In 2012 St. Joseph's had a focus on developing partnerships with external agencies to enhance accessibility and deliver programs that supported the learning and wellbeing of the young people at the school. Programs were developed in partnership with the Local Learning and Employment Network, community Art project groups, Victoria Police, Department of Human Services, MacKillop Family Services and Student Youth Network FM. Projects have included a school mural, school radio broadcasting, and special programs to support students in residential care.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

The curriculum at St Joseph's is based on Relevant and Responsive Learning Choices. Learning Choices are designed and implemented to build on the capitals that young people bring to the learning community. The Learning Choices framework reflects best professional practice and community expectations. Learning Choices encompass literacy and numeracy skills, rich humanity key learning areas, vocation and employment focused outcomes, sport and recreation activities, relationship development and community participation.

Personal Learning Plans are developed for students using the Learning Choices Framework. Curriculum is modelled and delivered using the Australian Core Skills Framework, accredited VET courses and the Australian Curriculum. Outcomes are assessed and reported twice yearly using the Australian Core Skills Framework.

**FUNDING:** State and federal government recurrent grants.

**OUTCOMES:** In 2012 there was a 97% attendance rate. A steady increase in enrolments and attendance and deepening relationships with community organisations and families.

### *Information Sources:*

2012 Annual Report to the School Community, St. Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre

Youth + Website, <http://www.youthplus.edu.au> accessed on 22 August 2013.

Summary of Current and State-wide Alternative Education Settings developed from workshop on 7 August 2013

### **STATEWIDE: Oakwood School and Flexible Learning Network**

Oakwood School and Flexible Learning Network was established in 2011 as a second campus of Caulfield Park Community School. Now operating two campuses in Noble Park and Frankston, Oakwood School also runs a Flexible Learning Network which offers programs in community settings in Rosebud, Hastings and Pakenham.

### *The Students*

Students who enrol in Oakwood School programs are aged from 10 to 18 years old. In 2013 there are approximately 200 students enrolled. The students have a history of disengagement, or significant risk of disengagement from mainstream schools. In order to enrol at Oakwood School, students need to have exhausted all other educational options.

60% of students attending Oakwood School are male, 20% have aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (AbTSI) cultural backgrounds and 15% receive funding under the Program for Students with Disabilities (PSD). 85% of students at Oakwood School have identifiable learning difficulties, such as language disorders.

Student learning needs are complex and there are co-occurring risk factors impacting on many of the students' lives. The school has found that all students who are referred to Oakwood School have experienced, or continue to experience significant trauma in their lives which may have damaged their cognitive and social development. Many have developed mental health diagnoses such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety Disorder and Conduct Disorder. Approximately 50% of students are referred to Oakwood School from agencies and 50% from schools.

For students enrolled at Oakwood School it is understood that re-integration into school environments is no longer a feasible option as a school environment is inappropriate for the young person's needs.

### *The Learning Environment*

Oakwood School provides supportive small class learning opportunities for all students. With an understanding of the importance of developing relationships, class sizes are limited to 10 students in calm, positive and therapeutic learning spaces. Mentoring and role modelling are considered in one to one interactions between staff and students.

Oakwood School in Noble Park was established on the site of Oakwood Park Primary School which had been closed for two years. The facilities at this campus include newly rejuvenated classrooms, computer facilities, an art room and a gymnasium. The Frankston annex is situated in a commercial premises in the shopping district. The building was completely renovated and reconfigured with consideration of optimal learning conditions for Oakwood School students. The three Oakwood Flexible Learning Network sites, 'My Place' in Pakenham, Shed 11 in Hastings and Community Hub in Rosebud, are situated in community settings often alongside other service providers.

The school is officially an annex of Caulfield Park Community School. The governance lies with the newly formed Oakwood school board, which reflects Oakwood School's emphasis on partnerships. It comprises agency representation, e.g. DHS Youth Justice, Headspace management, the Regional Director DEECD (or nominee), co-opted members, staff parent representatives and local council and local business representatives the principal of Oakwood School and campus principals including Caulfield Park campus principal. The management lies with the overall principal of Oakwood School.

Oakwood School has a campus principal and other leadership staff overseeing the work of the 31 teachers, education support staff and allied health professionals such as the full-time psychologist, mental health nurse, youth worker, community partnerships worker and administration staff.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

Oakwood School's approach to supporting young people is comprehensive and begins with a well-considered enrolment process. All those involved in the management of the young person's welfare and education participate in a process over at least four meetings to establish that the student will commit to the Oakwood School program and that it meets the student's needs. An individual learning plan is developed that outlines the timetable for engagement with Oakwood School.

Following the comprehensive enrolment process, all students are supported through holistic case management that addresses learning and behavioural needs of the young person and is supported by the Oakwood School Leadership Team and the full time psychologist, alongside all staff. Partnerships with other agencies support the coordination of services across multiple agencies and are developed and maintained through professional meetings, care team meetings, regular information sharing and coordination of services arrangements.

Students attend Oakwood School based on flexible, needs-based, negotiated individual plans. For most students this is on a part-time basis sometimes starting with as little as two hours each week and increasing with the aim of providing a pathway to a successful adult journey.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

The staff at Oakwood School believe that the words Learning, Respect and Empowerment best describe the intention of the school. Through individual learning plans with clear goals students are empowered through involvement in planning their timetable and their learning. Respect is a key focus as Oakwood School understands that the development of positive relationships are very important to engaging the young people.

Oakwood School's approach to supporting young people is influenced by their understanding of brain development as impacted by trauma and disadvantage. This underpins a philosophy that places the environment and relationships as central, understanding that they have a powerful influence on development. Stable, nurturing staff and teachers and knowledgeable supportive professionals can have a significant impact on development. Classroom environments are calm, quiet and safe places for these students to connect and learn.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

Oakwood School's program is centred on developmentally responsive, personalised student learning and pathway plans. Staff have developed learning continuums for literacy, numeracy, positive behaviours, art and physical education. Students' individual learning plans reflect these continuums. Students who move beyond those learning continuums are able to begin working towards a Foundation VCAL qualification.

Oakwood School believes that the best measure of success is the degree to which students leave the school with a positive destination – empowered to transition to further education and work with a positive trajectory.

**FUNDING:** As a DEECD school, students are funded through standard SRP arrangements and other funds such as PSD. Oakwood School is governed from Caulfield Park Community College.

**OUTCOMES:** Oakwood School believes that the best measure of success is the degree to which students leave the school with a positive destination – empowered to transition to further education and work with a positive trajectory.

### *Information Sources:*

Oakwood School Presentation to WYNBAY LLEN, 7 August 2013.

Oakwood School Website, [www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au](http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au), accessed 20 August 2013.

Oakwood School Profile, October 2011, available at [www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au](http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au), accessed on 20 August 2013.

Oakwood School- The First Year 2011, available at [www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au](http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au), accessed on 20 August 2013.



Oakwood School – Enrolment Process, available at [www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au](http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au), accessed on 20 August 2013.

Caulfield Park Community School 2012 Annual Report to School Community, available at <http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/StateRegister/Provider.aspx/DetailsProvider?AccountID=668fc00c-ed32-de11-9c94-002185cd8e5c&SearchState=%2526PProviderName%253dcaulfield%2Bpark%2526PPostcode%253d%2526PPostcodeIncludeSurrounding%253dFalse%2526PSuburb%253d%2526PSuburbIncludeSurrounding%253dFalse%2526PUseAdvancedSearchProvider%253dFalse%2526PProviderTypeID%253d%2526PDeliversQual%253d%2526PQualificationType%253d%2526PFieldOfEducation%253d%2526PCacheGuid%253dbea19315-187a-4add-aa5e-766ba9f96577>, accessed on 20 August 2013.

## STATEWIDE: Melbourne Academy

Melbourne Academy is an initiative of Melbourne City Mission (MCM). MCM supports Victoria's most vulnerable individuals, families and communities through varied programs in education, health and welfare services, disability and aged care supports, employment services, justice programs, housing and others. MCM was established 157 years ago by the Churches of Melbourne and has developed into a contemporary community services organisation.

Melbourne Academy was established to support young people who are disengaged from schools and to re-connect them with education. MCM is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), a registered Learn Local organisation and an accredited Senior Secondary Provider. Through the Melbourne Academy, MCM offers accredited qualifications and re-engagement programs for 15 to 25 year old students at four different locations. Some of the Melbourne Academy programs are offered in partnership with St Kilda Youth Services (SKYS).

### *The Students*

Students who enrol in Melbourne Academy programs must be between 15 and 25 years old. The students are usually disengaged from education or in some instances, they may be attending a school but not engaged enough to be learning. The young people accessing Melbourne Academy are defined as disengaged and hard to reach learners. These are young people who face multiple and complex barriers that stop them engaging in education and achieving their life goals. These barriers include personal and/or systemic challenges in relation to: homelessness; poor mental or physical health; family violence or breakdown; substance abuse; criminality; out of home care; and/or, young parenthood.

### *The Learning Environment*

The Melbourne Academy has four locations in central Melbourne and surrounding suburbs. North Fitzroy, King Street, Sunshine and Braybrook each offer specific programs that focus on training towards either VCAL and/or VET qualifications. Learning environments at the Melbourne Academy are relaxed adult environments where the students are supported to re-engage with learning based on their individual needs and interests.

Classrooms and programs are designed to meet each individual's needs around the outcomes of:

- *Educational engagement* - building a young person's confidence to return to education and their ability to maintain their engagement
- *Educational attainment* – assisting young people to achieve a qualification that will enable them to move through further training or employment.
- *Building relationships* – connecting young people into the wider community as well as the ongoing supports they need so as they feel part of the community and have people to turn to in difficult times



- *Improving wellbeing* – building a young person's sense of confidence and overall wellbeing, improving their mental and physical health and reducing negative behaviours.
- *Employment* – supporting young people into appropriate and sustainable employment that will provide them with a pathway for life (Passport to a Positive Future, ND, p 7)

### *Supporting the Young Person*

MCM has an integrated approach to supporting young people through education, training and employment. Their mission to help people and communities on pathways away from disadvantage recognises that education, employment and training are key to this goal.

Melbourne Academy has recognised that support is critical for re-engaging these young people. By integrating programs with social supports that address each young person's immediate needs, for example homelessness, they are able to address underlying reasons for disengagement and build up trust and relationships. Partnerships with other learning organisations assist in providing diverse options that can meet a range of needs.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

Melbourne Academy uses evidence based approaches for educational and social supports to assist young people to engage with learning. These key philosophical principals underpin the teaching strategies and approaches:

- *Flexibility* is reflected in all aspects of the Melbourne Academy model from curriculum options to classroom spaces. It is also reflected in an ability to innovate and adapt to meet changing needs.
- *Person Centred* approaches involve a whole person focus when designing and education program for a young person. Unique needs and backgrounds are considered when negotiating a learning program to suit each young person. The approach endeavours to connect with the passions of each students and ensure that the learning program is interesting and relevant. An important aspect of this approach is considering the achievement of individual goals and developing confidence.
- *Support* by addressing educational and social needs in an integrated way enables Melbourne Academy to address immediate needs and increase the likelihood of educational engagement. Developing relationships and trust are important in the approach taken.
- *Partnerships* enable Melbourne Academy to provide the best possible services for young people. Educational partnerships with other learning organisations, in particular SKYS, have enabled a diverse range of learning options for students. Corporate and philanthropic partnerships provide critical support including volunteers and funding.

(Passport to a Positive Future, ND, p 7-8)

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

Melbourne Academy offers a diverse range of courses and learning opportunities that focus on key skill areas of literacy, numeracy and life skills, as well as specific vocational skills.

At North Fitzroy students engage in a multimedia-themed VCAL program in a purpose-built learning space that includes multimedia and music studios. The King Street campus is integrated with the MCM Frontyard services for students who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. At this location students are engaged in VET subjects such as Creative Industries and Community Services. At the Braybrook program VET options in Community Services and Graphic Arts feature in the VCAL delivery. The *Print Side Up* program at

Braybrook is a social enterprise endeavour that engages Melbourne Academy students' core literacy and numeracy training with vocational skills training in the printing and graphics industries. The *Wheels* pre-vocational program targets early school leavers and unemployed young people in a short term course that equips them with the confidence and skills to re-engage in school, training or work. The *Wheels* program has a direct pathway into the Melbourne Academy.

As a Learn Local provider Melbourne Academy also utilises pre-accredited education programs as a pathway into the VCAL and for further education support when required.

**FUNDING:** Funding is dependent on the courses students are enrolled into. DEECD funding for VCAL and VET courses is accessed. Philanthropic funding is also employed to offer the broad range of services.

**OUTCOMES:** *Wheels* program data shows: attendance rate of 75%. Approximately 30 per cent of young people return to mainstream schooling, 14 per cent go on to training programs and 16 per cent to employment.

Wider Melbourne Academy Graduate data is not currently available but the retention rate of students between year one and year two of operation was 75%

#### *Information Sources:*

Passport to a Positive Future – Melbourne Citymission's integrated approach to education, training and employment (No Date).

Melbourne City Mission, Education and Training Programs website, <http://www.melbournecitymission.org.au/What-We-Do/Our-Programs-Services/Education-Training-Programs> (accessed 22 August, 2013).

### **STATEWIDE: Phoenix P-12 Community College**

Phoenix Community College is a student-centred learning community that is committed to creating a stimulating, caring and supportive learning community. The college is located in Sebastopol, near Ballarat in Victoria. Phoenix College started in 2012 after the merger of Sebastopol College and Redan Primary School.

#### *The Students*

Phoenix Community College enrolls approximately 1000 students from Prep to Year 12. Phoenix College is a 'mainstream' school that engages and supports students in ways that diminishes the likelihood that they will disengage from education.

#### *The Learning Environment*

Phoenix College operates across two campuses. Redan Campus caters for primary students (prep to Year 6) and Sebastopol Campus for the middle and senior schools (Years 7 to 12). The Sebastopol site has been, or will be, fully redeveloped.

Phoenix P-12 Community College is committed to creating a stimulating, caring and supportive learning environment where students have access to the resources, facilities and programs they require to maximise learning outcomes and achieve their full potential. The College is developing itself over the next ten years as a 'community site' offering learning opportunities and services for the whole Ballarat South community, including dental and health services, child-care, kindergarten and adult learning.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

A Learning Support Team is in place with the purpose of maximising all students' potential in education. This team specifically focuses on supporting students with disabilities and managing the emotional and educational needs of learners who are challenged by any aspects of their education.

The College respects and celebrates the fact that every student is an individual. As well as implementing individualised learning programs, the College implements the following initiatives to support student well-being: A free breakfast program; an afterschool social activities club for students in Years 6 to 8; the weights after school program (WASP), supervised weight training two afternoons per week.

The College works closely with wellbeing support organisations including: Youth Connections; Child and Adolescent Mental Health; Ballarat Community Health; Child and Family Services; Highlands Student Services; and Ballarat University.

The college ensures that emotional wellbeing is nurtured within every child and that each student leaves the College as an active, positive member of the community.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

The Phoenix College approach is student-centred. The emphasis is on developing optimistic, resourceful and resilient global citizens. Using theories such as Hattie's Visible Learning and Hopkins' Powerful Learning, a personalised, exciting and extensive pathway to 21 Century learning is developed for all students. The approach is to encourage students to take responsibility for success in their own learning. Programs enhance positive self-image and provide opportunity for students to develop their own individual interests and talents.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

The curriculum offered by Phoenix College is a stimulating, comprehensive and challenging academic program supported by specialist activities in sport, drama, music, public speaking, student leadership and the Arts. Enhancement programs and catering for individual needs in mixed ability classrooms from Year 7 through to the post compulsory years is a feature of the curriculum provided at the College.

An extensive range of elective study areas are available in Years 9 and 10. A flexible structure for program of study is provided to match individual student directions in the post compulsory years. In Years 10 to 12 all students have access to counselling to identify a learning program to suit their needs and aspirations. They access a range of programs working towards VCE, VCAL and VET certifications. From Year 7 any students who are identified as at risk of disengagement are able to access further support for their learning including vocational based individual programs.

**FUNDING:** The school is funded from DEECD through SRP and other grant monies.

**OUTCOMES:** Percent of students in 2012 who satisfactorily completed their VCE: 93%

Percent of Year 12 students in 2012 undertaking at least one Vocational Education and Training (VET) unit of competence: 51%

Percent of VET units of competence satisfactorily completed in 2012: 83%

Percent of Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) credits satisfactorily completed in 2012: 94%

### *Information Sources*

Phoenix P-12 Community College website, <http://www.phoenix.vic.edu.au> , accessed on 20 September 2013.

Phoenix P-12 Community College 2012 Annual Report to the School Community, available at

<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/StateRegister/Provider.aspx/GetFile?Type=AnnualReport&EntityID=1&SchoolNumber=8900>, accessed 23 September 2013

Greive, J. (2011). 'Phoenix College a new name change for Sebastopol'. *The Courier*. Published Dec. 2, 2011. Available at: <http://www.thecourier.com.au/story/60822/phoenix-college-a-new-name-change-for-sebastopol/>, accessed 23 September 2013

## **STATEWIDE: Prahran Community Learning Centre**

Prahran Community Learning Centre (PCLC) is a not-for-profit, community based organisation which has served the City of Stonnington community since 1979. PCLC is a Registered Training Organisation and a Senior Secondary Provider as part of the Learn Local sector. Prahran Community Learning Centre is led and managed by the Principal Executive Officer and governance is overseen by the Committee of Management.

PCLC is the proud recipient of the 2013 Southern Metropolitan Region Learn Local Legend Award. The Learn Local Legend is awarded to an organisation whose key strength is the way the diversity of the organisation works to deliver locally relevant services and by working together with other organisations, have an influence well beyond their size. The Learn Local Legend awarded organisation goes above and beyond in their contribution to the sector in innovation, best practice and leadership.

As a recipient of the Learn Local Legend Award, PCLC's performance in training delivery, dedication to improvement of staff and services, connection with the community and contribution to the sector were all considered.

### *The Students*

A significant cohort of the student population are secondary aged students who have disengaged from mainstream education. In 2013 there are 15 students enrolled in the YELLA program for 12 – 15 year olds, 11 enrolled in VCAL intermediate and 13 in VCAL senior. 68 per cent of students are male.

### *The Learning Environment*

PCLC runs class sizes of a maximum of 15 students. The community centre provides a multicultural social environment that educates and provides practical experience in social, financial, cultural and personal development. VCAL and VET programs are delivered in relaxed, open, adult learning environments

### *Supporting the Young Person*

The Client Services Officer along with other staff members provides support to students inside school hours. The majority of PCLC students are linked in with other agencies including; Youth Justice, Child Protection, Drug and Alcohol and Housing.

Some food is provided for the students. This is made available through donations from the local supermarket and fruit is purchased by PCLC.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

The teaching approach at PCLC is based on an applied learning model. Students are engaged initially using an Arts focus. Students at PCLC are re-connected to education under the guidance of qualified teachers, youth workers and psychologists.

The YELLA program is a community education model and places emphasis on preparing participants to return to mainstream education wherever possible. VCAL units are heavily

based on connectedness. Throughout the programs, participants are assisted to develop an education & training pathway plan suited to their individual needs and aspirations.

PCLC has developed relationships with organisations such as: Stonnington Youth Services; Youth Connect; Youth Xpress; TaskForce; and the InnerEastern LLEN. The services of these organisations are made available to students as necessary.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

The Prahran Community Learning Centre adopts Stephen Covey's 7 habits of highly effective people as part of their overall curriculum. They "reach to teach" at all opportunities and fundamentally believe that relationships are primary, and all else is derivative.

PCLC motivates students by engaging them in activities and community projects such as the Oakleigh Grammar Partnership Mosaic project, Combat fitness program and regular excursions such as rock climbing, and barbeques.

Youth programs include Youth Education for Life and Learning Access (YELLA), VCAL Intermediate & VCAL Senior. The YELLA program for 12 – 15 year olds is made up of two accredited qualifications: CGEA and Certificate I and II in Visual Arts and Contemporary Craft. The main subjects of the YELLA program are Numeracy, Literacy, Science and Art (painting, drawing, digital imaging, textiles and video art).

The VCAL programs include Core Units in: Literacy; Oracy; Numeracy; Personal Development Skills; and Work Related Skills. Additionally students need to participate in VET courses, often this is Certificate III in Business Administration.

Additionally, PCLC delivers Adult Education courses including, English, Visual Art, Computers and Business. PCLC also delivers health and well-being programs, including yoga, strength based training, playgroups, cooking and social discussion groups.

**FUNDING:** The centre receives funding from a range of government and community organisations. Students attending alternative education programs are funded through MOU's (often enrolled through Caulfield Park Community School) and through Higher Education and Skills Group (HESG) funding.

**OUTCOMES:** In 2012, 2 students returned to mainstream education, 1 student went on to an apprenticeship placement and the remainder of the 2012 students re-enrolled at PCLC for 2013

### Information Sources

Prahran Community Learning Centre website, [www.pclcentre.org.au](http://www.pclcentre.org.au), accessed on 24 September 2013.

### **STATEWIDE: The Pavilion School**

The Pavilion School is a Victorian Government Secondary School specifically for young people who have been disengaged from education. Established in 2007 in a large open pavilion in West Heidelberg, the Pavilion School aspires to uphold Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 'Everyone has a the right to education'. The Pavilion School was founded by Josie Howie and Brendan Murray who developed the model in response to community pressure and lobbying for more educational options for young people who had disengaged from mainstream education. The school is now hosted by Charles La Trobe P-12 College and the college manages student enrolments.



### *The Students*

Students attending the Pavilion School are young people who present with multiple risk factors. Almost all students present with one of more of the following risk factors: homelessness; childhood trauma; poverty; drug and alcohol use; involvement in youth justice; family violence, abuse and neglect; mental illness; and teen pregnancy. At the time of enrolment, students are not attending or engaged in any other education or training program and they are seeking to further their education.

In 2013 the school caters for 195 students (115 at East Preston and 80 at Mill Park). Up to 20% of students have indigenous backgrounds. The ages of the students range from 12 to 21 years old. Mostly, students are in groups of mixed ages, abilities and genders. Each group has 10 to 15 students. There is one group specifically for young boys 12 to 14 years old. This group operates with a maximum of 11 students.

Students come from various areas of Melbourne and have a range of personal, educational and cultural backgrounds. Students are referred by family, youth services, welfare agencies and schools. Many students refer themselves after hearing about the Pavilion School.

### *The Learning Environment*

The Pavilion School operates two campuses, East Preston and Mill Park. The East Preston Campus is the largest and utilises the old East Preston Primary school buildings. The Mill Park campus is housed inside the youth services building at a large shopping centre. The environment is characterised by a calm and therapeutic approach. The focus in the learning environment is for students to feel safe and able to express themselves and develop as individuals. Distractions are minimised to allow students to remain calm and stay focused on their learning. Classrooms are set up in a relaxed and adult way with plenty of space available so that students can have enough physical space to work independently. Students can take breaks whenever they choose and the school provides a stocked kitchen. A separate counselling room is available for students to access at any time. At the start of each lesson classes come to agreements about the environment for the session with regard to such things as listening to music, using mobile phones and the noise level.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

The Pavilion School aims to be truly flexible and staff members think, plan, support and teach with the best interests of the students as their priority. They start where the student is at and build an education program around individual needs. The school has a no expulsion or suspension policy. Each class group has one teacher for all subjects and one well-being counsellor assigned to them. The staff-student ratio is never more than 1 to 6.

Support for students is based around the staff/student relationship. Staff develop significant understandings of attachment theory, therapeutic processes and trauma theory and apply these to their practice at the Pavilion School. External support from welfare and family services are sought as required. The school provides food and drinks for students attending. They also provide support for transport to school and assist with the purchase of clothing, especially as needed for work related activities.

The enrolment process occurs over two to three weeks with individual meetings with the intake social worker and the teachers. During these meetings the student is asked to agree to the school expectations of: keeping the school safe and respectful; participating in school work; and keeping from distracting others learning. Making these agreements often involves the creation of detailed plans to manage specific behaviours or situations. Individual well-being and academic assessments procedures are also implemented and a Student Learning Plan is developed for each student based on targeted Literacy and Numeracy goals.

Students also negotiate personal goals and pathways and transitions goals in consultation with their Student Wellbeing counsellor and they collaborate to develop plans to meet these



goals. As student approach a point of exit from the Pavilion School they work with the Transitions and Pathways worker who supports their transition and provides support after they have left the school.

Parents and families are involved as much as possible through open communication, surveys, formal interview schedules, celebration events and home visits.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

The Pavilion School provides an education for students who present with a complex range of risk factors, behaviours and life situations. To do this the approach is a combination of education and social work. The approach is informed by theory in the fields of education, social work and psychology. The Pavilion School adheres to the DEECD principals and to the principals of psycho-social rehabilitation.

Teaching and Learning is informed by Hattie's 'visible teaching' principles around explicit instruction. A Leading Teacher provides instructional coaching and mentoring. This involves lesson observations, lesson feedback and lesson and curriculum planning support.

Students attend between three and five core classes each week, each class lasts for two hours. The focus of these core classes is Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Development and Work Related Skills. Each class begins and ends with a structured group session known as Circle Time facilitated by the teacher and the student counsellor. During Circle Time students practice personal development and communication skills, share experiences and reflect on their learning. Teachers are able to provide explicit instruction, set academic goals for the session, provide feedback and reflection on learning and remind students of the importance of respect and productivity in the classroom.

Student learning in each class is negotiated and flexible. Students are encouraged to design their own literacy and numeracy learning activities that build on prior knowledge. They are given regular feedback and consistent support with the aim of fast tracking their learning to age-appropriate levels.

As well as attending the two to three core classes per week students can choose to participate in the Elective program. Students who are able and willing can choose to participate in this more complete timetable with multiple interest areas. Elective areas of study are rotated each term and are jointly decided upon by staff and students. Regular elective areas include: art; dance; film; gym; boxing; photography; girls self-defence; horticulture; ICT; drug and alcohol education; mental health awareness and anger management.

The daily timetable generally runs three, two hour sessions per day beginning at 9.30, 12.00 and 2.30. There are no timetabled breaks and students generally come into their classes and then leave the school.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

Teachers implement a rigorous academic program that meets the needs of individual students usually within an integrated theme. The main assessment tool used is the ACER Compass tool which is designed specifically for young adults who have had learning disruptions or limited exposure to education.

Students under 15 years old are assessed using VELs. Students 15 years and older work towards a VCAL qualification. VCAL students can access VET courses offered on and off site.

**FUNDING:** Students are funded through SRP monies received from Charles La Trobe P-12 College for students attending the Pavilion School. Other funding is received from Philanthropic Trusts and small grants from Local and Federal Government Funding

sources.

Students are not required to pay any costs, excursions, camps and stationary are all included for students.

OUTCOMES: 85 per cent of students complete their VCAL level in one year.

In 2012, 68.75 per cent of students exiting moved on to further study, employment or apprenticeships.

The Pavilion School has over 50 students on waiting lists for access to their programs.

### *Information Sources*

The Pavilion School Presentation to WYNBAY LLEN, 7 August 2013.

The Pavilion School website, [www.thepavilionschool.com.au](http://www.thepavilionschool.com.au), accessed on 19 September 2013.

Howie, J. (2013). The Pavilion School (provided to WynBay LLEN)

### **INTERNATIONAL: Big Picture Learning - USA**

Big Picture Learning is an international, non-profit organisation that originated the United States of America. The mission of the organisation is the education of the nation, one student at a time. Established in 1995, the model is now used in 60+ schools across 16 states of the USA as well as schools in Australia, the Netherlands, and Canada.

Point Cook Senior Secondary College have adopted major aspects of the Big Picture Learning Philosophy and operates their Community Action Plan (CAP) elective program using this model.

### *The Students*

Big Picture Learning is implemented in interested schools so the approach influences all students. The organisation is particularly interested in 'under-served urban' communities. A commitment to equity in education is at the core of Big Picture Learning's mission and there is a clear expectation that all students, regardless of background, can achieve success.

### *The Learning Environment*

The learning environments are situated in the individual schools that join the Big Picture Learning movement. Big Picture Learning does not own any schools or manage charter schools. The organisation works with schools and adapts their 'innovative school design to fit specific school districts and communities'. The Big Picture Learning model involves designing and implementing innovative learning environments and researching and replicating good models of learning.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

The Big Picture Learning model is based on a structure of student centred learning:

- Each student is part of a small learning community group, of no more than 15 students, called an 'advisory'
- Each advisory is led by a teacher, called an advisor, who works closely with each student forming a personalised relationship and identifying personalised learning goal based on interests.

- Each student is also linked with a mentor from a work place setting of interest. This relationship facilitates opportunities for real-world learning, such as work placements.
- Parents and families are actively involved in the students learning plan, with the purpose of advocating for their child.

This group stay together through their high school years.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

Big Picture Learning's vision is to be a catalyst for a fundamental redesign of education in the USA. All the components of the Big Picture Learning design are based on three basic principles: 1) Learning must be based on each student's interests and needs. 2) Curriculum must be relevant to the student and allow them to do real work in the real world. 3) Students' growth and abilities must be measured by the quality of their work and how it changes them.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

Big Picture Learning aims for graduation and college readiness for all students. Further to this the program operates around five 'learning goals' which are designed to represent the skills, knowledge and personal qualities that will help lead students to a successful and fulfilled life. These learning goals are flexible to accommodate the diversity of students needs and they sit alongside the students personal learning goals. The five learning goals are: 1) Communication; 2) Empirical Reasoning; 3) Personal Qualities; 4) Quantitative Reasoning; and 5) Social Reasoning.

**FUNDING:** Big Picture Learning is funded through philanthropic monies. The programs in the schools are funded through usual school channels with Big Picture Learning claiming that the programs cost no more than regular programs

**OUTCOMES:** On-time graduation rate in Big Picture schools is 90%, national average is 69.5%

### *Information Sources*

Big Picture Learning USA website. [www.bigpicture.org](http://www.bigpicture.org) accessed on 2 October 2013.

Big Picture Education Australia website. [www.bigpicture.org.au](http://www.bigpicture.org.au) accessed on 2 October 2013.

Big Picture Learning Brochure. (2008). Available at <http://www.bigpicture.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Big-Picture-Brochure.pdf> accessed on 1 October 2013.

### **INTERNATIONAL: Youthreach - Ireland**

Youthreach is a national program of 'seconde-change' education in The Republic of Ireland. The program is government funded and jointly operated by the Department of Education, Science and Enterprise and the department of Trade and Employment. It is managed by an inter-departmental committee

### *The Students*

The program is directed at unemployed, young early school leavers aged 15 to 20 years old.

### *The Learning Environment*

Youthreach is delivered through Centres for Education managed by Vocational Education Committees. It is also delivered in a network of 45 Community Training Centres and ten 'Justice Workshops'.

The centres are all out-of-school settings and they are distributed throughout the country, generally in disadvantaged areas. The centres are locally managed and the programs reflect the particular social, economic and cultural environment of the community.

### *Supporting the Young Person*

The Youthreach program recognises that many young people participating in the program have complex issues. Financial support is made available to the individual centres for the provision of psychological, guidance and counselling services. There is also an advocacy service which provides advocates for each participant. The advocate's role is to support a student's decision-making and interaction with the administrative processes.

Youthreach centres provide crime awareness programs offered in partnership with juvenile justice services, and substance abuse programs.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches*

The program describes the following key features of successful intervention with early school leavers.

- A focus on the holistic development of the individual;
- A learning environment which is safe, structured and challenging; programs must focus on independence and integration;
- A process which is both participant-centred and participant-led; there should be open and honest feedback between trainer and participants;
- A team approach - programs are most effective if organised on the basis of a curricular matrix in which each teacher or trainer is implementing a range of cross-disciplinary curricular objectives (such as communications skills development, health and safety awareness, etc.);
- Staff who facilitate and animate and are themselves open to learning. Ideally, teams should be multi-disciplinary. The maintenance and in-career development of staff involved is a priority;
- A methodology/pedagogy which begins with the young person;
- A general emphasis on achievement rather than failure;
- Appropriate assessment and certification;
- Flexibility (at all levels - management, relationships, curriculum);
- Program duration based on need rather than time.

Each centre manages the specifics of its own education program within these guidelines.

### *The Curriculum and Qualifications*

Youthreach offers a flexible and dynamic program of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience. Learners set personal and educational goals that increase their self-esteem, skill and knowledge base and employability. Essential course elements include Personal and Social Development, Vocational Skills and Communications Skills.

The Youthreach program involves:

- personal development and exploration;
- identification of needs, interests and capacities;
- setting learning goals
- sampling general vocational skills;
- development of specific aptitudes;

- work experience;
- literacy and numeracy development.

A broad range of certifications are available to Youthreach participants. Most young people have their achievements certified through Ireland's Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), in similar ways to VET qualifications. The young people participating in the program can also work towards the *Leaving Certificate* and the *Leaving Certificate Applied*, which seem to be similar to VCE and VCAL.

**FUNDING:** The program is funded by the government Exchequer under the National Development Plan.

**OUTCOMES:** 75% of participants go onto employment

### *Information Sources*

Youthreach website. [www.youthreach.ie](http://www.youthreach.ie) accessed on 1 October 2013.

### **INTERNATIONAL: Montgomery County Public Schools – Study Circles Program**

Montgomery County Public School District in Rockville, Maryland is one of the largest and most diverse districts in the United States of America. This district has attracted international attention due to success in engaging students in education and associated reduced drop-out rates. The pivotal program that has been implemented across the district since 2003, is the Study Circles program. Study Circles are a small group of parents, school staff and students who take part in the program with the aim of addressing the impact of racial differences. The initiative developed as a tool in the district superintendent's 'campaign to raise the bar for all students and close the gap in performance that is often defined by race, ethnicity and poverty' (Fanselow, 2006: 1).

The diverse group of 8 to 12 participants meets together for several, two hour sessions. A trained facilitator encourages the members to share their stories and moderates discussions around ways that the school can work better for everyone. Diverse opinions and points of view are valued and at the conclusion of the program there is an action to be implemented by the community. The vision of the Study Circles program is "Where a diverse community comes together to make schools better for all".

Study Circles provide a framework that enables participants, all of whom are invested in the success of the school, to share their stories, work together and solve problems, in ways that were not possible in any other school forum. Getting the Study Circles started in schools has required staff specifically reach out to connect with diverse members of the community.

Study Circles provide the structure for stakeholders to:

- Develop trust
- Hear different perspectives and experiences
- Confront perceptions and beliefs
- Develop a shared understanding of a problem
- Create mutual accountability
- Collaborate on actions that impact attitudes, practices, and policies

Study Circles are leading to positive changes across the district. Parents are more commonly attending meetings and having input into school decisions. Evaluation of the program in 2006 found that there was significantly increased understanding of the impact of racial and ethnic differences on educational achievement and an increased understanding of others attitudes and beliefs as a result of participation in the program.

*Unfortunately, not enough information is available for this best practice to be able to write in the same format as the other best practices and so this school has also been excluded from Table 8.*

*Information Sources:*

Franslow, J. (2006). *Where a Diverse Community Comes Together to Make Schools Better for All: Montgomery County*. Connecticut: Study Circles Resource Centre.

Montgomery County Public Schools - Study Circles Website.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/studycircles/> accessed on 11 October , 2013.

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Table 7 – Statewide Best Practice Summaries

Name	Location	The Students	The Learning Environment	Support Strategies	Teaching Strategies and Approaches	Curriculum and Qualifications	Funding	Outcomes
Lynall Hall Community School	Inner Suburban Melb	14: Y 7-9 100: Y 10 -12 At risk and/or disengaged.	DEECD specialist setting. Inclusive/Supportive/ Flexible	Individual Learning Plans. Youth workers Ed Psychologist Drug & Alcohol Counselling	Variety of learning options. Main focus to develop social, emotional and educational needs.	AusVELS VCE VCAL VET	DEECD - SRP	67% VCE completion 98% satisfactory VET units 33% satisfactory VCAL credits
St. Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre	Inner Suburban Melb	61: Y 8 – 10 Vulnerable and at risk.	Catholic Specialist Secondary School. Part of Edmund Rice Education Australia. Small classes, flexible arrangements.	Each student has a teacher and a youth worker.	Provides meaningful, socially inclusive ed experiences. Based on individual needs. Partnerships with community orgs for engagement projects.	Learning Choices Framework modelled on Australian Core Skills Framework	State and federal recurrent grants	97% attendance rate Increasing enrolments
Oakwood School and FLN	South Eastern Melb	200: 10 – 18YO Disengaged Complex risk factors.	DEECD school. Annex of Caulfield Park CS. Classes of 10 max. Calm, positive, therapeutic.	Extensive enrolment and induction processes. Holistic case management.	Flexible, negotiated individual learning plans. Positive relationship focus. Based on understanding of trauma and disadvantage.	Staff developed learning continuums Foundation VCAL	DEECD - SRP	
Melbourne Academy	Inner Suburban Melb	15 – 20 YO	Relaxed, adult environments. Part of Melbourne City Mission.	Integrated approach in partnership with other services.	Flexible Person Centred	Themed VCAL programs VET courses Pre-vocational programs	DEECD – HESG Philanthropic	Attendance 75% 30% return to mainstream 30% employment or further training
Phoenix Community College	Regional - Ballarat	1000: 5-18 YO Generally 'mainstream'	Stimulating, caring & supportive.	Learning Support Team manages individuals who are challenged by aspects of their	Student centred. Personalised, exciting and extensive pathway to 21 C learning.	AusVELS VCE VCAL VET	DEECD - SRP	93% VCE completion 83% Satisfactory

Name	Location	The Students	The Learning Environment	Support Strategies	Teaching Strategies and Approaches	Curriculum and Qualifications	Funding	Outcomes
				education. Partnerships with other services.	Opportunity for individual talents and interests.			VET unit
Prahran Community Learning Centre	Inner Suburban Melb	13: 12-16 YO 21: 16+ YO Disengaged.	Classes of 15 max. Multicultural, social, relaxed, adult environment.	Client services officer oversees students. Partnerships with other services.	Applied learning model. Based on connectedness. Pathways for individual needs and aspirations.	YELLA – CEGA & Cert I & II Art VCAL Inter. & Senior	DEECD – MOUs & HESG	
The Pavilion School	Northern Melb	195: 12-21 YO Multiple risk factors. Disengaged.	Calm, therapeutic & safe. Relaxed adult classes. Classes of 15 max. Annex of Charles La Trobe College	Each class has one teacher and one wellbeing counsellor. Partnerships with other services.	Individual learning plans. Integrated education, social work, psychology approach. Explicit instruction. Core and elective classes.	AusVELS VCAL (inc. VET)	DEECD – SRP gov grants Philanthropic	85% VCAL level complete in 1 yr. 50 on waiting list

Table 8 - International Best Practice Summaries

Name	Location	The Students	The Learning Environment	Support Strategies	Teaching Strategies and Approaches	Curriculum and Qualifications	Funding	Outcomes
Big Picture Learning	USA – 16 states	School wide influence. Targets schools in under-served urban districts	School based but influenced by Big Picture Learning models	Students part of small groups of 15 max called 'advisories' Each student has a teacher and a mentor allocated	Three basic Big Picture principals: - Based on individual needs and interests - relevant to student and to the 'real world' - growth and abilities measured	Aims for college readiness. Personal goals and five specific learning area goals.	School based and philanthropic.	On-time graduation rate in Big Picture schools is 90% (USA average 69.5%)
Youthreach	Ireland	Unemployed, young school leavers 15 – 20 YOs	Delivered in Centres of Vocational Ed and Community Training Centres	Psychologists, guidance counselling and advocacy funded.	Holistic individual approach Flexible	Equivalent, applied Y12 Vocational certificates	Government, through various departments	75% move to employment

## **Best Practice Conclusions**

Review of these best practice examples illustrates that there is a wide variety of approaches to addressing the needs of disengaged students in alternative learning settings. The nine organisations work with students with a wide range of complex educational, social and emotional needs and the responses to these within a local context are inevitably varied.

However, there are common approaches that many of the organisations use. Therefore it can be assumed that these should work broadly in alternative educational settings. The following are the common elements identified from the evidence presented above.

### *The Learning Environment - Small class sizes*

The number of students within the defined groups or classes at the organisations is typically small. In the examples presented the maximum number of students ranged from 10 to 15. The staff to student ratio is often even lower as there is usually more than one educator working with each group of students. Education support staff and welfare officers, such as counsellors or social workers are often allocated to particular groups or particular students within a group.

The impact of small class groupings on student engagement and learning is likely to be drawn from two different outcomes. The first is that relationships have been shown to be extremely important to all students, particularly students that have disengaged from learning. The development of a positive, trust-based relationship with educators is essential in these settings. In small class groups these relationships can be developed more effectively simply because the attention of the educators is not spread so widely. In smaller class groups the relationships between the students are also more likely to develop positively. The second outcome of small groups is the minimisation of distraction and stimulation. As identified in several of the best practice summaries, the organisations recognise that many of the students who access their programs have been impacted by trauma at some point in their lives. These students need calm, stable, relaxed learning environments. Classes with fewer numbers of students reduce the likelihood of distraction and over-stimulation.

### *Supporting the Young Person - Integrated support strategies*

Supporting the students who are participating in these alternative learning settings requires significant consideration, effort and resources, as demonstrated by these best practice examples. Supporting students through complex issues around family, mental health, substance abuse and more requires specific consideration and expertise within learning programs. These best practice organisations direct resources into providing as much support as possible. They are considerate of these needs through the enrolment processes and the strategies they develop to engage individual students with learning. These organisations also foster partnerships with specialist services in order to best support the specific needs of each young person.

Another notable common feature of these best practice examples is a focus on careers and pathways. The young people in these programs are supported to think about their future options and to maintain a focus on their goals for their learning. This is an important and empowering feature of the alternative education settings and this support seems to be integrated throughout programs.

### *Teaching Strategies and Approaches - Flexible learning programs*

The organisations featured demonstrated that they have flexible, individualised approaches to learning for their students. Although many of them offer particular qualifications, such as VCAL or VET which involved mandated requirements, the learning is usually flexible and

adaptable to the needs of the students. This seems to be even more common with the programs offered to students under 16.

Flexibility with regard to attendance hours, learning tasks and interactions within the classroom is important when catering for these vulnerable students. Maximising opportunities for engagement with learning is the underlying aim. Often the educators providing programs need to not only pre-plan for individual needs of the students but also be prepared to adapt and respond to needs as they emerge in the classroom.

Despite the flexibility of the program, the key focus of the learning is usually similar. Literacy, numeracy, work skills and social and personal skills are at the centre of learning programs for these students.

#### *Curriculum and Qualifications – Practical and Vocational*

Provision of a range of options and therefore opportunities is central to most of the best practice examples presented. All the examples provide the opportunity for students to work toward some form of qualification or certification. This indicates that it is important that students have goals that they can relate to. That there is purpose to their endeavours in the form of a meaningful achievement that opens up pathways for employment or further education. Practical, applied and often specific vocational programs are common in these settings. This suggests that alternative education to engage students' needs to be 'real-world' based, purposeful and active.

Strategies used by Local, Statewide and International Best Practice re-engagement programs at a glance :

Best Practices	OUTREACH				WELLBEING					PEDAGOGY				PATHWAYS			
	Providing easily accessible information	Bringing learning to the learner	Targeting high needs groups	Establishing lasting meaningful relationships	Intensive support through guidance and follow-up	Taking a client sensitive approach to wellbeing	Developing beneficial community relationships	Hubbing of services	Providing whole community intervention	Making learning applied or hands-on	Flexible options	Addressing literacy and numeracy skill needs	Offering programs that integrate technologies	Embedding pathways in the program	Establishing connections with community	Using intermediate labour market approaches	Integrating work based learning programs
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>																	
<b>LOCAL</b>																	
Wyndham Community and Education Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Karingal Create Youth	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
The Link Centre	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Williamstown Community and Education Centre	✓	✓					✓		✓			✓	✓		✓		
<b>STATEWIDE</b>																	
Lynall Hall Community School	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
St. Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Melbourne City Mission	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Oakwood School and FLN	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Phoenix Community College	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
Prahran Community Learning Centre	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
The Pavilion			✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>																	
<b>United States</b>																	
Big Picture Learning			✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Montgomery County Public Schools – Study Circles Program		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		
<b>Ireland</b>																	
Youthreach			✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

## FINDINGS FROM THE WORKING GROUP

The Working Group for this project consists of participants of multiple projects currently being facilitated by the WynBay LLEN and its partners focussed on disengagement, re-engagement, retention, access and service co-ordination issues around youth. The benefit being that they can apply or inform each other on the learning and outcomes of each of their projects with a particular focus on common areas and objectives across various programs.

The working group initially met on a bi-monthly basis and later on a monthly basis.

The role of the Working Group for this project was to provide guidance and expertise to the Wynbay LLEN Project Manager to produce the outcomes of this project and support in making recommendations with the aim of improving the local response to students at risk of disengaging or who have disengaged from education.

The Working Group supported the Project Manager in:

- Providing guidance and expertise regarding the Alternative Education models currently operating in the local areas.
- Consulting widely with local schools and health and community services to establish the need and potential local level interventions
- Documenting current pathways for children and young people which identifies enablers and barriers to support children and young people to remain engaged or to re-engage in education.
- A literature review to report on best practice options for alternative education options for young people aged 10-18 years of age.
- Developing a business case outlining proposed model(s) including exploring the need for a setting suited to the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay municipalities including options for utilising existing funding to implement such models.
- Achieving the following additional outcomes :
  - ❖ The formation of a network of local stakeholders with an interest in alternative education to provide a platform for work in this area over the longer term
  - ❖ The utilisation of such a network to develop a consensus approach to what is needed in the local area
  - ❖ The ability to build knowledge and understanding of various alternative education models with these key stakeholders to inform the future delivery of alternative education locally.

This Working group will evolve to become a self-sustaining and ongoing forum with input from all members.

Members of the Working group are expert decision makers in their own fields who have genuine interest in improving the local demands of disengagement or re-engagement. They comprised senior advisors from DEECD, Principals of primary and secondary government, catholic and independent schools, senior personnels from Wyndham and Hobsons Bay Councils, Department of Health, Department of Human Services and local education providers.

## SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was carried out in order to determine the needs and/or gaps in the current delivery of Alternative Education Options in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay area. This activity was carried out to evaluate the current settings and propose new model/s for future delivery of Alternative Education Options.



The SWOT Analysis was carried out in two parts:

1. Current Settings
2. Future Delivery

The main objectives of the SWOT analysis were:

- to provide a systematic picture of the present state of the local alternative education delivery in both the LGAs, in order to have a base situation from which to assess the results of the project;
- to identify promising options for policy intervention, in order to know where resources can best be targeted at, at which scale and with which services are currently being involved;
- to identify promising options for local setting - what are the strengths that the current providers may learn from, and what are its weak points where it may benefit from other best practices;
- to gain insight in the extent to which the current settings connect to the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the local providers; this is important to assess both their chances for better services and their possible contribution to the future delivery.

*SWOT Analysis (Current Settings)*

INTERNAL	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localised agencies</li> <li>• Localised partners</li> <li>• Working relationships</li> <li>• LLEN partnership brokerage &amp; advocacy</li> <li>• LLEN local primary research</li> <li>• Youth Partnerships Demonstration site to pull together ideas</li> <li>• High quality programs</li> <li>• Collective ambitions/responsiveness</li> <li>• Partnerships with schools</li> <li>• Wyndham Youth Resource Centre</li> <li>• Works best outside school setting</li> <li>• Qualified teachers, youth workers, psychologists</li> <li>• Tailored programs based on school curriculum</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough awareness</li> <li>• No early intervention (age 8-12) in Wyndham</li> <li>• Unmet needs</li> <li>• Physical space</li> <li>• Lack of data</li> <li>• No formal process for determining dis-engagement</li> <li>• Refugee in the older group (age 15-17)</li> <li>• Restricted transport and activities</li> <li>• Restricted funding</li> <li>• No infrastructure</li> <li>• Not many providers</li> </ul>
EXTERNAL	
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver outreach programs</li> <li>• Whole-of-community code of agreement on dis-engagement</li> <li>• Implement "Services Connect" – DHS model</li> <li>• Implement "Access and Service Coordination" – Wyndham Youth Partnerships project</li> <li>• Blue print of Alternative Education – arriving at a consensus of the work done by Youth Partnerships and already existing researches</li> <li>• Eligibility to get into Alternative Education system – protocols, MOUs, etc., with others</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation and generalisation</li> <li>• FUNDING</li> <li>• No infrastructure</li> <li>• Structures imposed on existing providers</li> <li>• Design of the model</li> <li>• Unrealistic expectations</li> </ul>

### SWOT Analysis (Future Delivery)

INTERNAL	
<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships</li> <li>• Inclusiveness</li> <li>• Holistic approach to support</li> <li>• Maximising expertise and resources</li> <li>• Young people re-engaging in learning and feeling motivated</li> <li>• Possibility to create and increase pathway opportunities</li> <li>• Using existing resources, focus on local</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same setting</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Staff competencies</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Limited potential for parental engagement</li> <li>• Sharing of information</li> <li>• Leadership in congruency</li> <li>• Kids not currently at school grounds, so getting them back could be hard</li> <li>• Buying from schools could be hard to get – venue</li> <li>• Finding the right young people for the programs</li> <li>• Funding model – funding based on census date</li> <li>• Families have often disengaged in education by the time the young person is 10 years old.</li> </ul>
EXTERNAL	
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued Education</li> <li>• Brighter futures</li> <li>• More pathway options</li> <li>• Using existing resources</li> <li>• Maintain social connections</li> <li>• Mobile settings – bus, etc.</li> <li>• Outreach work to engage young people</li> <li>• Inclusive community focus – families, local services</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Impact of young people</li> <li>• Lack of awareness and value</li> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>

Some overall conclusions may be drawn, against the background of observations from the comparative analysis that a proposed model should be:

- Community based
- Strong linkages to local schools
- Co-located facilities, e.g shopping centres, etc.
- Need to develop a sense of belonging – ownership
- Small classes
- Individual relationship with teachers
- Flexible program delivery
- Partnerships – community agency support
- Individual learning plan – remedial support
- Additional support for young people outside of school
- Re-entry to mainstream a key – need for more flexible curriculum
- Professional development for mainstream teachers

- Testing of kids as to where they are at – literacy, numeracy, etc.
- Early intervention – the longer it takes the harder it will be to engage them back into mainstream schooling
- Partnership models
- If completely disengaged, then transitional programs with case management
- If partially disengaged, then separate programs comprising of literacy & numeracy, social & emotional needs, each staff with small class sizes to build close relationships and professional development for staff

The Working group agreed that in terms of provision of flexible learning options for children and young people who are at risk of disengaging or have already disengaged from school, the options are diverse. Alternative education has traditionally formed part of the range of flexible learning options offered to reengage vulnerable young people in education.

In addition to funded alternative education settings, many schools have developed innovative programs to cater for the needs of disengaged young people, funded from their Student Resource Package or from other sources. Many schools including those in the National Partnership Extended School Hub field trials are working in partnerships with local community service agencies, business and other government departments to offer a range of extended day services and programs.

It is suggested that a place- or package-based model is most appropriate for funding education for disengaging or disengaged children and young people. As mentioned in KPMG 2009 report, this model provides schools and school networks with the flexibility to determine the specific mix and type of supports to be provided to a student according to their individual needs. Further, the model is relatively simple to administer – more so than an individualised funding model and service-type based funding model.

For alternative education programs to provide both the means to re-engage students and the ability to move them through the stages of change, into a readiness to develop the skills and take the opportunities to participate successfully in society, alternative education programs must rely on:

- A broad and comprehensive range of curriculum and teaching approaches
- Teachers skilled in a variety of teaching styles and in ways of dealing with the intense interactional dynamics of difficult individuals and groups
- Skills in the assessment of student's needs and the stage of change at which they are situated. And they must be flexible planners who work with students to develop strategies appropriate to the assessments of these needs.
- Leadership with a clear understanding of the limitations of the program, and of the different requirements at each stage of the model.
- Creativity and flexibility to respond effectively to the situations that arise as individual needs and different stages are addressed.

The needs of those who struggle to remain within the mainstream education system are complex. It needs to have coordinated involvement from many providers taking a multi-pronged approach to providing identified services to the young person. Drawing from the conclusions of local, state-wide and international best practices, recommendations need to be structured around four key areas as follows:

#### **1. The learning environment provided:**

- Alternative education provision should be learning that takes place in an independent setting from a traditional school, preferably a vocational setting or adult environment (the latter for 15 – 20 year olds).

- It should foster a sense of community, be safe and supportive of learners.
- Good relationships with teachers and peers are critical in engaging students and keeping them. An alternative education setting should employ staff with literacy and numeracy expertise and vocational and industry expertise and experience.
- There should be opportunities to learn outside of the alternative setting including supported work placements, apprenticeships or traineeships and opportunities to learn from business and industry.

## 2. Support for the young person:

- An initial needs assessment should inform individual learning plans that identify the needs and goals of the young person and set the direction of the learning.
- A personal learning plan should be ongoing and include development of social and personal effectiveness skills including confidence, self-esteem, motivation and persistence as well as employability skills that develop team work, communication, problem solving, self-management, learning, and technology skills. These skills are necessary not only to gain future employment, but also to successfully re-engage with learning and maintain motivation and engagement.
- Learners in an alternative education setting need to be provided with good careers advice and guidance including pathways planning. This advice should be one-to-one if necessary. Mentoring programs are important in supporting the young person.
- There should be a focus on young people who are not managing at any time throughout the program to prevent learners from disconnecting or from failing in the program.
- A relationship with teachers who can be trusted and who are interested in the young person is critical to their success.
- Young people need to be supported when transitioning from the alternative setting back to school, to employment or to further study.

### **Suggestions :**

#### **Access & Service Coordination Project**

*Youth Partnerships Access & Service Coordination Project in the Western Metropolitan Region demonstrates how schools, youth and community services can work more effectively together to improve the identification, assessment and service provision for young people. The Initial Needs Identification Tool (INI) and Protocols can be used for:*

- *common approach to intake and referral with agreed principles and practices*
- *easy access to information on local services and better knowledge of available services*
- *consistent assessment of young person's needs regardless of the first point of contact*
- *assisted and timely access to the right service*

*More information on the project and the tool can be found at*

*<http://youth.wyndham.vic.gov.au/ysd> & <http://hobsonsbayyouthdirectory.com/>*

#### **School Focused Youth Services (SFYS) in Hobsons Bay & Wyndham**

*The School Focused Youth Service is a state wide initiative targeting 10 – 18 year olds at risk of disengagement from the education system. This includes young people in all Government, Catholic and Independent schools. The initiative is funded by The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in partnership with the Department of Human Services, Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools Victoria.*

The Hobsons Bay/Wyndham School Focused Youth Service (SFYS) aims to develop an integrated response for young people at risk of self-harm, disconnection from school, their family or their community, as well as those displaying behaviours which require support and intervention. The SFYS:

- strengthens links and working relationships between schools and community agencies that provide health and welfare services for young people;
- creates a supportive community network which caters for the needs of young people aged 10 to 18 years who are at risk;
- provides support to schools and agencies so that young people can access appropriate services before they are in 'crisis'; and
- provides brokerage funds to schools and agencies to meet gaps in the current service system.

More information on the project can be found at

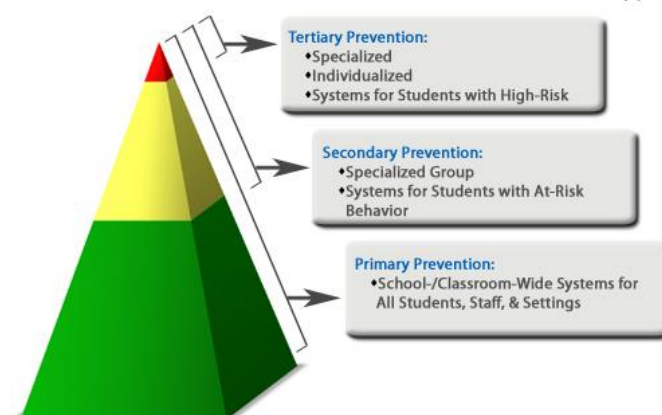
[http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Community/Young\\_people/Networks\\_and\\_Alliances/School\\_Focused\\_Youth\\_Service](http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Community/Young_people/Networks_and_Alliances/School_Focused_Youth_Service)

### **The Learning Mentor Concept**

The Learning Place is the Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and Employment's comprehensive eLearning environment providing secure access to an innovative range of digital tools, resources and online spaces for teaching and learning, collaboration and networking. The Learning Place supports contemporary teaching practice enabling today's learners to steer their own learning and arrive at their own ICT-enriched learning destinations.

School-Wide Positive Behavioural Interventions & Supports (SWPBIS), established by the Office of Special Education Programs, US Department of Education is a decision making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioural practices for improving important academic and behaviour outcomes for all students. SWPBS schools organize their evidence-based behavioural practices and systems into an integrated collection or continuum in which students experience supports based on their behavioural responsiveness to intervention. A three-tiered prevention logic requires that all students receive supports at the universal or primary tier. If the behaviour of some students is not responsive, more intensive behavioural supports are provided, in the form of a group contingency (selected or secondary tier) or a highly individualized plan (intensive or tertiary tier).

Continuum of School-Wide Instructional & Positive Behavior Support



More information can be found at [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org); <http://www.learningplace.com.au>; <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/>



### 3. Teaching strategies and approaches:

- Teaching approaches should be flexible and adapt to meet individual needs.
- Classes should be small (no more than 15) and facilitated by staff experienced and professionally developed to engage the particular learner cohort.
- Practical or applied learning approaches with unit based assessment should be undertaken with options to be re-assessed as required and flexibility around start and completion dates of units.
- There should be progression through units to give young people a sense of direction and achievement. It should be genuine progression with pathways to employment or further study.
- Approaches based on adult learning principles will foster independence through more informal teaching styles, encouraging independent learning.
- Learning should be a combination of “real world” practical learning and formal learning as required.
- Alternative education has become much more than a different school structure and program. It has moved to the cutting edge between education and therapy. To provide effective programs alternative educators must search the complexity of educational and psychological theory for the simple solutions that can be used daily to work with students with challenging behaviours.

A recent review of the relevant literature by Black, Lemon & Walsh (2010) found that various forms of school-community partnerships have been implemented under a range of titles, for a wide variety of purposes, and under a wide range of governance arrangements.

School-community partnerships have multiple benefits for children, families, services and communities, including improved engagement of families, improved connections between services and increased feelings of connection. They also pose multiple challenges, especially relating to partnership and collaboration, funding and support.

#### **Suggestions :**

##### **Collective Impact - ‘systemness’ to improve educational outcomes**

*Collective impact is a structured framework for successful collaborations, particularly effective for tackling complex, place-based, social problems. No single sector or organisation, however innovative or powerful, can accomplish change on their own.*

*Conditions for success :*

1. Common agenda across sectors
2. Evidence-informed decision making
3. Collaborative action
4. Continuous communication
5. Backbone support

More information can be found at <http://collectiveimpactaustralia.com/>;  
<http://www.oregon.gov/gov/docs/OEIB/keynoteChange.pdf>

##### **Oakwood School and Flexible Learning Network**

*Oakwood School is the beginning of a coordinated approach across the Southern Metropolitan Region to cater for students who have disengaged from school.*



Oakwood Flexible Learning Network provides a case managed, individual education and pathway plan for young people who have left school or are disengaged from school. Oakwood Flexible Learning Network will establish satellite programs in conjunction with schools and community organisations that meet the learning needs of disengaged students.

The intention is to create a network of provision across the Southern Region.

More information can be found at [www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au](http://www.oakwoodschool.vic.edu.au).

### **Services Connect**

Services Connect is the model for integrated human services in Victoria, designed to connect people with the right support, address the whole range of a person's or family's needs, and help people build their capabilities to improve their lives. The Services Connect approach draws the community around people so they receive more support from important people in their lives and are more socially connected. At the core of Services Connect is a model of service delivery that provides:

- one assessment when people and their families access human services, instead of multiple assessments that duplicate each other;
- one client record instead of multiple records held by different services, so that people only need to tell their story once;
- one key worker to be a single point of contact for people with complex needs, so that they don't need to navigate through a maze of services on their own; and
- one plan that considers the full range of a person's or family's needs, goals and aspirations, and covers the full range of services they receive.

More information can be found at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/plans,-programs-and-projects/projects-and-initiatives/cross-departmental-projects-and-initiatives/services-connect>

### **DOTS**

DOTS (Developing Other Talents and Skills) is a unique learning program developed by the Education Alliance under the Youth Partnerships Initiative and auspiced by various banking schools including Distance Education Centre Victoria (DECV). DOTS is a significant Youth Partnerships Demonstration Project for South Western Victoria and has been grounded by the significant work of the Grampians Youth Partnerships Governance Committee, Grampians Education Partnerships and the Youth Options Guarantee and a long history of reengagement and reconnection programs within our area.

DOTS draws on local partnerships to offer alternative learning options to students, teachers and educational support staff. DOTS are directly managed by the Education Alliance and are supported by local Community Action Networks (CAN) and Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST).

For day to day work with people in guided and managed support, we are embedding a new outcomes focus via the Outcomes Star case planning tool. The tool tracks a person's development towards independence, from being 'stuck', to accepting help, learning skills

and being able to manage on their own. With the help of their key workers, people can use this tool to assess their situation and develop meaningful plans to improve their lives. They can then use the tool to measure their progress against their agreed plans. The Outcomes Star helps clients to see where they are and where they want to be.

More information can be found at <http://dotseducation.com/>

#### **4. Curriculum and qualifications on offer:**

- Curriculum should be broad and wide ranging and above all be relevant and meaningful to a young person's identified needs and future goals.
- Applied learning and vocational education which progress incrementally are critical stepping stones for disengaged learners. As described above, flexible time frames are important.
- All disengaged learners require some basic education skills, particularly around literacy and numeracy as many have huge gaps in their learning, knowledge and skills development.
- Vocational training should be offered to complement literacy and numeracy development with pre vocational training programs available for those not ready for accredited vocational training. Pre vocational training should provide pathways into vocational training and could include taster courses or short courses to develop skills and to provide a possible range of 'come and try' options.
- Wherever possible VCE options should also be provided for eager learners.
- Employability skills should be embedded across all learning activities.
- Work experience or work placement must be part of any alternative education program.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the consultations and meetings with the Working Group, we can conclude that:

- There are significant numbers of young people aged between 10 to 18 who are disengaged, or at risk of disengagement, from mainstream schools and need access to programs within or outside school in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas.
- Vulnerable and disengaged young people are being referred to alternate education programs both outside the region or to local providers within the region.
- Many schools in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay have developed unilateral partnerships with support services and education or training providers to pro-actively reengage their vulnerable students by providing a range of in school or community based complementary assisted learning programs ( WynBay Re-Engage Program Pilot )
- For all schools in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay there is a real need and a definite capacity to benefit from an integrated continuum of a diversity of options that can be easily accessed that caters for a wide range of needs.
- There are no binding agreements, framework or understanding as a region on the issue.
- Requirements trade-off between provision/space and referral/usage is similar to other regions studied in this report. Apart from the exponential population growth challenges in Wyndham, this report could not identify any specific, local demographic or other constraints compared to other “disadvantaged” regions in Victoria, that would prevent the replication of best practise elements or models in a local setting.
- In Wyndham, community based Learn Local and other complementary local education providers are providing a valuable and effective service catering to the special needs of their vulnerable cohort, which is achieving positive outcomes in terms of transition to further education, training or employment.
- In Wyndham, the local complementary education providers compare well with state-wide best practise identified in the report. The Wyndham Learn Local provider – Wyndham Community and Education Centre is in the view of this report a best practise model itself.
- Providers in Wyndham are currently facing acute space, capacity and resource constraints in meeting demand. The significant projected growth in student population in Wyndham would mean that in the medium to long term there has to be a significant expansion of provision
- New growth corridors in Wyndham such as Tarneit, Wyndham Vale, Manor Lakes, Truganina currently are not serviced in their localities.
- In Wyndham, provision of programs in terms of numbers or scope is limited for the age group 10-14.
- In Hobsons Bay there is very limited or a complete lack of local place based options for the age group 10-18 years.

In considering the present context of alternative education and in order to meet the needs of young people into the future, it would seem apparent that a greater emphasis must be placed on re-evaluating the scope of existing programs by supporting the current providers with statistics and reviews for both within school and outside school settings.

Given the findings above it is immediately evident that space, greater funding, coordination and an increase in provision of alternative education is necessary to improve educational outcomes for young people in the WynBay area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations mentioned herein have been supported by the stakeholders and are based on series of extensive group as well as one-on-one consultations undertaken by WynBay LLEN. The below mentioned models are outreach, inclusive, holistic, place-based support services based on continuum / expansion of existing programs provided within as well as outside school settings.

The working group has reached a consensus on 2 different models for each of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas:

- **Model 1**
  - Age group 10 to 14 years
  - Outcome – transition back into mainstream schooling
  - Tier 3 flexible learning options within school setting to be short-term, intensive programs
- **Model 2**
  - Age group 15 – 18 years
  - Outcome – transition back into mainstream schooling wherever possible or into further education, training or employment
  - Tier 4 flexible learning options outside school setting to be long-term ongoing programs

### **Model 1 Recommendations ( 10 -14 YO):**

Flexible learning options for the age group 10 - 14 years involve intervening early to address the issues that are preventing a child or young person's full engagement with school and learning. These initiatives should be to be short-term, intensive programs, delivered on the school site but away from a usual classroom. Alternatively, students participate in these programs for part of the week and attend their usual classroom for the remainder of the week.

Children and young people who access these programs may face a range of barriers to learning, such as poor concentration, low self-esteem, learning difficulties, behavioural issues or other risk factors that may make it difficult for them to remain in the classroom with their peers and reduce their potential to succeed in school.

These programs should be provided by individual schools or within a network across multiple schools.

Approaches to support youth at risk of disengagement in the school setting typically focus either on comprehensive school reform or on programs targeted to individual students. Research suggests that it is crucial to combine the best components of both approaches.

### **System level recommendations**

Recommendation 1: There is a need for an integrated education system, comprising a continuum of provision options (offered within school and community settings) catering to the differentiated needs of children and young people at risk of disengaging.

### **School-wide recommendations**

Recommendation 2: There is a need for effective and standardised early identification systems to ensure that schools can identify youth at risk of disengaging, such as universal implementation of the Student Mapping Tool.

Recommendation 3: There is a need for high expectations on attendance and behaviour to be maintained and promoted, as per the School-Wide Positive Behavioral model.

Recommendation 4: There is a need for adequate and coordinated resourcing of student wellbeing within schools, including the consistent and cooperative use of those resources.

The above could be implemented by setting up a multi agency support team comprising of external education and youth services providers. It is essential that the team meet regularly and be chaired by a designated assistant principal. The organizations represented should provide outreach, individual case managed support and complementary learning ideally in the school setting. The key emphasis of this learning should be focussed on elemental aspects such as literacy and numeracy. Project based learning or problem based learning that engage students in more perceived relevant curriculum needs to be considered.

### **Student-focused recommendations**

Recommendation 5: There is a need to build the capacity of young people through positive relationships with adults and peers that strengthen students' psychological and cognitive engagement with school and learning

Recommendation 6: There is a need to equip young people with the life skills to be able to seek out and effectively engage with available support services.

Recommendation 7: There is a need to offer flexible learning approaches within schools that tailor responses to the needs of children and young people at risk of disengaging from school.

*These recommendations can be found in the WynBay LLEN Youth Partnerships – In School Support Project Report.*

### **Model 2 Recommendations (15 – 18 YO) :**

Flexible learning programs are available for children and young people in the age group 15 - 18 years who require more complex and intensive services and supports in order to re-engage with education.

These programs are considered when all other options for learning have been exhausted, the child or young person has a long history of disengagement or exclusion from school and reintegration into an educational environment is a long-term option. In some circumstances, these programs are of extended and ongoing duration.

Keeping in mind, the fast growing population in the western corridor, the Working Group members have suggested we need to come up with solutions that would endeavour to address some of these issues immediately while other long-term solutions are still being planned.

Therefore, two solutions have emerged out of these discussions:

1. Immediate
2. Long-term

#### 1. **Immediate Solution:**

In order to immediately address the growing needs in both the LGAs, services of existing local as well as established external providers for continuum or expansion can be considered.

##### **Wyndham**

Local providers based in the Wyndham area viz. Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc.(WCEC) and Karingal Create Youth have indicated that they are prepared to expand and operate on a larger scale. They have the capacity to expand as far as Tarneit, Truganina or Manor Lakes and meet the demands of these areas provided they are given more space. Space is the only barrier to their expansion.

Interviews with the WCEC CEO and Karingal Create Youth Manager have indicated that client numbers have reached the point where both the organisations are no longer able to increase enrolments due to space limitations. There are currently more than 500 students in both the LGAs on waiting lists for various courses.

Currently, WCEC is the only Learn Local provider in the City of Wyndham. WCEC Business Plan for 2012-2014 reports that WCEC currently has a strong capacity to meet its short term liabilities with a current ratio of 8:1, no longer term solvency issues with a debt to equity ratio of 0.07 and maintains 6 months working capital (as at October 2011). The Business Plan also outlines projected surpluses for its 2012-2014 reporting years, building from a 3.5% surplus in 2012 to 7.1% surplus in 2014.

Both these organisations have expressed genuine interest in expanding their services / co-locating to service the northern growth corridors of Tarneit, Manor Lakes and Wyndham Vale. Though based in Wyndham, these providers will continue to support young people living in Hobsons Bay.

If provided space, both these providers have the capacity to quickly scale up their existing services and acquire funding to harness the dis-engagement / re-engagement issues in the Wyndham area within a short span of time.

##### **Hobsons Bay**

There is very limited range of options available in Hobsons Bay for the age group 10 – 18 years.

The above two Wyndham providers have clearly indicated that they do not intend to be physically located in this LGA.

But there has been a genuine interest shown by some providers outside these LGAs particularly St. Joseph's Flexible Learning Centre, North Melbourne and Oakwood School and Flexible Learning Network, Caulfield to name a few. These providers already have their business plans in place and have also started their search for space.



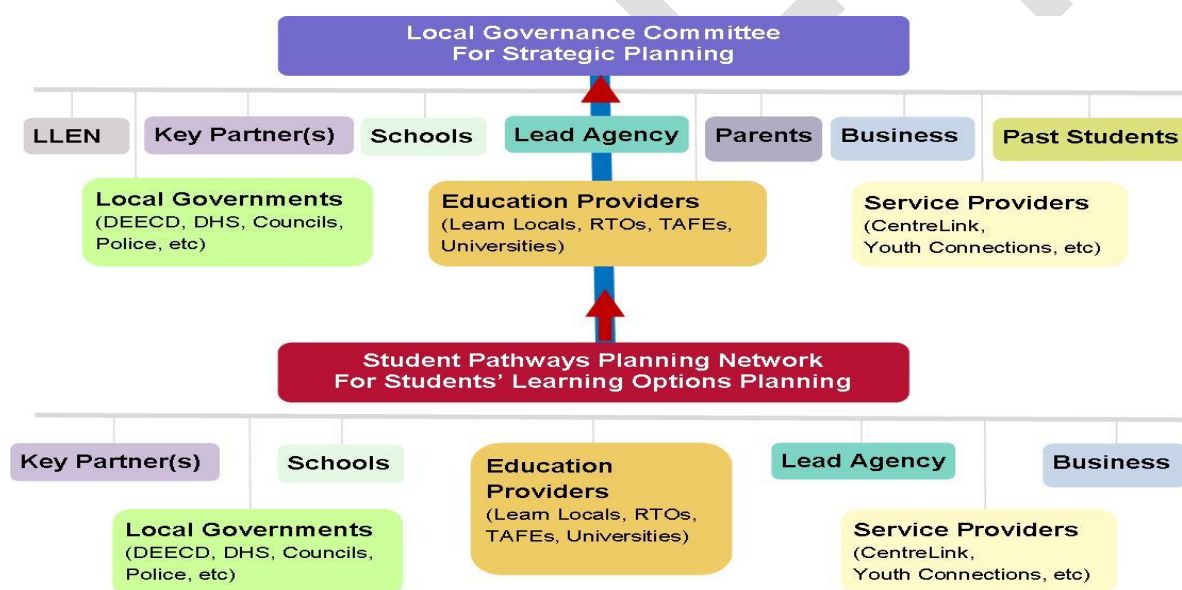
***Further investigation and consultations with interested providers need to be made in order to start their operations in these growing cities.***

## 2. Long-term Solution :

In Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas, the WynBay Community Learning Hub model is recommended. The WynBay Community Learning Hubs should be established to be based on a consortium made up of partnerships. This consortium can be brokered by WynBay LLEN which is a School Business Community Partnership Broker and is ideally placed. The LLEN would broker partnerships, develop and coordinate strategic alliances to get communities involved in shaping educational options for young people in these local areas.

Though led by a LLEN, this consortium would be actually managed by a Lead Agency and / or a Key Partner and driven by the communities like schools, local governments, education providers, service providers, parents and other partners including businesses to address the needs of dis-engagement, re-engagement and skills shortages in these two LGAs.

Governance of this consortium would be two-layered :



In addition to the SRP funding following the student, this model can be complemented with a brokerage allocation to DEECD regions to give them the additional flexibility to allocate discretionary or top-up funds to schools or school networks for additional supports in areas of particularly high need. The amount of brokerage funding would need to be determined by the Department, and allocated using an equitable, population based allocation formula, considering the rapid growth in the western region.

Drawing from the learning of local, state-wide and international best practices, recommendations around four key structures as mentioned in the Conclusions section above need to be considered when the operational aspect of this model.

Proposal for the WynBay Community Learning Hub model has been further detailed in the Business Case section of this report.

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## BUSINESS CASE

This business case is the first step in identifying and testing some key concepts and principles. It relies on literature review, local consultation and a number of recommendations to develop an initial conceptual understanding of the proposed model.

Business Case in relation to this project is a one-off, start-up document that should be used by the proposer of this project to assess the justification of a proposed project, or to assess the options for a project that has already received funding. Upon approval, the business case will confirm the project proposer support and/or resourcing for a recommended course of action. Further, direction may be given by the proposer of the project to proceed to the development of a *Project Business Plan*.

### 1. Proposal

There is strong demand for an expanded region wide re-engagement program in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay LGAs. There are a significant number of young people between 15 – 18 years of age who are at risk of disengagement from education as is evident from the findings and conclusions above.

The Wyndham region is an expanding area that is serviced by a number of government secondary colleges and other schools. The population is growing rapidly, school enrolments are increasing and so is the waiting list with external education providers. Hobsons Bay area has minimal service provision for the high number of at risk kids.

While this project remains a major focus, these regions also recognise the need to ensure that there are quality place making, community building and service provision initiatives in the many suburban centres that make up the remainder of Wyndham Hobsons Bay regions.

Both these regions are now considering new ways to plan services and facilities to better address increasingly diverse and complex community needs. The issues affecting service delivery include physical barriers to collaboration, lack of integration of services, difficulties with access, fragmentation and unsuitable and outdated facilities. A school-community hub is one approach that may address some of these issues.

WynBay Community Learning Hub model serves to provide an answer to the practical and structural barriers in each of these LGAs by providing a range of social services either in a school or in collaboration with a school.

### 2. Proposed WynBay Community Learning Hub

Based on feedback during the consultations conducted as part of proposing this model we concluded that a school-community hub model can be defined as:

*A model of school-community partnership that involve collaboration between schools and other sectors in order to support the learning and wellbeing of disadvantaged children and their families through the provision of multiple services available in a single location or network of places in an integrated way.*

This model serves to provide an answer to the practical and structural barriers by providing a range of social services either in a school or in collaboration with a school. The hub calls on



services to ensure access to necessary support and services are readily available to all, with a focus on children who are at a disadvantage and at risk.

Although a wide variety of school-community hubs exist, the purpose of hubs can be distilled to three primary mutually exclusive objectives. These objectives are:

- *Service coordination and delivery*  
School-Community hubs can provide a means of accommodating a number of social and community organisations together in the one physical space, with the goal of enhancing both coordination among services and access to them by the community. The emphasis of service coordination is on encouraging collaboration between different organisations to better serve community needs.
- *Place making*  
Not just the act of building or fixing up a space, but a whole process that fosters the creation of vital public destinations: the kind of places where students feel a strong stake in their communities and a commitment to making things better. Simply put, place making capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote young people's health, pathways, and wellbeing.
- *Community building*  
Community building means enhancing the connections and relationships amongst people in order to strengthen common values and promote collective goals. These goals may include community cohesion, support for isolated or disadvantaged people, healthier children and families, more local employment opportunities, greater cultural recognition, more equitable access to profitable local businesses.

### **Benefits of WynBay Community Learning Hub:**

WynBay community partnerships will have multiple benefits for children, families, services and communities, including improved engagement of families, improved connections between services and increased feelings of connection, including:

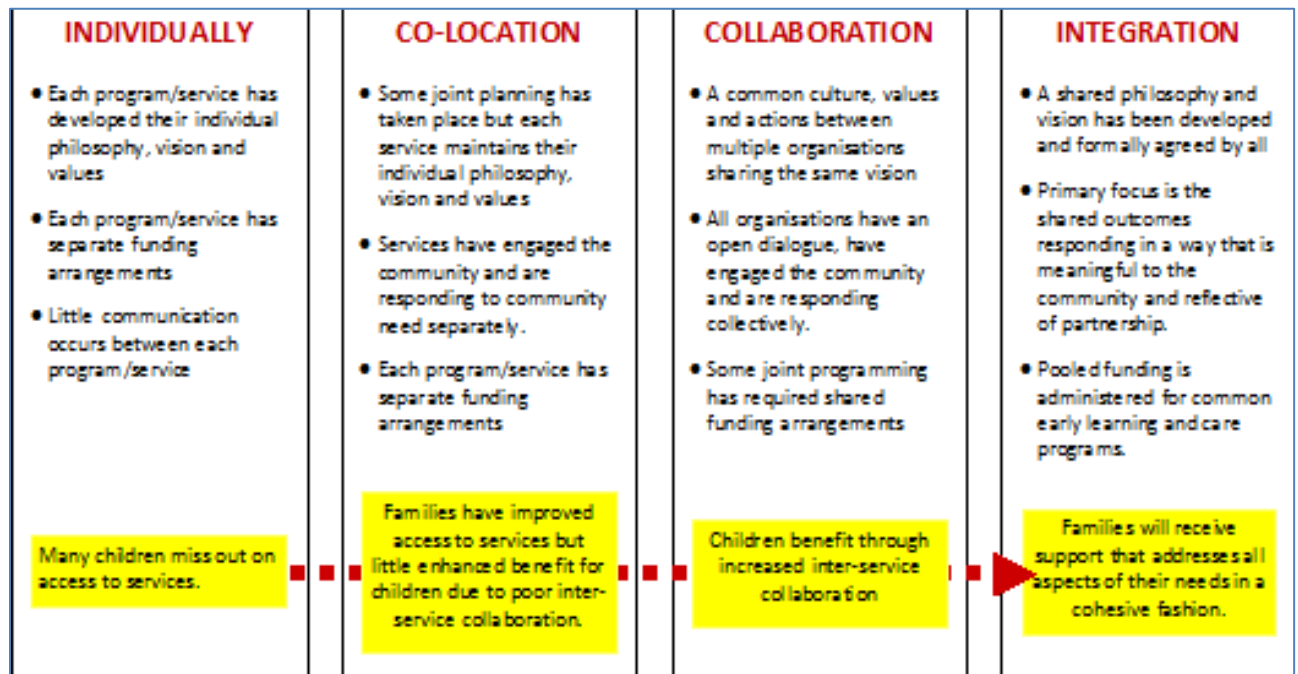
- Improved access to and participation in services for both youth and families
- Improved youth connection to school
- Improved attendance, academic achievement and behaviour
- Increase in family involvement in children's schooling
- One focal point delivering a range of quality services with easy access
- Community development through stronger networking, greater involvement in school activities and student education
- Community/business partnerships within a local neighbourhood endeavour to enhance local morale and community wellbeing through their individual contributions

The economic effectiveness of the WynBay Community Learning Hub will have:

- a cost-efficient model of addressing social issues in the long term
- improved potential career opportunities for students as a result of them not 'slipping through the net' and a subsequent potential reduction in social inequality and welfare dependency
- benefits for local business (as a result of a better-skilled workforce)
- increased skills and employment of parents who volunteer at the school as part of the extended service model
- greater connections with the community leading to improved business performance
- generation of income for the school



The potential for agencies to integrate programs and services is also seen as a benefit to the agencies themselves, in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of their services.



Adapted from source: Chaplin et al. (2010), *Moving Forward Together*

### 3. Hubs in Practice

In a literature review of hubs, Lennie (2007) found that characteristics of successful and sustainable hubs include:

- colocated agencies who have developed mutual respect, shared norms/values and understanding/trust
- willingness of agencies to share ideas and make compromises when interests conflict
- flexible agencies open to innovation, yet pragmatic
- highly motivated and committed staff, possessing good will
- facilities and human services
- respond to, and are shaped by, the unique circumstances and needs and assets of their community
- include a variety of uses and services (including community services, health care, leisure and retail) that attract different groups of people at different times of the day and meet a wide range of community needs and support community strengths
- attract people and are identified as a focal point for the community
- are readily accessible to ensure all community members can utilise them
- have a civic quality, sense of stability and level of amenity that marks them as an important place in the community

In addition to the Best Practice examples mentioned earlier in the report, hub models from Wyndham, Victoria and abroad also provide evidence of what can make a hub successful including:

- Point Cook Community Learning Centre in Wyndham
- Chermside Community Hub in Brisbane
- Family centered approaches both international and within Australia

#### *Point Cook Community Learning Centre – Wyndham*

As a local example, an integrated learning facility was established at Point Cook in 2009. The facility includes:

- 950 square meter library
- two kindergarten rooms
- maternal and child health facility
- community rooms and kitchen
- consulting room
- toy library

A survey of visitors conducted in 2010 and 2011 indicated that the Point Cook Community learning Centre is a success. For example, 96% of respondents agreed that the center was 'the heart of the growing Point Cook community' with 'convenience and accessibility seen as the main benefits of services collocated at the center.

#### *Chermside Community Hub - Brisbane*

The Chermside Community Hub is described as 'a place where you can meet people, learn new skills, relax and enjoy life in your neighbourhood.' The hub links:

- Chermside Library
- Chermside Aquatic Centre
- A coffee shop, and
- Kedron-Wavell Services Club

The Chermside Community Hub is a partnership between Brisbane City Council (who own and operate the library), the Kedron Wavell Services Club (which includes entertainment, eating and sporting facilities) and the Splash Aquatic Centre (which includes the pool and other entertainment areas).

Chermside also highlights the potential of linking with different partners including those outside of what is traditionally considered to be the community sector. The Kedron-Wavell Services Club is a key partner in the Chermside hub and provides a range of community support services and facilities.

#### *Family centred approaches both international and within Australia*

Other hub examples of successful integration have focused on family centred approaches.

#### *International*

Rosemount lifelong learning in Glasgow, Scotland demonstrates how the integration of services may deliver outcomes which might not otherwise be achieved. Rosemount is primarily an adult learning provider that is able to offer mothers the opportunity to access further education and training by providing on-site childcare facilities. Goulet and Maclachlan (2010) found that 68% of participants used the crèche facilities and many would not have been able to attend if the crèche didn't exist. The collocation of adult education and child care facilities at Rosemount is a

clear example of how a hub can deliver outcomes which may not have been possible had the two services not been co-located.

#### *Australia*

Another Australian example is the Queensland Primary School in regional Queensland. This primary school in regional Queensland has 411 students, and is situated in a semi-rural community with a population of approximately 1500 people. It is a low-medium socio-economic area where approximately half of the students come from single-parent families. The school values and encourages parental involvement and believes the co-operation produces positive outcomes for their students. The school's community enhancement officer plays a vital role in strengthening parent-school relationships. She is instrumental in providing opportunities for interaction between parents, school and the wider community.

The focus is on trying to capture the interest and the active participation of parents who are not readily available or are not as active in school initiatives as the current group. All these factors, in addition to the enthusiasm and forward thinking of the Principal, suggest that the school could be an exemplar for schools wishing to engage in successful and effective family-school partnerships.

## **4. The case for a WynBay Community Learning Hub in Wyndham & Hobsons Bay**

### ***City of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay background***

The City of Wyndham experienced the largest and fastest growth rate out of all Victorian local government areas in 2011 and it is predicted that this degree of growth will continue well into the future, with the population expected to grow from 161,575 in 2011 to over 300,000 by 2031 (.id forecasting, 2012). Furthermore, in 2011 the ABS estimated that between the decade of 2001 and 2011, Wyndham experienced the largest population growth of all local government areas in Australia (78,942 people, or 86%).

A contributor to this population growth are new and emerging communities, evidenced by only 35.6% of Wyndham residents having both parents born in Australia compared to 50.0% nationally (ABS, 2012).

From the new and emerging communities settling in Wyndham, 2011 Census data indicates that 21,512 residents were born in either 'South East Asia' or 'Southern and Central Asia' with two thirds (66.53%) of this population arriving between 2001 and 2011 (ABS, 2012).

Contributing to the new and emerging communities settling in Wyndham are considerable numbers of refugees. Refugee and humanitarian entrants DIAC Settlement Reporting outlines that from 2001 to 2012 Wyndham was ranked 16th out of the 594 local government areas in Australia for number of humanitarian entrants.

In Hobsons Bay between 2006 and 2010, almost 1,000 young people aged 12 to 24 arrived from overseas. Almost 15,000 young people aged between 12 to 25 years are estimated to be living in Hobsons Bay, accounting for 17 per cent of the overall population. 25 per cent could not speak English or spoke it poorly.

The English proficiency of new and emerging communities settling in these LGAs is identified to be comparatively poorer than the national average with fewer than 30% of new arrivals reporting to have 'Very Good' English (DIAC, 2012). English language skills are vital in an economy where manufacturing jobs are no longer readily available to recent migrants (Australian industry group, 2012).

### ***Growth of young people not suited to a traditional school environment***

Secondary school students in Wyndham underperform in comparison to their peers elsewhere. Out of the 79 Victorian LGAs, year 9 students in Wyndham ranked 61st in reading and 69th in numeracy in terms of the percentage at or above the national minimum standard on the 2010 Naplan (DEECD, 2010).

Only 70% of young people attain Year 12 or equivalent qualifications compared to the state average of 80% (WynBay LLEN, 2012). Conservative estimates also point to at least a further 720 young people in Wyndham not being suited to traditional schooling by 2024.<sup>1</sup>

School retention rate (full time enrolment in Year 12) in Hobsons Bay is 74 per cent, almost 6 per cent lower than the state average. On an average, 69 per cent of 19 year olds had attained Year 12 or an equivalent, compared to the Victorian rate of 80 per cent. Approximately seven per cent of 15 to 19 year olds and 15 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds are disengaged from paid work or education. Hobsons Bay had the highest disengagement rates for 20 to 24 years olds across the Western Metropolitan Region and was ranked as having the fourth highest rate of disengagement for metropolitan Melbourne.

The WynBay's 2012 Environmental Scan notes that:

'Principals from schools in the Western Metropolitan Region (WMR) of Melbourne strongly endorsed the role of VCAL in retraining students at risk of early leaving, and schools cited multiple ways in which VCAL programs benefited their students, including engaging and retaining less academically inclined students and providing a pathway that links school with post-school training or employment.'

### ***Under-Provision of Local Alternative Education Service***

A recent survey conducted by WynBay LLEN on Alternative Education service provision as a part of this project in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas, found that there are around 14 alternative education providers which support re-engagement options but function on a smaller scale focussing on need-basis. One of these providers, Williamstown Community and Education Centre in Hobsons Bay does not run any specific re-engagement programs.

These existing providers currently have a total of 263 students enrolled with the data suggesting that there are somewhere under 1000 places available in re-engagement programmes within the WynBay LLEN. Given the significant numbers of early school leavers, including the numbers of 10-14 year olds disengaging from education this demonstrates a significant under-provision.

All programs were expecting student numbers to remain the same or increase over the next two years, with eight of the eleven programmes expecting their enrolments to increase by more than 10% over that period.

In terms of disability and special needs provision, although only four programmes reported having students who were receiving disability funding, providers estimated that between 40% and 100% of students enrolled in re-engagement programs had some form of learning difficulty.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on population growth of 10-24 year olds from 30,000 in 2009 to 54,000 in 2024 with 3% disengaged. Population prediction – WynBay LLEN, Environmental Scan 2012, June 2012- Updated, p. 43

The data suggest that the number of program places available to disengaged young people is significantly less than is required. Re-engagement programs, possibly due to their typically small size, are also fragmented, with schools seeming to rely on local knowledge and relationships for referrals rather than on any central point of information.

There is no centralised hub for information on alternative educational provision, meaning that understanding of the alternative options available is fragmented.

Schools are working in partnership with external providers but comments from schools suggest that these partnerships are formed on an ad hoc basis and rely on personal knowledge of individual programs rather than a coordinated referral process. Such a coordinated process may assist students to be more appropriately referred.

The detailed summaries of these providers illustrate that there is a limited range of options available, especially in Hobsons Bay.

Given the findings above there are strong arguments that further research into alternative education provision and need across the area is needed. It is however, immediately evident that greater funding, coordination and an increase in provision of alternative education is necessary to increase educational engagement amongst young people in the Wyndham and Hobsons Bay LGAs.

## **5. State and Local Planning Context**

The development of a WynBay Community Learning Hub in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay is aligned to policy at both local and state levels including:

- Wyndham City Plan 2011-2015
- Wyndham Community Learning Strategy 2010-2013
- Hobsons Bay City Plan 2013 - 2017
- Hobsons Bay Youth Strategic Plan 2009 - 2013
- 2011 Victorian Families Statement.

### **Local policy**

Snapshot of these policies are as follows :

Wyndham	Hobsons Bay
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>City Plan 2011 – 2015</i></p> <p>A strategic theme of the Wyndham City plan 2011-2015 (Wyndham City Council, 2012) is 'Sense of Community'.</p> <p>'Sense of Community' has as an overall aim to 'Build a community rich in social, cultural, leisure and lifelong learning opportunities having regard to the differing needs of women and men, cultures, abilities and sexualities.' Two specific strategic outcomes that are aligned to the development of a school-community education hub are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the provision of facilities and services that meet the needs of our diverse community</li> <li>• Provide flexible and integrated services that are inclusive of our diverse community.</li> </ul> <p>The plan places emphasis on offering lifelong learning opportunities to people of diverse backgrounds with a strategic outcome focused on the provision of a school-community education hub.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>City Plan 2013 – 2017</i></p> <p>The Community Health and Wellbeing Plan and Council Plan were developed following an extensive program of consultation and research that identified four key goals to drive the Council's action planning over the next four years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Inclusive, Resilient and Healthy Community</li> <li>• A Well Planned, Vibrant and Sustainable Place</li> <li>• Quality Community Infrastructure and Public Open Spaces and Places</li> <li>• An Innovative, Proactive and Leading Organization</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Community Learning Strategy 2010-13</i></p> <p>The Wyndham Community learning Strategy 2010-13 (Wyndham City Council, 2010) recognizes the wide ranging benefits to both the individual and the community of lifelong learning. Specific objectives within the strategy that support the development of a community education hub include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for all (initiative 5) – Work with CALD communities and stakeholders to ensure refugee communities are aware of and understand the learning opportunities available to them</li> <li>• Leading the way (initiative 1) – Advocate for appropriate learning infrastructure to meet the needs of our rapidly growing city</li> <li>• Leading the way (initiative 2) - Investigate future infrastructure needs for adult education delivery in Wyndham and how this will impact upon community center planning</li> <li>• Leading the way (initiative 3) – Develop an integrated learning center usage policy to maximize how space is used to achieve community development and community learning outcomes.</li> </ul> <p>The strategy clearly states that lifelong learning similar to what would be provided at a school-community education hub helps migrants integrate into the community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Youth Strategic Plan 2009 – 2013</i></p> <p>The Youth Strategic Plan 2009 - 2013 guides the Council's work towards ensuring that young people aged 12 – 25 years of age in Hobsons Bay are valued, supported and championed to achieve their full potential. Hobsons Bay City Council acknowledges the increasing demands placed on young people to reach their full potential and as such recognises that it has a role to play in shaping the lives of young people living in the municipality by providing :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership and coordination within the local community to ensure a more integrated support system for young people and advocate for a 'better deal'.</li> <li>• Spaces and places for young people to participate in community.</li> <li>• Opportunities for young people to connect and participate in their local community through</li> <li>• Access to services and civic leadership programs.</li> <li>• Provide support to young people as they transition from adolescence to adulthood</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for young people to live diverse and healthy lives.</li> </ul>



## **State policy**

### *2011 Victorian Families Statement*

The 2011 Victorian Families Statement (State government of Victoria, 2011) is a broad ranging document that is a pragmatic approach to what Victorian families need from the State government. The government recognises that many Victorians are lacking in the necessary literacy and numeracy skills and pledges to increase training places for the disadvantaged whilst also supporting training facilities on public housing sites. The proposed WynBay Community Learning Hub can be located in an area of public accessibility and would benefit greatly from a facility that the community could 'call their own.'

Safe and friendly neighbourhoods are a key concern raised in the statement. The development of a WynBay Community Learning Hub could act as stimulus for the urban regeneration of the immediate area by providing families with a facility to be proud of and, also creating a sense of community. Such a goal is in congruence with the Victorian Families Statement that not only raises the importance of safety, but of being connected to others and getting involved in the local area.

## **6. Proposed WynBay Community Learning Hub Plan**

### *Wyndham Community Education Hub*

In October 2012 Wyndham Community and Education Centre (WCEC), in partnership with Wyndham City Council, had submitted a Business Case that a community education hub be developed on the former Glen Devon Primary School site in Werribee. The development of a community education hub would involve DEECD clearing and decontaminating the site and a new purpose built building constructed in place, funded by WCEC, Wyndham City Council and potentially DEECD. WCEC as primary occupant would provide training, settlement services and youth services with a focus on serving newly arrived migrant families in Wyndham and young people who do not succeed in a traditional school environment.

*WCEC still awaits the outcome of this submission of the Business Case.*

Approval of this Business Case would lead to an immediate solution that would address the coordination and an increase in provision of alternative education amongst young people not only in Wyndham but Hobsons Bay LGA as well.

### *Proposed WynBay Community Learning Hub*

The plan for WynBay Community Learning Hub provides an outline of the program that can be considered for future implementation.

In each of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas, the School-Community Hub model will be based on a consortium made up of partnerships. This consortium would be led by WynBay LLEN which has Partnership Brokering as one of its strategic goals. The LLEN would broker

partnerships, develop and coordinate strategic alliances to get communities involved in shaping educational options for young people in these local areas.

Though led by a LLEN, this consortium would be actually managed by a Lead Agency and / or a Key Partner and driven by the communities like schools, local governments, education providers, service providers, parents and other partners including businesses to address the needs of dis-engagement, re-engagement and skills shortages in these two LGAs.

The Lead Agency and/or Key Partner would also auspice and provide individualised training with a focus on dis-engaged young people who do not succeed in a traditional school environment.

There are major benefits from this hub, in terms of providing all schools with access to programs (for their students), which provide the intensive counselling, case management and skills development that is required to re-engage students at risk. This regional approach will make available (to all schools) best practice programs that utilize in-school and community provider based programs. Students will be provided with a broader range of programs that can be tailored to their identified needs.

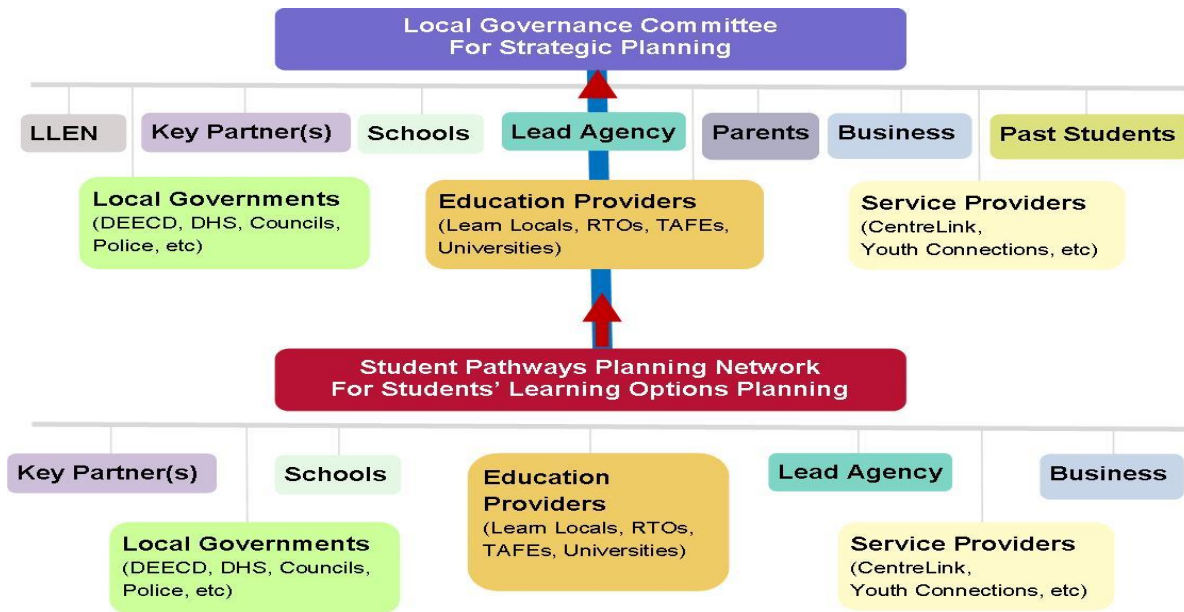
### ***Proposed Scope***

The region wide plan is designed to implement new programs for re-engagement for students 15-18 years at risk of disengagement. The plan will enable the development and delivery of new targeted individually-tailored re-engagement programs based on outreach, place-based, services and support containing school and community based elements in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay areas.

These programs will be primarily funded via Student Resource Package(SRP) with a minimum of six months duration delivered either within or outside school or a combination. In addition to the SRP funding following the student, application for a complemented brokerage allocation can be made to DEECD regions to give them the additional flexibility to allocate discretionary or top-up funds to schools or school networks for additional supports in areas of particularly high need. The amount of brokerage funding would need to be determined by the Department, and allocated using an equitable, population based allocation formula, considering the rapid growth in the western region.

### ***Proposed Governance Structure***

The consortium will have strong governance arrangements to oversight the development of the school-community hub and its regular evaluation; to ensure best practice approaches are utilized in both the regions; and to ensure continuity and ongoing improvement. Governance of this consortium would be two-layered:



### Proposed Funding Model

Calculations for the revenue and expenditure are based on per calendar year for 300 students in a class size of 15 students and 20 classes. Courses will be delivered in the hub location by course providers. Figures are approximate and have been gathered during consultations.

### Revenue

These are indicative figures only.

Revenue		
Funding Source	Fees per student per year	Total for 300 students per year
DEECD SRP Funding from school	6,786	\$2,035,800
VCAL VTG Funding incl. student fees	8,100	\$2,430,000
General Education VTG Funding incl. student fees	6,000	\$1,800,000
VET BAND Funding per course	800	\$240,000
<b>Total Revenue per year for 300 students</b>		<b>\$6,505,800</b>

### Revenue Assumptions:

- Program caters for a total 300 students aged 15-18 years.
- 1 year program full time (delivered in external provider)
- SRP Funding per year per student = \$7,143, but only 95% is passed onto the providers. This does not include VETiS or MIPS
- VTG (Victorian Training Guarantee) funding is calculated on approx... 52% concession, 48% non concession. All are eligible for funding provided 100 % completion rate.
- VET Band Funding is approximately \$800 per student per course and that 100% of this

amount will be passed on with the student.

## Expenditure

Expenditure will comprise of one time building setup costs (if no space) and operating costs.

## Building Setup Costs

These are indicative figures only.

Building Setup Costs :			
School Buildings	Area m2	Rate	Estimated Cost
		\$/m2	
Administration & Staff	450	\$2,200	\$990,000
Student toilets, sick bay & cleaner	100	\$3,500	\$350,000
Student Lounge	100	\$2,500	\$250,000
Computer Labs 1-4	150	\$2,300	\$345,000
Classrooms & airlock, breakout space & circulation	700	\$2,000	\$1,800,000
Covered outdoor area (m2 130)			\$130,000
Security			\$40,000
Site works including Car park for 42 cars			\$466,900
External Services			\$317,000
Rock excavation allowance			\$200,000
<b>Sub Total Construction Estimate (Building Area)</b>	<b>1500</b>		<b>\$4,888,900</b>
Cost Escalation			\$100,000
<b>Sub Tender Total</b>			<b>\$100,000</b>
Loose Furniture & Equipment			\$380,000
Authority charges / Infrastructure costs PC			\$100,000
Contingency during Construction - 5%			\$300,000
Consultants fees 8%			\$560,000
Project management fees			\$120,000
<b>Sub Total Fees &amp; Allowances</b>			<b>\$1,460,000</b>
<b>Total Building Setup Cost Excluding GST</b>			<b>\$6,448,900</b>

## Building Setup Costs Assumptions:

- This would be a greenfields project architecturally designed and developed from ground up.
- It does not include provisions for the purchase of commercial land at the current unit price.
- Existing facilities could be leased or accessed if provided by Council or interested parties -this could be an immediate solution for short term need.

## Operating Costs

These are indicative figures only.

Operating Costs :	
	Total Estimated Costs
Program Development	\$70,000
Courseware Licensing Fees	\$3,000
Workshops	\$8,500
Program Guide	\$3,500
Program Coordination	\$5,000
Program Monitoring and Report	\$15,000
<b>Total Program Development Cost</b>	<b>\$105,000</b>
Manager	\$80,000
Trainer * 8	\$480,000
Youth Worker/Counsellor * 2	\$120,000
Admin staff * 2	\$100,000
<b>Total Staff Costs</b>	<b>\$780,000</b>
Utilities (Phone, gas, electricity)	\$30,000
Internet Setup costs	\$1,500
Laptops * 20	\$20,000
Materials	\$5,000
Student Materials	\$25,000
Photocopy	\$20,000
Stationery	\$4,000
Vocational Indicator Tests	\$4,500
Staff Professional Development	\$5,000
Student amenities	\$5,000
<b>Total Office Costs</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>
<b>Ongoing Maintenance and Internet</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>
<b>Total Staffing, office and Ongoing Costs</b>	<b>\$145,000</b>
<b>Total Operating Cost</b>	<b>\$1,030,000</b>

#### Operating Costs Assumptions:

- **Program Development:** It is based on estimates by the community providers of the costs of professional staff in developing program modules and curriculum and preparing program guides. This is required to fully document the program. This budget includes any printing costs.
- **Workshops:** This component is to support embedding the model in current practice of schools and to provide professional development for the schools welfare teams and for those delivering the programs. This component is also to promote the hub model and its lessons to a broader group of schools and to other stakeholders.
- **Program Monitoring and Reporting:** This component is to cover activity reporting, surveys and preparation of the report on the project. This is based on an estimate of staff time and costs to research and prepare reports for the pilot project.

Expenditure	
Total Building Setup Cost Excluding GST	\$6,448,900
Total Operating Cost	\$1,030,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$7,478,900</b>

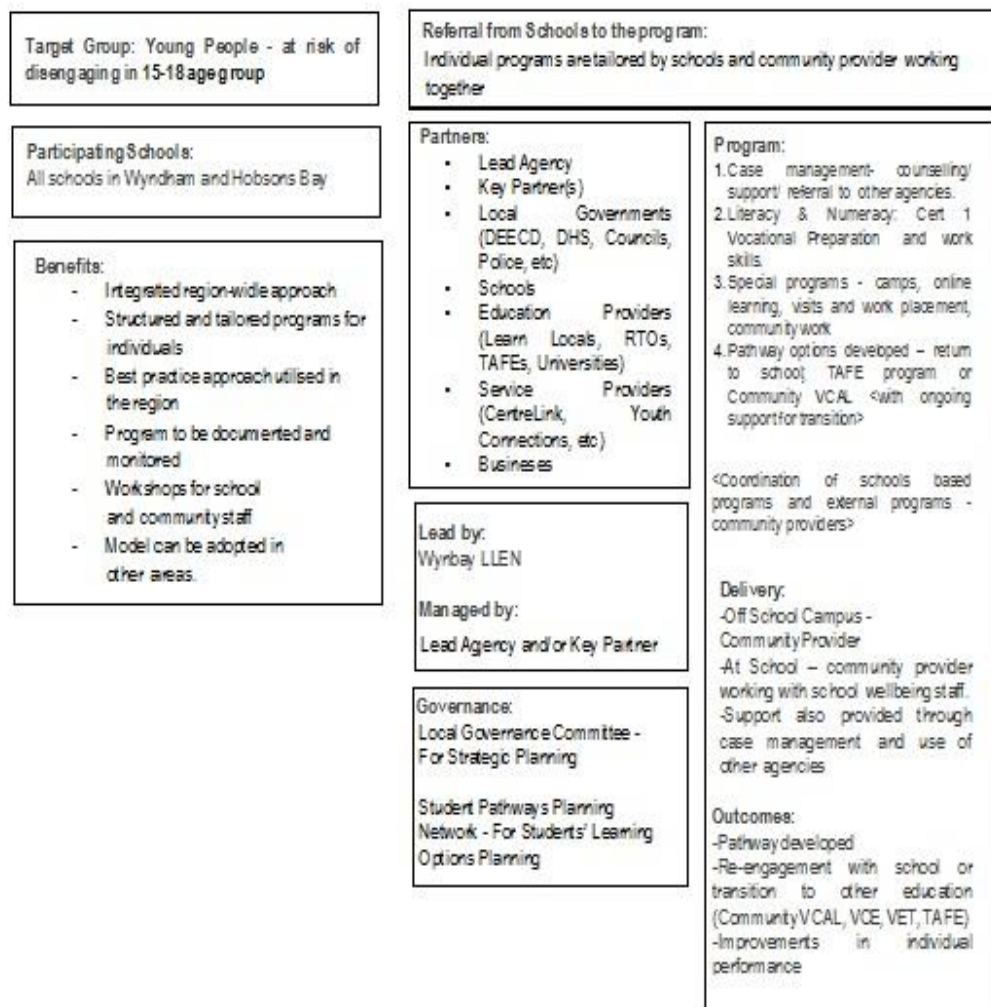
## Proposed Program Overview

Drawing from the learning of local, state-wide and international best practices, recommendations around four key structures as mentioned in the Findings section above, need to be considered for the operational aspect of this model.

The following summarises the proposed program and its components.

### Proposed Program

### Program Components





## ***Proposed Characteristics***

Based on local consultation, literature review and case study research, it is possible, however, to identify some key characteristics of the proposed community learning hub. The following key characteristics can help to build a school-community hub, without being too prescriptive about its form, content or function at this stage.

### *Key characteristics*

Successful community hubs are places that:

- Collocate or cluster a range of community facilities and human services
- Respond to, and are shaped by, the unique circumstances and needs and assets of their community
- Include a variety of uses and services (including community services, health care, leisure and retail) that attract different groups of people at different times of the day and meet a wide range of community needs and support community strengths
- Attract people and are identified as a focal point for the community
- Are readily accessible to ensure all community members can utilise them
- Have a civic quality, sense of stability and level of amenity that marks them as an important place in the community, and
- Include an inviting public domain that encourages people to interact in the public realm.

### *Imperative characteristics:*

- The CHILD is always at the centre of any discussion/work and the understanding that, in most cases, parents are that child's main teacher,
- The process is underpinned by the building of quality relationships and partnerships,
- Modelling the way we want things to be,
- Genuinely engaging the community and all parties involved, and
- The use of reflective practice to facilitate change.

## ***Challenges to Hub development***

In addition to the benefits to services and facilities, it is important to consider the challenges. Some of the challenges have been highlighted to illustrate some of the situations that can impede developing School-community hubs. These barriers have been listed because of their importance to integration. Within each of the key categories there are powerful opportunities for real progress once issues are overcome.

### *1. Establishing joint visions*

It takes significant time at the beginning to set up, establish objectives, and share ideas before any activities can start. Doing this work can be challenging particularly as it is an ongoing process and takes considerable time. With the young person firmly at the center, service or individual agendas must be put to one side.

### *2. Managing multiple partnerships*

Key issue emerging in relation to building community strengths and capacity is the importance of a bottom-up model of meaningful participation. Several organisations have multiple relationships around the Hub work—this can be sometimes complex to manage, especially given competing timelines and objectives.

### 3. *Community expectations*

There are substantial concerns expressed by the communities around the Hub about what would happen if there is a reduction in funds. Managing community expectations, once built, can be particularly complex.

### 4. *Managing community access*

Where community resources are held on school grounds (e.g. a community pantry) there may be issues regarding appropriate restriction of access to particular areas within the school.

### 5. *Network access*

It may be difficult for professionals from other sectors to access their own agency's network online.

### 6. *Working within school open hours*

Where non-school staff are working at the school outside of traditional school opening hours (i.e. when teachers/students are not present) there may be safety concerns and, more importantly, potential feelings of isolation.

### 7. *Segmentations*

It can be difficult to blur lines across different roles within Hub projects. As a result segmentation can occur:

- Roles - people see their job as separate to the Hub idea (e.g. 'I'm a teacher, not a family worker')
- Internally - the activities offered within a service have no cross-over although they are compatible in outcomes and targets
- Externally - activities and programs are run separately when there is opportunity to run in collaboration.

### 8. *Dealing with change*

Resistance to thinking beyond the square and doing things differently are an ongoing issue. Lack of communication within team's means that key staff can stifle change. When there is limited organisational support for change, it can cause difficulty and slowed progress.

## ***Sustainability of the WynBay Community Learning Hub***

- Catchment population for the proposed hub will continue to grow rapidly ensuring that the hub is Well utilised.
- Current client numbers at WCEC suggest that the proposed services at the community education hub are currently needed and will continue to be needed in the region, regardless of whether the hub is developed.
- Assuming a basic level of integration in the form of Lead Agency and one other co-located tenant, significant cost savings can be achieved including
  - potential for shared reception
  - shared leasing of office equipment
  - costs of IT servers
  - utilities expenses
  - improved administrative efficiencies
- It is estimated the co-location could reduce the overhead costs to approximately 10%.

- Development of a hub could provide a flexible and sustainable option for DEECD to operate an English Language School as well.
- If DEECD were to contribute to the cost of construction, they would be provided with first option to use up to an agreed number of classrooms each year.
- The proposed program will be sustainable as the new model and courseware will have been developed and imbedded in the schools.
- Funding for the additional components can be sought from other philanthropic contributions.

WynBay LLEN would continue to broker partnerships and strengthen ongoing community involvement in the WynBay Community Learning Hub.

DRAFT

## INFORMATION SOURCES

DEECD website – Funding Arrangements

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/reengagefunding.aspx>

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Developing a Business Case for Wyndham Community Education Hub, submitted in October 2012 to DEECD, developed by Wyndham Community & Education Centre Inc. and the Wyndham City Council for Glen Devon site

Re-Engage Wyndham Pilot Program September 2012, submitted to DEECD by Manor Lakes P-12 College

Brighter Futures – ECD Local Partnerships based on Murdoch Children's Research Institute July 2012. *Schools as Community Hubs*, Department of Education and Child Development, Govt. of South Australia.

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Chermside Community Hub - Brisbane City Council, [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/.../community-hubs/chermside-community-hub/index.htm](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/.../community-hubs/chermside-community-hub/index.htm)

Goulet, G & Maclachlan, K (2010) Rosemount Flexicentre Research Project: Executive Summary, <http://www.rosemount.ac.uk/assets/Flexi%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

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