



Central Ranges Local Learning & Employment Network
Incorporating Macedon Ranges, Mitchell & Murrindindi Shires

Evaluation of Kyneton Community Learning Centre Flexible Learning Options Program

Certificate I Vocational Preparation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

February 2013

Prepared by: Lisa Linton – Partnership Broker Central Ranges Local Learning and
Employment Network



Executive Summary

During a meeting of the Macedon Ranges Employment and Training (MRE&T) Network in 2011, the high numbers of disengaged young people in the area was tabled as a collective issue. The Central Ranges Local Learning and Employment Network (CRLLEN) brokered a meeting and subsequent workshop with key stakeholders to examine the viability and possible elements of a Flexible Learning Option program, through local training providers, that would target this cohort of young people, re-engaging them into an educational or career pathway.

The program was to be delivered through Kyneton Community Learning Centre (KCLC) beginning in Term 3, 2012 and targeting enrolled and non-enrolled students aged 14-15 (up to 17 years) in a Certificate I in Vocational Preparation course. The program was intended to use two funding streams (Fee for Service through School Resource package funding arrangements and Skills Victoria) to ensure referrals from a wide source. It was intended that an MOU be developed outlining referral mechanisms, points of contact between schools and funding arrangements. The program was supported by a Flexible Learning Options Advisory Committee of key stakeholders who met on a monthly basis. Wrap around support was provided to the program ranging from case management of participants through Youth Connections, to course delivery support.

Nine enrolments were received with a total of seven going on to either partially or fully complete the course and establish their own education and career pathway. Four participants fully completed the course and three achieved a partial completion. The program ran four days a week for a total of nine weeks.

The advisory committee decided it was important to evaluate the program against the objectives outlined in the original stakeholder workshop. Outcomes could then be reported back to the network to inform future program development and evidence resource requirements. An evaluation plan was developed using a Flexible Learning Options evaluation framework tool and endorsed by the committee and the Macedon ranges Partnership Broker conducted the research with participants, program deliverers and partners.

The evaluation report investigated the ability of the program to increase the re-engagement into educational/career pathways for dis-engaged young people. The degree to which this was achieved was measured by the ability of the program to achieve sustained participant engagement, increased opportunities for education and career pathways for participants, increased partner effectiveness in supporting participants during and after the program and learning's to inform future re-engagement programs. Tools were developed to measure outcomes.

Evaluation findings concluded that the pilot was successful in re-engaging the majority of young people enrolled for a period beyond the life of the program. Sustained engagement did occur over time but was very difficult in the first three weeks while students settled in and received assistance with social and emotional issues. Key barriers to program engagement included external lifestyle issues, instability of the home environment, depression and family



break-down. These factors are largely out of control of the program organisers. Key enablers for sustained engagement was one on one attention, certificate recognition, supportive relationships with personnel from other agencies, flexibility of the program, not too restrictive learning environment and the absence of bullying. Participants demonstrated significant changes in their behaviours, attitudes and self-awareness which had a positive impact on their ability to learn. The majority of participants followed the course with further education, or TAFE. Using the wrap around approach to participants these pathways have been maintained three months after the program. The flexibility of the course, the environment in which it was delivered, and the approach taken by the coordinator and trainer ensured maximum retention and engagement of students. Coupled with partnership support for participants, and support to the staff from the advisory committee greater success for students was achieved. The key difficulty for the pilot was sustainability of funding and referral processes.

Participants reported learning a wide variety of new skills including financial management, preparation for work, controlling their behaviour, relaxation, and learning how to give and receive respect. They also reported increases in self-awareness, communication skills, confidence, and motivation.

At the completion of the program seven participants had clear understanding of and solid plans around their career pathway. A flexible approach to participants working towards their goals allowed student's to progress at their own pace and be comfortable to come back and complete units at a later date. Pathway development was supported through connections with other agencies. Following up students after course completion was seen as important but not within the scope of the training provider.

Partnerships were demonstrated to be vital in the successful delivery of the program. Key successes for partnership in the program included opportunities for projects, flexibility of partners to meet needs of participants, and a collaborative approach to identifying and developing solutions to issues. Challenges were the establishment of roles of partners, coordination of support for participants, and clear referral processes.

Themes that emerged from the evaluation included:

- Flexibility – flexibility of the environment, curriculum, support for participants all contributed to the success of the program
- The environment – out of school, community focussed, home like, mentoring, adult focussed environment aspects decreased students anxiety levels, increased trust and removed barriers to learning
- One on one learning – at student's own pace, pursuit of individual interests, and use of volunteer support contributed to success outcomes around individual learning needs
- Incentive – need for achievement, real outcome that could be built upon enabled students to refocus on their goals
- Partnerships – wrap around support for high needs students, problem solving, new opportunities for community involvement all contributed to successful outcomes for students



- Role of Coordinator and Trainer – flexibility, taking on additional resource commitments, coordination of program ensured ongoing engagement of students and greater ability of program to remain sustainable

Key challenges and successes included:

- Success also involves challenges
- Partnerships
- Sustainability and funding
- Program content

The key challenge of the program was in the difficulty of sustainability with funding constraints and the lack of formal and agreed referral and coordination arrangements in place between partners.

The program demonstrated that for particularly disengaged young people the course was a successful model for re-engagement into educational and career pathways. This model is vital to continue as part of a suite of options available for young people who require a different pathway than traditional schooling to complete their education.

Sustaining programs that are resource intensive and specialised for individual needs of students is challenging but essential in ensuring that no young person falls through the gaps because there is no option to meet their requirements. There are gaps that exist to support young people as they transition through such programs that also need to be addressed.

A strategic approach is required to develop the necessary processes and coordination between different programs to ensure their sustainability. Linking in findings of the report to the Macedon Ranges Youth Partnerships project will assist in the development of systems and processes for a coordinated approach to referral and tracking student pathways in such programs.

It will also ensure a sustainable model of funding is developed to support this course as one of a number of options available to young disengaged people in Macedon Ranges.

With the recognition that there are increased numbers of young people disengaging from school at earlier ages, there is an emergence of increasing numbers of Flexible Learning Option programs. The use of an evaluation framework to inform outcomes of Flexible Learning options is vital in the quality improvement of programs, ensuring duplication does not occur, and in supporting schools and organisations to understand what works and what needs ongoing support in ensuring success.