



a fairer victoria achievements so far

**Strategy Two** Keeping young people on track

# strategy two

## Keeping young people on track

### Aim

Youth and early adulthood is a complex time involving many changes, transitions and opportunities that set us on course for later life. Most people navigate these changes successfully and build on these opportunities with help from family, friends and others. But some young people find the period more difficult and struggle to stay at school, find a job, find a place to live or pursue further education or training. We are providing more opportunities and more support to help young people get into, and stay in, education, training and work and to participate in community life. Much of our effort is focused on those most at risk, including those who are disengaging from education and training.

### Keeping young people engaged

Through Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) we have set up 290 new partnerships which assisted 28,000 young people in 2006, including re-engaging approximately 8,000 young people in education and training.

Through LLENs we have also:

- supported over 1,000 young people in the first ten months of the *Youth Transition Support Initiative* with almost half the participants placed into education, training or employment, and
- assisted 1,459 Year 12 completers and 546 early school leavers as part of the *On Track* program, which helps young people between Years 10 and 12 into further education, training, or full-time employment.

Absences from school have been reduced by over 370,000 school days (about five per cent) through *It's Not OK to Be Away*, a program to reduce truancy and absenteeism.

In addition, of the 154 young people who participated in the *Early School Leavers* program between July 2003 and May 2007:

- 91 per cent were successfully connected to education, TAFE/vocational training, or employment/apprenticeships

- 58 per cent maintained this connection for at least three months
- 82 per cent demonstrated better relationships with family and friends
- 50 per cent showed an improvement in substance misuse
- 73 per cent were engaging less in risk-taking behaviour, and
- 72 per cent were more motivated in terms of education and life in general.

### Supporting young people at risk

Our focus on supporting young people at risk has already resulted in:

- over 1,300 young people at risk gaining sustainable employment through *Workforce Participation Partnerships*
- 100 young people being referred to legal, health, and welfare services by having 70 independent persons attend about 350 police interviews as part of the *Youth Referral and Independent Persons Program* in 2006/07
- 4,200 seventeen year olds appearing in the children's court in 2007 rather than an adult court, because we raised the age jurisdiction in the Criminal Division of the Children's Court to 17 years of age to allow more appropriate handling of these young people, and
- 50 houses being refurbished or replaced as part of the *Better Housing for Young People* initiative for young people who are unable to live with their families

We have also increased the *Education Maintenance Allowance*, which helps low income families with education costs, by over 60 per cent since 2005/06.

## Supporting youth participation

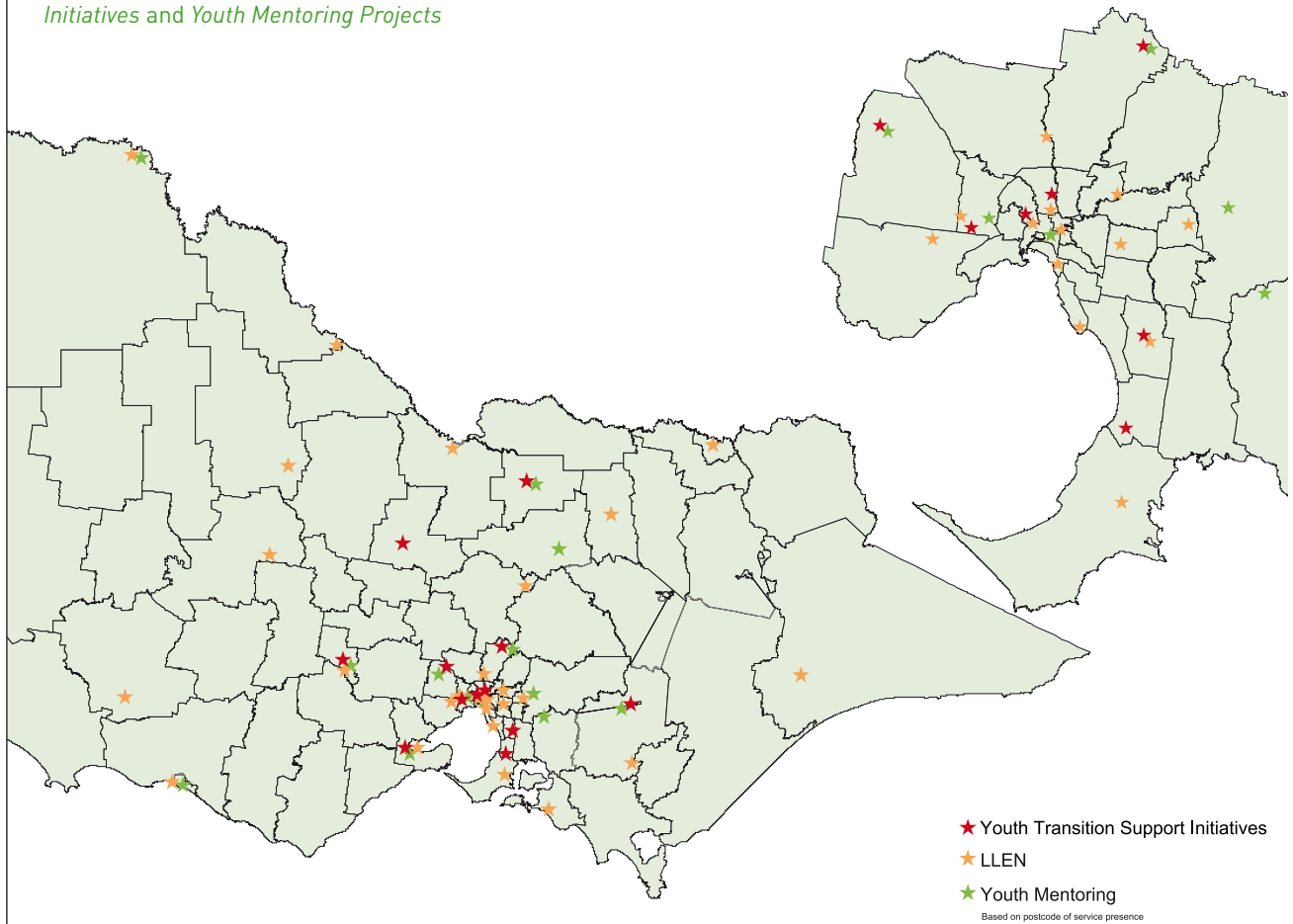
We are giving young people more options to get involved in positive ways in their communities. Key initiatives include:

- establishing three Youth Foundations in Laverton, Yarra Ranges and Whittington / Newcomb in the Geelong area. Youth Foundations are designed to give young people in disadvantaged areas a chance to develop leadership and participate in their communities. So far the foundations have involved 25 government, private sector and community agencies joining together to give young people a say in priorities for youth services and facilities in local areas
- resourcing young people to produce over 50 per cent of the regular weekly content for our *youthcentral* website, which attracted over 1.2 million page hits over the past year
- creating over 680 traineeships for young people in the Victorian public sector as part of the *Youth Employment Scheme*, providing a valuable stepping stone to a future career for young people
- supporting safe, alcohol-free FReeZA music events which are attended by over 130,000 young people every year, and
- providing 100 accredited training opportunities for young people in the music and entertainment industry through FReeZACentral.

We have supported 75 community organisations to provide high quality mentoring for over 2,600 young people, and reinvigorated our effort in mentoring and capacity building with:

- a strategic framework for mentoring, *Leading the Way*
- the *Mentoring and Capacity Building Initiative*
- *A Guide to Supporting Effective Programs for Mentoring Young People*, launched in September 2006 to assist community organisations establishing, running or planning to improve the effectiveness of their youth mentoring programs, and
- additional training, including a three day mentoring training workshop for 130 participants from organisations seeking to establish or strengthen their youth mentoring programs in 2006, and a training summit in partnership with the *Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance* in 2007, attended by 50 participants.

Location of LLENs, Youth Transition Support Initiatives and Youth Mentoring Projects



## Koorie Pathways Project

Koorie students often face a range of challenges – and one of the major ones can be maintaining connection with their culture while attending a mainstream school.

The *Koorie Pathways Project* has been successful at helping Koorie students in the Benalla, Mansfield Wangaratta & Wodonga areas bridge that gap.

Launched in early 2007 the project provides focussed, one-on-one support to about 70 young Koories at twelve local secondary schools. Each student is supported to set goals for their time with the program, with a student profile developed to complement their Individual Learning Plans. Student profiles focus on students' goals and career aspirations, and the pathways, ongoing support and individual strengths necessary to achieving them.

Once the student profile had been written up, the program creates a range of classroom and community-based opportunities that help the students look beyond the world of school. Very strong individual support is offered to support them to become well-rounded members of their communities.

The classroom activities focus on skills such as resume writing, interview techniques and career exploration. Such activities build the students' employability skills and confidence, so that they leave school equipped to face the challenges of entering the workforce.

At the same time, the students are invited to take part in a series of excursions to local education and training providers and industry. These activities raise awareness of post-compulsory education and employment options, giving students a better understanding of multiple pathways to gain entry into their preferred career choice.

A strong component of the program was identified very early on by students: cultural learning and celebrating their cultural identity. As a result, this was built into the program at every opportunity.

For Aaron, a Year 10 student in Benalla and participant in the project in 2007, the experience has been a valuable one.

"I've gotten a lot of new experiences," he says. "I learnt heaps about all the careers, new skills, our history and our culture. Just being aware of your cultural history is mind-blowing... I feel like the school is supporting me more now."

As well as encouraging and motivating him to stay on at school and complete year ten, Aaron's involvement increased his sense of community. Aaron, already an active community member, was supported to complete his level two first aid certificate. He was also provided with additional encouragement to continue his participation with the CFA, which included participation in the cadet training program at Wangaratta on a weekly basis.

The Koorie Pathways Project is a partnership between NE TRACKS Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), the Hume Region of the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development and twelve schools in the area.

Chris Bonacci, Senior Project Officer for the Hume Region (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), says that this partnership approach has been key to the program's success.

"Working with the LLEN has been a real bonus. They know who to connect with, and organised the TAFE visits, the uni visits, and the industry visits – that's been brilliant."

*This is an achievement under initiative 2.2, Assisting People in Transition from School to a Job, A Fairer Victoria 2007.*

Published by the State Government of Victoria,  
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne VIC 3002.

This publication is copyright. No part may be  
reproduced by any process except in accordance  
with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*.

© State of Victoria 2008

Authorised by Peter Batchelor,  
1 Spring Street, Melbourne VIC 3000.

Printed by On Demand,  
152 Sturt Street, South Bank

ISBN 978-1-921331-21-3