



ANNUAL REPORT

2025



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COVER IMAGE:

Year 10 students and local industry representatives come together for a Careers Quick Chat event at Ararat College.

ABOUT CGLLEN

Central Grampians LLEN (CGLLEN) was established in 2002 as one of 31 Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (VicLLENs). Each LLEN is an incorporated association governed by a volunteer board. LLENs are committed to working with their local communities and across Victoria to improve the education, training and employment outcomes of all young people.

CGLLEN currently delivers the **School to Work** program, **MATES Mentoring**, the **TAC L2P Program** and **Resilient Ararat**. These four initiatives utilise the existing resources, skills and capacities of the local area to provide education, training and employment opportunities, encourage aspiration and improve the mental health and wellbeing of our community.

The Central Grampians region includes all of Ararat Rural City and most of the Northern Grampians Shire. Our TAC L2P Program also services the Pyrenees Shire.

OUR TEAM



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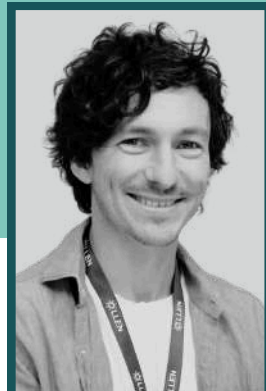
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Central Grampians LLEN
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Business Manager
Shelly Chalmers

Communications Manager
Jessie Newton

Youth Project Officer
L2P
Mellissa Allen

Youth Project Officer
MATES
Natalie Taurau

Partnerships and Pathways
Coordinator
Benjamin Bailey-Webb

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



OUR MISSION

Facilitating and supporting local partnerships that create opportunities for young people to actively participate in education, training and employment, and connect with their community.

OUR VALUES

Collaborate

Strong partnerships are central to who we are and what we do.

We build networks with schools, industry partners and the wider community to improve outcomes for local young people.

Innovate

As an organisation we are creative and resourceful. We are willing to explore unique solutions to ensure we can adapt to the changing needs of young people in our community.

Empower

We believe in the limitless potential of young people. We are committed to providing opportunities that encourage aspiration and have positive long-term impacts on their lives.



EXECUTIVE OFFICER & CHAIR REPORT

It is a pleasure to present our 2025 Annual Report. This year's document is an excellent representation of the team's shared achievements and highlights the many partnerships and community connections it takes to successfully deliver our programs and support local young people. Without the ongoing backing of local industry and community partners, CGLLEN would not be able to provide students in our region with such a diverse range of quality work placements and work-based learning opportunities.

Staffing over the past 18 months has remained stable, which boosted our capacity to make a consistent and meaningful contribution to our community. We would like to thank the CGLLEN team, Shelly, Jessie, Benj, Nat and Mell, for all their hard work throughout the year.

In 2025, we had 87 volunteers mentoring young people across our L2P and MATES programs. One of the highlights of the year is our National Volunteer Week events, and end-of-year celebrations, where we get to acknowledge their contributions to our organisation. These activities are just a small part of the CGLLEN Mentor Community which provides all our

volunteers with free support, information and training opportunities. As part of the initiative, our mentors have exclusive access to events, including personal development sessions, guest speakers, Coffee Catch Ups and celebrations. They are able to attend as many activities as they like to connect with fellow volunteers and boost their skills, knowledge and confidence as mentors. If you have ever considered volunteering your time to support young people, we encourage you to reach out to Mell or Nat to find out more about our mentoring programs. These roles are mutually beneficial and, based on first-hand experience, our entire team can vouch for just how rewarding it is to mentor a young person.

It is always exciting to add a new program to our offerings and in 2025 we successfully implemented Passport 2 Employment (P2E) as a pilot program at Skene Street Specialist School thanks to the support of an are-able Foundation Community Grant. P2E was originally developed by Glenelg Southern Grampians LLEN and delivering the program in our region has been on the bucket list for some time. We are very appreciative of are-able's financial assistance which allowed us to support eight students to graduate from the P2E program.

Some other highlights from 2025 were:



Expanding our MATES Mentoring program to a total of 13 schools with the inclusion of Marian College in Ararat.



Supporting 96 students to access VET courses in Ararat, Stawell, Ballarat and Horsham through the VET Transport Fund.



Supporting 16 learner drivers to gain their licences through our TAC L2P program.



Developing and launching our annual Resilient Ararat Mental Health Month campaign, 'The Positive Postie Project' with students from Ararat College and Ararat West Primary School. This included our virtual gratitude wall which will be an ongoing activity featured on the CGLLEN website. The navy 'grateful' caps used to promote the campaign were also a big hit!



Facilitating 55 school-industry engagement events across the region, including Careers Quick Chat, VIC VICE, industry workplace tours and school industry engagement presentations. These events provide students from a range of year levels with industry connections and exposure to different career options.

Thank you to all CGLLEN board members for their support over the past twelve months, in particular, our executive members for their leadership and governance.

Mid-year, we farewelled Ellie McDougall, a longstanding board member and Ararat College's Principal. We sincerely thank Ellie for her valuable contributions to the organisation through partnership, leadership and advocacy. Our gratitude extends to Matt Haddow, Jenette Penn and Cr Jack Blake who also stepped down as board members in 2025 after demonstrating outstanding commitment to improving education, training and employment outcomes for local young people.

As we look forward to 2026, we are excited by what we have planned for the year ahead and encourage everyone to follow our progress by subscribing to our newsletter and following us on Instagram and Facebook.

If you would like to contribute to our organisation, we are proud to be endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR). Not-for-profit organisations like ours rely on funding to provide crucial programs and activities at no cost to young people, many of whom are disadvantaged. Every donation, big or small, makes a significant difference and allows us to expand our reach within the community.

Jane Moriarty
CGLLEN
Executive Officer

Janine Adams
CGLLEN
Board of Management Chair



Scan the QR code to donate to CGLLEN's programs and activities



Barista Training at Lake Bolac College

SCHOOL TO WORK

SCHOOL INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

The Department of Education funds Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) to deliver the School to Work program. As a program provider, CGLLEN works with local employers, industry partners and schools to improve students' access to work-based learning opportunities.

Work-based learning opportunities supported through the School to Work program include:

- Work Experience (WE)
- Structured Workplace Learning (SWL)
- School-Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs)
- Workplace visits and industry tours
- School-industry engagement activities

Work-based learning helps students to:

- Understand how their education prepares them for work
- Understand employer expectations
- Develop employability skills
- Make informed pathway and career decisions
- Stay engaged with, and complete secondary schooling

| Status Tracking 2025 | Actual number achieved |
|--|---|
| <p>Activity 1: Students are able to access work placements of the appropriate type and quantity to meet their needs [74]</p> <p>Teachers and students are empowered to use the S2W Portal [100%]</p> <p>Students and teachers are able to access events and activities [8]</p> | <p>92</p> <p>Achieved</p> |
| <p>Activity 2: Schools industry engagement needs are being met and they are supported to work together to meet local industry challenges.</p> | <p>Achieved</p> |
| <p>Activity 3: Industry is provided a seamless experience when working with schools and the number of industry partners grows over time.</p> | <p>Achieved</p> |
| <p>Activity 4: School to Work providers support DE's strategic goals.</p> | <p>Achieved</p> |
| <p>Activity 5: The School to Work provider is professional and well run.</p> | <p>Achieved</p> |
| <p>Activity 6: School to Work providers work together as a system.</p> | <p>Achieved</p> |



Gio is working as an apprentice cabinet maker after completing an SBAT at Ararat Kitchens and Joinery.

SBAT success story

Ararat Kitchens and Joinery

Former Ararat College student, Gio is pursuing his dream career as an apprentice cabinet maker after undertaking a 12-month School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT) with Ararat Kitchens and Joinery.

Gio always knew he wanted to learn a trade and was supported by Ararat College Careers Practitioner, Andrew Sherwell to get a head start on a qualification while still at school. CGLLEN Partnerships and Pathways Coordinator, Benj-Bailey Webb was brought in to connect Gio with a local industry that could provide him with on-the-job training.

“Our organisation manages a database of employers that offer work-based learning opportunities for local students. After speaking to Gio and Andrew, I reached out to Ben Hargreaves from Ararat Kitchens and Joinery to see if he had the capacity to provide Gio with an SBAT. Ararat Kitchens and Joinery is a valued industry partner of ours and Ben is extremely supportive of giving local young people the opportunity to kick start their careers,” Benj said.

From there, Benj organised a meet and greet so he could introduce Gio to Ben. The meeting was successful and Gio commenced an SBAT shortly after. He has stayed on as an apprentice since leaving school.

“I’m a hard worker, I have a good attention to detail and I’m determined to get as much as I can out of this apprenticeship. I’m always looking to grow. I love asking questions and continuing to learn,” Gio said.

“Working at Ararat Kitchens and Joinery, along with trade school, has allowed me to learn so much. I’d like to stay with Ben as we do a lot of different work together. I enjoy working for him and learning from his diverse range of skills and experience.”

Local employers interested in hosting a secondary school student in their workplace should contact Benj on 0417 589 973 to discuss the opportunities available.

PLACEMENTS BY INDUSTRY

In 2025, local students consumed 92 work placement opportunities in a broad range of local industries:

Health - 24

Community & Early Childhood Ed - 22

Building & Construction - 10

Agriculture & Environment - 8

Automotive - 9

Business Services - 7

Hospitality - 3

Sport and Recreation - 4

Manufacturing - 2

Hair and Beauty - 1

Creative Industries - 1

Engineering - 1

S2W HIGHLIGHTS

- **Ararat Wind Farm Tour (Marian College and Ararat College)** Students visited Ararat Wind Farm to explore career pathways in renewable energy thanks to James Coburn from RES Group.
- **Building and Construction Tours (Marian College VCE VM Year 11)** Students explored diverse trade and construction career pathways during industry tours to Tiny Away Escape @ Grampians Edge, a tiny home construction warehouse, and Reece Plumbing in Ararat.
- **Stawell Gold Mines Tours (Lake Bolac College, Ararat College and Marian College)** We organised a tour of Stawell Gold Mines with the assistance of James Sorahan at Minerals Council of Australia. The tour provided students with an insight into the day-to-day operations of a working gold mine and the career opportunities available in the industry.
- **Ararat Industry Tour (Lake Bolac College Years 9 and 10)** Students were introduced to a range of local careers during visits to Ararat Rural City Council offices, Ararat Fitness Centre, Ararat Library, Ararat Town Hall, Ararat Physio and Ararat Gallery TAMA. Each location provided tours and demonstrations, showcasing the variety of roles available within their industries.
- **Passport 2 Employment (Skene Street Specialist School)** We introduced P2E to support students with their transition from school to further education, employment and community participation.
- **Unserious Careers (Marian College, Ararat College and Lake Bolac College)** We engaged author, Alana Kilmartin to present at secondary schools in Ararat Rural City as part of her Unserious Careers book launch tour. Her presentation focused on actionable steps for the school-to-work transition.
- **Mobile Skills Lab (Lake Bolac College, Ararat College, Marian College and Skene Street Specialist School)** South West TAFE Mobile Skills Lab visited schools to showcase the innovative possibilities of VET health subjects and provide students with a tangible glimpse into modern medical career pathways.



Ararat College was one of four local schools to access VIC VICE through Central Grampians LLEN in 2025.

VIC VICE

The Victorian Virtual Industry Careers Experience (VIC VICE) has continued to gain momentum since its introduction in 2024. Developed by Goulburn Murray LLEN in partnership with VicLLENs, the virtual reality platform features 360-degree video and video-game style simulations that allow secondary school students to experience different workplaces in a fully immersive, interactive and multi-sensory way. In 2025, VIC VICE launched a new virtual industry tour experience profiling carpentry in the building and construction industry.

CGLLEN is responsible for delivering the initiative across the Central Grampians region to provide students with a more accessible alternative to traditional workplace learning experiences. In 2025, we provided VIC VICE sessions to Marian College, Lake Bolac College, Ararat College and Skene Street Specialist School, helping expose 137 students to workplaces they may otherwise have been unable to access. We also helped roll out VIC VICE at the Western Victorian Careers Expo at Longerenong. Using the headsets, students from across the district were able to experience multiple industries through the 360-degree virtual tours.

VIC VICE is an absolute winner for career education, especially for our rural students. Its 360° virtual-workplace environments let kids practically 'step into' real jobs, which is a huge advantage when on-site placements aren't practical. The best part? The team at CGLLEN (Benj) is fantastic; they're ready to deliver this immersive experience whenever we need it. This program is powerful, flexible, and truly opens up the career world to every student, sparking genuine interest in industries they might never have considered."

Dani Smith
Head of Applied Learning
Marian College



Lake Bolac College students take part in an accredited First Aid/CPR course at their school.

SHORT COURSES

We received funding through Ararat Wind Farm Sustainable Grants Program to support students from our five local secondary schools (Lake Bolac College, Ararat College, Marian College, Stawell Secondary College and Skene Street Specialist School) develop employability skills in the hospitality, construction and health industries.

The funding allowed us to provide students in Years 10-12 with access to accredited short courses, including Food Safety Handlers, Responsible Service of Alcohol, Barista, Sandwich Making, First Aid/CPR and White Card training, to help equip them with additional skills and confidence to understand the world of work.

In 2025, participating students achieved a total of 155 nationally recognised certificates which will enhance their employability, support their transition from school to the workplace and increase their chances of gaining meaningful employment.

DRONEED

In 2025, we received funding from the Hugh D.T Williamson Foundation to develop DroneEd. This program will be offered to our secondary schools in 2026 to showcase the diverse pathway options available to students post-school. It is designed to provide technology-related skills and knowledge and create meaningful connections between local students and employers.



CGLLEN Partnerships and Pathways Coordinator Benj Bailey-Webb (far left) and Skene Street Specialist School teacher, Jacob Bates (far right) with the 2025 P2E group.

Introducing... PASSPORT 2 EMPLOYMENT PILOT PROGRAM

This year, Central Grampians LLEN implemented Passport 2 Employment (P2E) for the first time in the local region, introducing a pilot program at Skene Street Specialist School. The pilot complements and links into the current School to Work contract and was funded through an are-able Foundation Community Grant.

P2E was originally developed by Glenelg Southern Grampians LLEN to support school students living with a disability, or other challenges, overcome barriers to participating in their community and the workforce. The eight-week program focuses on improving communication and life skills needed for employment, as well as supporting students to

explore pathways into further education and to participate in their community.

Our strong industry connections through the School to Work program allowed us to utilise existing host employers for the workplace tour, Amazing Race activity and as co-facilitators. P2E also included interview preparation and mock interviews to help students build their self-confidence and communication skills.

In Term 4, we were proud to watch eight students complete our very first P2E program. Due to the success of the pilot, we will be seeking funding to run P2E again in 2026.

PASSPORT 2 EMPLOYMENT OVERVIEW

Week 1: Meet and Greet – Students become familiar with the program and the other participants in a fun way.

Week 2: You've Got the Look – Focuses on personal presentation and self-advocacy.

Week 3: You've Got the Skills – Explores general employability skills, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise.

Week 4: Healthy & Wealthy – Students learn about healthy lifestyles, encompassing healthy eating and regular exercise. This session also covers budgeting and how to save for something special.

Week 5: Accessing Support and Transport – Students discover ways to overcome transport barriers by participating in an 'Amazing Race' around

the local business area, familiarising themselves with agencies that provide support and assistance for the future.

Week 6: Workplace Tour – The P2E group visits local industries to develop an understanding and awareness of their inner workings, focusing on career options that may appeal to students.

Week 7: Putting It All Together – Participants further explore future careers and transition planning and shop for an outfit suitable for graduation and job interviews.

Week 8: Graduation – Students, dressed in their new outfits, are presented to their families, principals and community members at a special ceremony. They deliver speeches and are celebrated for their achievements over the eight weeks.



CGLEN Partnerships and Pathways Coordinator, Benj Bailey-Webb coordinated the VET Transport Fund for our local secondary schools.

In the spotlight... VET TRANSPORT FUND OPENING DOORS

In 2025, secondary students from across the Central Grampians region continued to benefit from the VET Transport Fund.

First introduced as a pilot in 2023, the initiative is helping reduce barriers and expand subject choices for students in regions where there are significant transport shortages and geographical barriers to attending VET classes.

The Department of Education funds the Transport Fund, which is managed by Frankston Mornington Peninsula LLEN (FMPLLEN) and coordinated by individual LLENs, to help provide transport solutions that improve student access to Vocational Education and Training Delivered to Secondary Students (VDSS) programs across Victoria.

Statewide, these local, collaborative efforts have resulted in the establishment of effective transport

“ (The Transport Fund) has enabled consistent attendance at VET programs, without the added stress of transport costs. Parents frequently express appreciation for this initiative, noting its positive impact on their children’s ability to engage in vocational education. ”

Andrew Sherwell
Careers Practitioner; VASS; VET Coordinator
Ararat College

solutions that are region-specific and needs-driven.

Locally, Central Grampians LLEN worked closely with our secondary schools to support 96 students to access VET classes in 2025.



Resilient Ararat

Ararat Early Learning Centre implemented The Positive Postie Project with their staff.

RESILIENT ARARAT

In 2025, Resilient Ararat once again partnered with a working group of students from Ararat College and Ararat West Primary School to roll out a community campaign for Mental Health Month. Students were involved in an initial planning workshop where they helped CGLLEN staff develop branding and social media content ideas for a kindness-based wellbeing initiative.

Schools participating in *The Positive Postie Project* received free campaign resources, including branded notepads and Positive Postie boxes to inspire students to write kind, uplifting notes to their peers, teachers and school staff. Resilient Ararat also delivered free resources to businesses that signed up to get involved in the campaign with their staff.

To allow the wider community to participate in the campaign, a virtual gratitude wall was set up on the CGLLEN website for community members to acknowledge and celebrate local businesses, sporting clubs, community groups or individuals

doing great things. During Mental Health Month, there were 47 messages posted to the wall, recognising everything from tireless volunteers to businesses going above and beyond for their customers.

About RESILIENT ARARAT

Resilient Ararat supports a school-led approach to promoting positive mental and emotional health and wellbeing among students and the wider community. The project supports the implementation of The Resilience Project curriculum in participating schools across Ararat Rural City and promotes positive community engagement with mental and emotional health. Through the development of specialised projects and activities, Resilient Ararat helps reinforce the important work schools are undertaking with students throughout the local community.

Our cluster schools:

- Ararat College
- Ararat West Primary
- Maroona Primary
- St Mary's Primary
- Willaura Primary

2025 highlights



Just some of the messages posted to the virtual gratitude wall.

VIRTUAL GRATITUDE WALL

We launched *The Positive Postie Project Virtual Gratitude Wall* in October as part of our Mental Health Month campaign. The wall was designed to allow the community to experience the benefits of practicing gratitude by leaving a kind message to acknowledge and celebrate local businesses, sporting clubs, community groups or individuals doing great things.

When the messages started flooding in, Resilient Ararat decided to keep the virtual gratitude wall as an ongoing initiative at the conclusion of the campaign. It remains live on the CGLLEN website so the community can continue to post messages of gratitude.



Visit *The Positive Postie Virtual Gratitude Wall*



Paying it Forward has been popular with customers at Fred and Bet's and Foragers cafes.

KINDNESS IN A CUP

Over the past 12 months, our *Paying it Forward – Kindness in a Cup* campaign has continued to

grow. Launched in September 2024, the initiative allows community members to visit participating cafes (Fred & Bet's and Foragers) and pre-purchase a hot drink for someone who could use a little extra happiness in their day.

In addition to providing the Ararat community with a simple way to practice empathy and generosity, *Kindness in a Cup* supports local businesses and residents experiencing hardship.

The response to the campaign has been overwhelming, with more than 1,000 pay it forward coffees distributed since the initiative was first introduced.



Local teachers and youth workers at our YMHFA training.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

In September, Resilient Ararat sponsored 36 community members to complete Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training. We also worked with Ararat College to train two staff members as Teen Mental Health First Aid (TMHFA) instructors, leading to 134 Year 7 and 8 students being certified in TMHFA.

YMHFA and TMHFA equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to recognise, understand and respond to young people experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis.

Since 2020, we have supported 82 locals to become Youth Mental Health First Aiders. These individuals are teachers, youth workers, sports coaches and mentors who are now trained to provide vital support to young people in our community.

ANNUAL *Mental Health Month* campaign



L-R Ararat College students, Kody, Zahlia, Sienna and Tiffany, and Ararat West Primary School students, Blake, Brad, Millie, Hudson and Hallie helped Resilient Ararat roll out The Positive Postie Project in the local community.

THE **positive postie** PROJECT

This year's Mental Health Month campaign was a kindness-based wellbeing initiative that encouraged the whole community to practice gratitude. As in previous years, Resilient Ararat worked closely with a group of students from Ararat College and Ararat West Primary School to roll out the campaign.

The Positive Postie Project was widely promoted through navy 'grateful' caps which were dropped at parks, sporting facilities and other landmarks for

community members to find.

Participating schools received free campaign resources, including branded notepads and Positive Postie boxes to inspire students to write kind, uplifting notes to their peers, teachers and school staff. Local businesses were also invited to get involved in the campaign with their employees.

As part of the campaign, a virtual gratitude wall was set up on the CGLLEN website to allow community members to acknowledge and celebrate local businesses, sporting clubs, community groups or individuals that are doing great things.



The Resilience Project's Hugh van Cuylenburg and Martin Heppell promote Resilient Ararat's grateful caps.



Navy caps were hidden around Ararat during Mental Health Month to promote The Positive Postie Project.



CGLLEN staff, Nat, Jane and Jessie deliver promotional materials to local schools.



Learner driver, Jaxon celebrates gaining his P-plates through the TAC L2P Program.



TAC L2P PROGRAM

The TAC L2P Program is funded by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) and coordinated by Central Grampians LLEN.

This valuable program assists young Victorian learner drivers aged 16 to 21 who do not have access to a supervising driver or vehicle, gain the 120 hours of experience required to apply for a probationary licence. Learners are matched with a fully licenced volunteer mentor and program vehicle to support their driving journey.

Our program runs across the Northern Grampians Shire, Ararat Rural City and Pyrenees Shire, with financial support provided from each of the three councils.

Demand for L2P remains steady, and in 2025 we had **62 learners** enrolled in the program. Congratulations to the **16 young people who graduated from L2P** with a probationary licence in 2025. We would also like to thank our **wonderful mentors who supervised over 1,513 hours of driving!**

ADVISORY GROUP

The L2P Steering Committee (now Advisory Group) was established in 2019. The following organisations are represented:

- Ararat Rural City Council
- Central Grampians LLEN
- Central Grampians L2P Program mentor representatives
- Department of Transport and Planning
- Grampians Driving School
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Pyrenees Shire Council
- Victoria Police

Thank you to all of our partners, advisory group members, participants, volunteer mentors and sponsors for their contributions to this valuable community program.





L2P LEARNER PROFILE

A'Leaha

Our TAC L2P mentors work with our young learners to ensure they achieve the driving hours needed to sit for their probationary licences.

When Year 11 student A'Leaha joined the program in 2024, early morning drives fitted best with her busy schedule. We were able to match her with one of our wonderful mentors, Alistair who was happy to take A'Leaha out on the road before school.

Over a period of 10 months, Alistair supervised A'Leaha's drives in our L2P vehicle to help her gain experience in different driving environments and situations. This included some night driving.

Their hours of hard work paid off in August 2025 when A'Leaha gained her probationary licence after receiving a perfect test score!

In addition to helping A'Leaha become a safe and confident driver, the TAC L2P Program has provided her with greater independence and improved access to further education following her graduation from secondary school.

L2P 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

- Over **1,513 hours of supervised driving** completed by participants and mentors.
- **Twenty-nine participants enrolled in Ararat Rural City. Ten** gained their **probationary licences.**
- **Twenty-seven participants enrolled in Northern Grampians Shire. Four** gained their **probationary licences.**
- **Six participants enrolled in Pyrenees Shire. Two** gained their **probationary licences.**



Tony Sutherland was one of three L2P mentors recognised for five years of service to the program.

FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE

In 2025, we celebrated long-serving mentors, Tony Sutherland, Rose Rowe and Mick Watson who have been volunteering their time to the TAC L2P Program for over five years.

Their amazing dedication to helping local young people obtain their licences was recognised at our National Volunteer Week events in May.

We thank Tony, Rose and Mick for their ongoing support of our organisation.

CGLLEN TAC L2P PROGRAM CAR LOCATIONS





Mentor, Lisa (centre) helps students, Jeremy and Axel with a Christmas activity during end-of-year MATES celebrations in Ararat.

MATES MENTORING

CGLLEN now delivers MATES in 13 schools after Marian College joined the mentoring program this year.

MATES draws on the strong support of the local community to act as positive role models for young people and take a personal interest in their growth and development. In 2025, our program coordinator, Nat delivered **11 mentor training sessions** to equip volunteers with the skills and knowledge required to support local students. This allowed us to provide our participating schools with **55 trained volunteers** to mentor the **60 students** nominated to take part in the program.

Students and their mentors met for one hour each fortnight for the duration of the school year. During their meetings, they participated in some of their favourite hobbies, including gardening, cooking, sport, craft and board games. There was also plenty of time for conversation and sharing ideas.

To meet growing demand for the program, we have developed a MATES Community Champions model to attract new mentors. The initiative encourages local organisations to provide their staff with flexible work arrangements to be able to mentor a student in the MATES program during business hours.

Organisations can choose to donate staff hours to the program or allow staff to make up the time spent volunteering, outside their usual working hours.

Community groups can also qualify as Community Champions by hosting a CGLLEN MATES information session, distributing information about the program and encouraging their members to become mentors.

If you would like to become a MATES mentor or a MATES Community Champion, please contact our Coordinator:

Nat Taurau

Email: mates@cglLEN.org.au

Phone: 0432 204 840



MATES Coordinator, Nat Taurau accepts a Findex Community Fund donation from Senior Accountant – Accounting & Business Advisory, Belinda Amess in Stawell.

FINDEX DONATION

In 2025, a generous donation from Findex’s Stawell office allowed us to provide mentors to more students across the Central Grampians region.

The financial advisory and accounting firm selected our MATES Mentoring program to receive \$1,000 through the Findex Community Fund, helping facilitate resource development and support mentor recruitment across the Northern Grampians Shire. The donation also allowed us to purchase additional games, books, puzzles and craft supplies for our MATES Activity Boxes, ensuring the program is a fun experience for students and mentors.

Senior Accountant, Belinda Amess said MATES was selected by the Stawell office as a worthy recipient of a Findex Community Fund donation.

“ I myself have heard great things about the MATES program from people I know who volunteer. We are proud to be able to support this valuable program and help CGLLEN recruit additional mentors to support local students in need.

Belinda Amess
Senior Accountant
Findex Stawell

CGLLEN MATES PROGRAM 2025 SCHOOLS

- Concongella PS
- Marnoo PS
- Skene Street Specialist School
- Stawell 502 PS
- St Patricks PS
- Stawell West PS

Northern Grampians LGA

STAWELL

ARARAT

Ararat LGA

- Ararat College
- Ararat 800 PS
- Ararat North PS
- Ararat West PS
- Buangor PS
- Pomonal PS
- Marian College

DREAM SEEDS WORKSHOPS

In November, CGLLEN provided Northern Grampians’ primary schools with the opportunity to participate in a Dream Seeds workshop facilitated by You thrive Victoria.

Grades 5 and 6 students from Stawell Primary, St Patricks Primary and Stawell West Primary took part in the 100-minute hands-on learning experience which was designed to build aspiration, resilience and connection for rural students leaving primary school.

Dream Seeds focused on teaching students about values, the importance and power of community and teamwork, making decisions, and setting goals. During the workshops, students participated in a range of fun, original activities that encouraged them to think about their futures and understand that they are the leaders of their own lives.

Each session was facilitated by young people who grew up in rural areas and are now studying at TAFE or university, undertaking an apprenticeship or working. This helped provide our local students with the opportunity to learn about a variety of pathways and possibilities for their own futures.

Thank you to Northern Grampians Shire Council for funding the initiative through its 2025 Community Grants program.

OUR MATES PROGRAM IN ACTION



WHAT OUR MATES STUDENTS SAY:

"(My mentor) has made a positive difference in my life because she is fun, nice and caring."

"I know I can trust (my mentor) and she is safe."

"(My mentor) is easy to talk to."

"I don't usually get to do all of this stuff."

"(MATES) gives me something to look forward to."

"It makes me happy to have someone to talk to."

"(My mentor) has supported me through the highs and lows."

"My mentor plays basketball with me - they tap into my interests."

"(MATES) gives me a nice break for my brain from all the work."

"Since having a mentor I am happier, calmer and feel like I'm cared about."

"I have someone to talk to now."

"My mentor makes me want to come to school."

"My MATE helps me with stuff that is hard for me."

WHAT OUR MATES PARENTS SAY:

"(Mentor) was flexible and a great match for my son. He was able to tailor activities to my son's interests."

"Thank you to everyone who volunteers for the program. We hope to have the opportunity to participate again next year."

"Having a MATE has helped with getting (my child) to school."

"(My child) has felt very valued by his MATE and really enjoyed the time they spent together."

"My child's attitude towards school has improved, especially when his MATE is there."

"This program has had a very positive effect on my child. Thank you!"



CGLLEN staff and mentors at National Volunteer Week celebrations in Stawell.



MENTORING

The Central Grampians LLEN Mentor Community provides free support, information and training opportunities to all volunteers across our MATES and TAC L2P programs.

As part of the initiative, mentors have exclusive access to events, including personal development sessions, guest speakers, Coffee Catch Ups and celebrations. They are able to attend as many activities as they like to connect with fellow volunteers and boost their skills, knowledge and confidence as mentors.

Our Mentor Community is a way for us to give back to our volunteers and ensure they feel valued, capable and supported in their mentoring roles.

MENTOR COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Youth Mental Health First Aid training:** Our MATES and L2P mentors had the opportunity to participate in training designed to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to recognise, understand and respond to young people experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis.
- **Ambulance Victoria session:** We organised a PD session for mentors to learn about the chain of survival, alternate care pathways, seasonal health messages and other valuable safety information.
- **National Volunteer Week celebrations:** In May, we celebrated our wonderful MATES and L2P mentors at National Volunteer Week events in Ararat and Stawell. Volunteers were presented with service awards and had the opportunity to hear from our guest speakers, Pinnacle CEO, Kathryn Clayton and Ararat Neighbourhood House Manager, Teli Kaur.
- **Coffee Catch Ups:** Mentors for both programs came together for Coffee Catch Ups in Stawell, Ararat, Beaufort and St Arnaud. These regular events allow mentors to meet with our program coordinators for a coffee and informal chat. They also provide the perfect opportunity for volunteers to share their experiences with fellow mentors and ask any questions they may have.

OUR MEMBERS

CGLLEN BOARD

- **Janine Adams (Chair)** *Ararat U3A*
- **Claire Sladdin (Deputy Chair)** - *East Grampians Health Service*
- **Toni Chegwin (Secretary)** - *VicPol (Wimmera)*
- **Sandi Slocombe (Treasurer)** - *Community Member*
- **Ellie McDougall** - *Ararat College (until July 2025)*
- **Jenette Penn** - *Ararat College (September - December 2025)*
- **Matt Haddow** - *Skene Street Specialist School (until July 2025)*
- **Catherine Howison** - *Marian College*
- **Cindy Bibby** - *Stawell Secondary College*
- **Shannon McGrath** - *Gason*
- **Cr Jack Blake** - *Northern Grampians Shire Council*
- **Phuong Au** - *Ararat Rural City Council*
- **Larelle Kuczer** - *Y Ballarat*

UNIVERSITY AND TAFE

- Federation University Australia - Western Campus

ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- Ararat Neighbourhood House
- Ararat U3A
- Stawell Neighbourhood House

OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

- Catholic Education Office
- WDEA Works

TRADE UNIONS

- Ballarat Regional Trades and Labour Council Inc

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Maurice Billi
- Kevin Bowles
- John Coghlan
- Greg Earle
- Kaye Harris
- Julie Maddocks
- Dave Sanders
- Sandi Slocombe

KOORI/ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS

- Brambuk - The National Park and Cultural Centre
- Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative
- Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative

SCHOOLS

- Ararat College
- Ararat North Primary
- Ararat West Primary
- Ararat Primary School
- Buangor Primary School
- Concongella Primary
- Great Western Primary
- Lake Bolac P-12 College
- Marian College
- Maroona Primary
- Moyston Primary
- Pomonal Primary
- Skene St Specialist
- St Mary's Primary
- Stawell Primary (502)
- Stawell Secondary College
- Stawell West Primary
- St Patrick's Primary School

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYER ORGANISATIONS

- AF Gason Pty Ltd
- David O Jones Mitre 10 Stawell
- East Grampians Health Service
- Waacks Bakery

COMMUNITY AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS

- Child and Family Services Ararat
- Department of Education
- Grampians Community Health
- Grampians Disability Advocacy Association
- Grampians Health
- Grampians Public Health Unit
- Greater Ararat Business Network
- Pinnacle Inc
- The Y Ballarat
- Victoria Police (Wimmera)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Ararat Rural City Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council

OUR SPONSORS

TAC L2P PROGRAM



MATES MENTORING



RESILIENT ARARAT



PASSPORT 2 EMPLOYMENT



DREAM SEEDS



SHORT COURSES



DRONEED



THE
HUGH D.T.
WILLIAMSON
FOUNDATION

MENTOR COMMUNITY





FINANCIALS

20

25

Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.

ABN: 67 845 485 864

Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 December 2025

Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 31 December 2025

| | 2025 \$ | 2024 \$ |
|---|-----------------|---------------|
| Revenue | 609,322 | 627,423 |
| Salaries and employee benefits expense | (448,723) | (433,539) |
| Depreciation expense | (16,818) | (30,126) |
| Finance costs | 137 | (4,524) |
| Occupancy and associated costs | (7,177) | (6,915) |
| Advertising and promotional costs | (2,722) | (5,718) |
| Motor vehicle expenses | (27,877) | (31,500) |
| Administration and association costs | (28,434) | (30,238) |
| Project costs | (106,403) | (60,833) |
| Other expenses | (8,600) | (8,600) |
| Surplus before income tax expense | (37,295) | 15,430 |
| Income tax expense | - | - |
| Surplus after income tax expense | (37,295) | 15,430 |
| Other comprehensive income/(expense) | - | - |
| Total comprehensive income attributable to members of the entity | (37,295) | 15,430 |

Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2025

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Current assets | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 441,971 | 501,364 |
| Trade and other receivables | 116,919 | 125,138 |
| Other current assets | 9,399 | 10,877 |
| Total current assets | 568,289 | 673,379 |
| Non-current assets | | |
| Property, plant and equipment | 44,740 | 32,127 |
| Right-of-use assets | 2,802 | 19,024 |
| Total non-current assets | 47,542 | 51,151 |
| Total assets | 615,831 | 688,530 |
| Current liabilities | | |
| Trade and other payables | 34,308 | 44,057 |
| Other liabilities | 70,530 | 71,200 |
| Lease liabilities | 7,724 | 23,914 |
| Provisions | 24,663 | 29,517 |
| Total current liabilities | 137,225 | 168,690 |
| Non-current liabilities | | |
| Lease liabilities | - | - |
| Provisions | 316 | 4,255 |
| Total non-current liabilities | 316 | 4,255 |
| Total liabilities | 137,541 | 172,945 |
| Net assets | 478,290 | 515,585 |
| Equity | | |
| Retained earnings | 478,290 | 515,585 |
| Total equity | 478,290 | 515,585 |

Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc.

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the Year Ended 31 December 2025

| | Retained Earnings \$ | Total Equity \$ |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Balance at 31 December 2024 | 515,585 | 515,585 |
| Surplus attributable to the entity | (37,295) | (37,295) |
| Total other comprehensive income/(expense) for the year | - | - |
| Balance at 31 December 2025 | 478,290 | 478,290 |

Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. Statement of Cash Flows

For the Year Ended 31 December 2025

| | 2025 | 2024 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| | \$ | \$ |
| Cash flows from operating activities | | |
| Receipts from customers | 675,826 | 505,070 |
| Payments to suppliers and employees | (717,722) | (484,020) |
| Interest received | 11,701 | 16,389 |
| Interest paid | (343) | (4,524) |
| Net cash provided by / (used in) operating activities | (30,173) | 32,915 |
| Cash flows from investing activities | | |
| Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment | | - |
| Purchase of property, plant and equipment | (13,209) | - |
| Net cash provided by / (used in) investing activities | (13,209) | - |
| Cash flows from financing activities | | |
| Payment of principal elements of lease payments | (8,991) | (11,377) |
| Net cash used in financing activities | (8,991) | (11,377) |
| Net increase / (decrease) in cash held | (52,393) | 21,538 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year | 501,364 | 479,826 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year | 441,971 | 501,364 |

Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. Financial Declaration by Responsible Persons

Per section 60.15 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*:

The Responsible Persons declare that in the Responsible Persons' opinion:

- (a) there are reasonable grounds to believe that the registered entity is able to pay all of its debts, as and when they become due and payable; and
- (b) the financial statements and notes satisfy the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

Chairperson



Treasurer



Dated: 12 March 2026

Independent auditor's report to the members of Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc

Report on the financial report extract

Opinion

The financial report extract, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2025, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, are derived from the audited financial report of Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc (the association) for the year ended 31 December 2025.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report extract, is consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial report on which they are based.

Financial Report Extract

The financial report extract does not contain all the disclosures required by Australian Accounting Standards applied in the preparation of the audited financial report of Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc. Reading the financial report extract and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report and the auditor's report thereon. The financial report extract and the audited financial report do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the audited financial report.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

The Audited Financial Report and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial report in our report dated 12th March 2025.

Directors' Responsibility for the Financial Report Extract

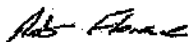
The committee is responsible for the preparation of the financial report extract in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the financial report extract is consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial report based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with *Auditing Standard ASA 810: Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*.

Matters Relating to the Electronic Publication of the Audited Financial Report

This auditor's report relates to the financial report extract of Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc for the year ended 31 December 2025 on Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc's website. The committee of Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc is responsible for the integrity of Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network Inc's website. The auditor's report on the financial report extract refers only to the subject matter described above. It does not provide an opinion on any other information which may have been hyperlinked to/from the financial report extract. If users of the financial report extract are concerned with the inherent risks arising from publication on a website, they are advised to refer to the hard copy of the audited financial report to confirm the information contained in the website version of the financial report extract.



Rob Florence
Florence Audit & Assurance

513 Grant Street
Ballarat VIC 3350

Dated this 12th day of March, 2026



Central Grampians LLEN

Phone: 5352 3266

Email: info@cglLEN.org.au

Website: www.cglLEN.org.au

Office: 4-30 Barkly Street ARARAT, 3377

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the various lands on which we work, collaborate and support young people. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and all those who participate in CGLLEN activities.