

2023 Annual Report



**YOU'VE COME TO THE
RIGHT PLACE**

We've been connecting young people to opportunities since
2001.



**North East
Local Learning
and Employment Network**

NELLEN acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout North East Victoria and their continuing connection to land, waters, and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.



**North East
Local Learning
and Employment Network**

**CREATING FUTURES
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

Our Vision

All young people are valued in our community

Our Mission

NELLEN partners with schools, employers and communities to bridge gaps and connect youth with meaningful educations and employment pathways.

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Table of Contents

Chair's Report: Virginia Mansel Lees	1
CEO's Report: Bev Hoffmann	2
2023 Board Members	3
2023 Staff Members & Support	4
School to Work (S2W)	5
Industry Engagement Network Meetings	7
B4Work	8
What's It Really Like (WIRL)	10
Regional Transport Fund (RTF)	11
Future Proof	12
On Track Connect	13
Partners & Stakeholders	14

Chair's Report

Virginia Mansel Lees



As the year rapidly progresses towards our AGM, we reflect on a period of significant evolution within our sector. This year, transformative changes have necessitated thoughtful adjustments in our operations and program delivery. Under the skilful leadership of our CEO, Bev Hoffman, and our dedicated staff, NELLEN has adeptly navigated these new systems, setting the stage for a clear and promising path forward.

We've also experienced shifts within our Board, bidding farewell to some members while welcoming new faces eager to contribute fresh perspectives. I extend my gratitude to all past and present Board members for their invaluable service and anticipate the innovative ideas our new members will bring.

This year, the Board and senior staff participated in the development of a new Strategic Plan for 2024-2026, facilitated by Patrick Moriarty - Strategic Australia Communications.

It's crucial to recognize that our achievements are made possible by the

collective effort of our Board and staff, who have embraced the challenges brought by change with remarkable resilience and commitment.

As we advance in 2024, I am enthusiastic about re-engaging with our local communities, introducing new directions and opportunities. It is particularly fulfilling to envision the role NELLEN will play in helping young individuals shape their futures - a critical milestone in their life journeys.

I also extend my appreciation to our stakeholders and collaborators. We are excited about launching new initiatives designed to enhance our engagement and support the young people at the heart of our mission. Thank you for your continued partnership and support in these endeavours.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Virginia Mansel Lees". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Virginia Mansel Lees
Board Chair | May 2024

CEO's Report

Bev
Hoffmann



This year marked the beginning of NELLEN's new three-year commitment with the Department of Education, an exciting phase steered by insights from the Firth Review and the Senior Secondary Reform Taskforce. The Victorian Government continues to support our endeavours through the School to Work program, enabling collaborative efforts with local employers, industry partners, and schools to enhance work-based learning opportunities for students.

Our team's relentless dedication has led to significant achievements across our programs. We notably exceeded our placement targets in the School to Work program, securing 107 placements. The B4Work project not only met its objectives but also gained a 12-month extension, recognizing its impact. The Regional Transport Fund was pivotal, improving access to VET courses for 61 students from our rural communities, thereby broadening their educational prospects.

This year, we also took significant strides in bridging the information gap across key sectors including Building and Construction, Health, and Digital Media. Our initiatives, like industry visits and a creative arts forum, have been instrumental in connecting students to real-world professionals and industries. These engagements have proven vital in equipping students with the necessary insights and connections for their future careers.

In addition to these initiatives, I actively participated in various influential networks and meetings, contributing to regional social and economic development. These included among others the Indigrow Economic Advisory Group, LLEN Statewide Industry Group (SWIG), and the Ovens Murray Digital Plan. Furthermore, our involvement in quarterly educational and industry-specific meetings has strengthened our collaborative efforts and advocacy for youth pathways.

Our efforts this year have been greatly supported by the enthusiastic participation of students, parents, and the community, confirming the effectiveness of our programs and approaches in meeting the diverse needs of our stakeholders. The dedication of our team and the constructive feedback from the community continue to inspire and drive our mission forward.

As we move into the next year, we remain committed to enhancing the educational and career outcomes for young Victorians, ensuring they are well-prepared and supported through their transition from school to the workforce.

My deepest appreciation goes to our entire team and partners for their unwavering support and contributions to these successes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bev Hoffmann'.

Bev Hoffmann | CEO

May 2024

2023

Board Members



Bernie Boulton



Vern Hilditch



Jennifer Gordon



Virginia Mansel Lees



Ashly Baikaloff



Alana (Lany) Pund



David Kirkby



John Williams



Matthew Fagence

**The following Board
Member resigned in 2023:**

Angela Pesavento
resigned February 2023

Board and Sub-committee secretariat support provided by Karen Nankervis
from My Beechworth Secretary. mybeechworthsecretary.weebly.com

2023

Staff Members

Andrew Scanlan	Programs Manager
Bev Hoffman	CEO
Kristin Kemp	Office and Data Administrator
Mackenna Robson	Peer Worker
Mark Cottee	Partnership Manager & B4Work Coordinator
Nick Bond	Training Pathways Coordinator
Rebecca Lan Lui	Training Pathways Officer
Susan Shelley	Operations Manager

NELLEN was supported by these additional staff and contractors during the year:

- Kasey Kemp
- Ellyn Martin and Rod Fraser | Business Growth Strategies
www.businessgrowthstrategies.biz
- Aidan Jenkins and Annie Tonta | Johnsons MME
www.johnsonsmme.com.au
- Patrick Moriarty | Strategic Australia Communications
www.linkedin.com/in/patrickmoriartystrategic/
- Lanie Rock | Marketing and Communications Specialist
www.lanierockmarketing.net
- Michael Rosenbrock | Website Creation and Management
www.michaelrosenbrock.com

School to Work (S2W)



School staff and students find opportunities through the Portal



Enhancing Work-Based Learning Opportunities

The School to Work program, funded by the Victorian Government, is a strategic initiative managed by Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), including NELLEN, to enhance work-based learning opportunities for students. By collaborating with local employers, industry partners, and schools, this program ensures that students have increased access to work experience, Structured Workplace Learning (SWL), and School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT) through the School to Work Portal.

In the past year, NELLEN has been instrumental in successfully negotiating 111 placements, with 86 completions. Feedback from teachers and students highlighted a demand for more detailed information in key industries.

In response, NELLEN spearheaded initiatives to bridge these information gaps, particularly in sectors like Building and Construction, Health, Community Services, Engineering, Creative Industries, and Digital Media.

Significant efforts included organizing visits to major industry players such as Westmont Aged Care Services and Bertazzos Engineering, primarily benefiting schools outside Wodonga. Additionally, engaging speakers such as the Deputy Editor from the Border Mail newspaper proved highly beneficial for students in rural schools.

School to Work

continued



Through strategic partnerships and innovative initiatives, NELLEN is transforming educational opportunities into real-world career pathways for students.



To cater to the diverse interests of students, a creative arts forum was organized, drawing professionals from Dance, Music, and Graphic Design.

This event provided students with invaluable insights into these creative fields. Moreover, an evening event facilitated by members of the Master Builders Association greatly aided parents and students in understanding specific industry requirements.

These comprehensive efforts are part of NELLEN's proactive strategy to foster student engagement, provide deeper industry insights, and build meaningful

connections. The successful establishment of traineeships at Indigo Shire Council and collaboration with Australian Women in Solar Energy (AWISE) are prime examples of how NELLEN is extending its reach and impact.

Furthermore, NELLEN's development of an online system for the City of Wodonga (CoW) to administer work experience and placements showcases our commitment to creating practical learning opportunities across various sectors. These initiatives collectively underscore NELLEN's dedication to enriching students' educational and vocational experiences through the School to Work program.

2023

Industry Engagement through Network Meetings

Throughout 2023, NELLEN actively participated in various network meetings to strengthen its engagement with relevant local industries. These collaborative efforts aimed to enhance connectivity and partnerships. Key participation includes:

1. Alpine Valleys Dairy: Engaged in discussions and collaboration within the dairy industry, fostering connections and potential opportunities.

2. Hume Social Enterprise Network: Contributed to discussions on social enterprise, emphasizing NELLEN's commitment to supporting young people's upskilling and engagement with initiatives that have a positive social impact. Corryong Neighbourhood Centre's Bakery Cooperative being a strong example of how students are offered pathway opportunities.

3. IndiGrow Economic Advisory Group: Participated in Indigo Shire's economic advisory discussions and planning, working towards regional growth and development strategies. Significant outcome of these discussions is the negotiations to implement traineeships within Council.

4. Business Wodonga's Jobs Expo: Actively involved in the Jobs Expo organized by Business Wodonga, facilitating interactions between student job seekers and potential employers offering entry-level employment opportunities.

5. LLEN Statewide Industry Group (SWIG): Collaborated with the Statewide Industry Group to implement the proposed model of coordinated responses to industry enquiries. NELLEN has nominated to be the lead LLEN for Business and Construction, and the support LLEN for Clean Energy.

6. Australian Women in Solar Energy (AWISE): Responded to an invitation to partner with this network, and provide facilitated introductions to their member and the relevant LLEN. AWISE has received funding to promote inclusivity and diversity in this industry through school and community events.

7. Ovens Murray Digital Plan Refresh Workshops: Participated in workshops focused on refreshing the Ovens Murray digital plan, aligning with the evolving technological needs in North East Victoria.

NELLEN's consistent involvement in these diverse network meetings showcases a commitment to industry engagement, knowledge sharing, and collaborative efforts to drive economic and educational development in the region.

B4Work



The B4Work program continues to grow its presence across the region. Highlights include:

- Developed processes & resources have been trialled across different demographic needs (people with disability, CALD, Aboriginal, ETC) and has proven equally effective for these clients. The universal design approach works.
- By working with individual clients the B4Work program has a special focus on which issues are common amongst the young people from a systems point of view. Through the work with individual clients B4Work is becoming instrumental in guiding future strategic directions and solutions. Individual outcomes driving systematic change.
- There are resources that have been developed as part of the program. These will create a legacy effect once the program is no longer funded with on-going products being made available outside of the B4Work program specifically.
- By working directly with the young people to create solutions the B4work program does have direct access to immediate or current events or issues affecting young people across the region. (Links to point 2 above) Just wanted to re -word it in my head.
- Because B4Work is relevant in terms of its appeal to the following; client directly, parent or carer, service agencies, NELLEN continues to grow in terms of its collaboration efforts and ultimately leads towards a more prominent and well considered reputation. This includes strengthening our reputation with major funding sources. In this case, the Federal government.
- Flexibility and pivoting have been key to the success of the program so far.

B4Work

continued

A Comprehensive Career Readiness Program

The B4Work program, led by NELLEN, is a groundbreaking initiative that integrates unemployed young people aged 17-25+ from the Hume Region of Victoria into the workforce. In 2023, the program expanded to three initial communities and began phased integration into seven additional townships. Its innovative framework uses community-based, co-designed workshops to facilitate a smooth transition into employment.

Key Achievements

Community Engagement: B4Work successfully established local groups in 10 different communities, fostering a sense of belonging and support among participants.

Inclusive Design: The program's universal design effectively addresses diverse

needs, including those of individuals with disabilities, from CALD backgrounds, and Aboriginal communities.

Strategic Impact: Through direct engagement with participants, B4Work has influenced broader systemic changes, identifying and addressing common barriers faced by young job seekers.

Sustainable Delivery: Developed resources, destined to outlast the program's funding, are ensuring sustained support for job seekers.

Strengthened Collaborations: Enhanced partnerships with local stakeholders and the Federal government have fortified NELLEN's standing and expanded its impact.

The flexibility and responsiveness of the B4Work program have been key to its success, setting a standard for future employment initiatives. As it fully launches across all targeted communities by 2024/25, B4Work continues to evolve based on participant feedback, ensuring it addresses current and anticipates future workforce challenges.

Statistics

October 23

Activities	50
Participants	37
Supports	125
Programs & Services	88
MOU	3
Mentor Groups	21
Mentors Engaged	7

WIRL

What's it
REALLY
Like...

Matching Learning with Jobs



Providing real-life insights into jobs and experiences

The "What's It Really Like" (WIRL) initiative remains a pivotal part of NELLEN's efforts to connect Year 9 students with the professional world. This year, significant strides were made in enhancing the WIRL database, supported historically by Regional Development Victoria and aligned with our School to Work (S2W) program goals. The database expansion is crucial for increasing diverse, real-world work experience opportunities.

Achievements and Collaborative Efforts:

In collaboration with NETracks LLEN, we have enriched the WIRL database to better match student interests with industry needs, broadening the scope of potential career insights. This enhancement facilitates more effective student-industry engagements and reflects our commitment to regional workforce development.

Our strategy included targeted training and network meetings that brought together educators, industry leaders, and stakeholders. These efforts were designed to refine program direction and explore scalable, place-based initiatives.

Future Directions: Looking ahead, NELLEN will continue to develop the WIRL initiative, focusing on deeper integration with the S2W program and expanding the database further to include more comprehensive career pathways. We aim to enhance the connectivity between educational initiatives and workforce needs, ensuring the program's adaptation to regional demands.

Conclusion: The WIRL program's success in bridging education with real-world employment opportunities underscores NELLEN's commitment to enhancing the vocational trajectories of young students in our communities. We remain dedicated to expanding these opportunities and fostering a skilled, adaptable future workforce.

RTF

Regional Transport Fund



How the RTF Drives Young Dreams Forward

Launched in Term 1, 2023, the Regional Transport Fund (RTF) enhances access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) for senior secondary students across school clusters. By providing coordinated, fit-for-purpose travel solutions, the RTF addresses logistical barriers, enabling increased access and broader educational choices.

Impact: The RTF has transformed travel logistics from burdensome to beneficial, significantly improving student engagement and retention. One parent from Bright highlighted the change, noting the RTF's door-to-door service allows her son to attend VET more rested and engaged, ensuring he will complete his VCE VM by achieving the required VET hours.

Attendance and Parental Feedback:

The introduction of the RTF has dramatically improved attendance, with schools reporting near-perfect records compared to previous years. Parents express relief at the reliable and convenient transportation, leading to higher enrollment and participation in VET programs.

Educational Outcomes: The RTF has also enriched educational experiences. Students, like a Year 11 in Mount Beauty, praise the hands-on learning and broader perspectives gained through access to enhanced resources at Wodonga TAFE. This access inspires greater career consideration and motivation.

Statistics: In 2023, the RTF served 61 students with a budget of \$94,800, reflecting a commitment to educational equity.

Conclusion: The RTF is pivotal in reducing educational disparities, providing regional students with the necessary support to pursue and succeed in their vocational aspirations.

Future Proof



Empowering Youth for Community Resilience and Recovery

The Future Proof program, funded by the Federal Government and led by YACVic Rural in collaboration with NE Tracks, has made significant strides in empowering young people aged 16 to 25 by providing them with valuable training and qualifications in emergency management and community services. This initiative not only enhances community resilience but also promotes a youth-inclusive approach to recovery and preparedness.

Throughout 2023, Future Proof offered a variety of free courses and qualifications that were crucial for building resilience, including accredited training in Youth

Work, Mental Health, Counselling, Public Safety, and Fire Fighting. Additionally, participants engaged in short courses such as White Card, First Aid, Safe Food Handling, and Drone Piloting, with a total of 345 young individuals enrolled in these programs.

The project was supported by dedicated staff including a Training Pathways Coordinator and Pathways Officer, who facilitated enrolment in Registered Training Organizations and supported the integration of Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs). These groups, formed from young individuals with shared disaster experiences, focused on enhancing disaster readiness and community preparedness.

Future Proof has not only provided skill development and employability enhancements but has also fostered significant personal growth and community engagement among participants, showcasing the program's profound impact on both individual and community levels.

On Track Connect



Providing insights into
pathways of school leavers



Charting Bright Futures for Victorian School Leavers

The On Track survey monitors the destination outcomes of Year 12 completers and Early Leavers six months after leaving school to find out if they are on track to a bright future.

Since 2003, the annual On Track survey has followed the outcomes of Victorian students who finish Year 12 and those who leave school before completion.

This information provides insights into post-school destinations and pathways and highlights the diversity of pathways young people successfully pursue after leaving secondary school.

Ten young people were referred to local supports such as Skills and Job Centre and ReConnect. Seven of these were looking for advice on employment assistance and one young person had already managed to find an apprenticeship by the time NELLEN was in contact with them.

Results from On Track 2023 have not been published yet.

2022 results can be found at vic.gov.au/on-track-survey

2023

Our Partners and Strategic Stakeholders

Thank you to the Partners and Strategic Stakeholders
who supported NELLEN in 2023



netracksllen.org.au



uworkin.com



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Youth Affairs
Council Victoria

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NELLEN is supported by the Victorian Government with recurrent and projected funding from the Department of Education and Training (DET), the Department of Job, Precincts and Regions (Through Regional Development Victoria), and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.



Australian Government



nellen.org.au