

2025 a year in review



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NE TRACKS LLEN
Annual Report



NE Tracks Local Learning and Employment Network

Our catchment

NE Tracks LLEN is an independent, not-for-profit organisation funded by the Department of Education to deliver the School to Work Program and is one of 31 LLENs operating across Victoria. LLENs connect employers, education and training providers, businesses, industry groups, and community organisations with schools to improve opportunities for young people.

Since 2002, NE Tracks LLEN has built strong partnerships across the region to support young people in their education and career pathways. By harnessing community resources, it acts as a connector and information hub—linking schools, industry, and community to create meaningful, lasting outcomes for the region's youth. Our LLEN also delivers other programs supported by industry, not-for-profits, philanthropic and government funding bodies.

Our Schools

- Australian Christian College Hume
- Benalla Flexible Learning Centre (WSSC)
- Benalla P-12 College
- Borinya-Wangaratta Community Partnership
- Cathedral College Wangaratta
- EdSpace Benalla
- FCJ College
- Galen Catholic College
- Mansfield Secondary College
- Mansfield Steiner School
- Wangaratta District Specialist School
- Wangaratta High School





Our Vision: Supporting Young People to Succeed

Our Purpose

The purposes of the Association are to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people with a priority of those experiencing disadvantage, discrimination, social isolation and from low socio-economic backgrounds in the Ovens Murray Region.

We do this by brokering and facilitating strategic partnerships and programs to support sustainable outcomes and addressing gaps in our community; developing and facilitating collaborative approaches towards planned improvement and provision of education, training and employment; engaging with appropriate stakeholders from education, training business and industry, community and cultural organisations, government bodies and commissions, to achieve our vision across the community.

Our Vision

All youth in our communities are successfully engaged in education, training and employment.

Our Goal

To support secondary school students within our geographical boundaries by ensuring they have clear connections to the world of work and access to school to work activities that increase their awareness of local career pathways.

Our Focus

Creating area based strategic and sustainable partnerships that improve education and transition outcomes and build career aspirations for young people in secondary school.

Thank you for another year of support for students at Benalla P-12. From mock interviews and industry visits and workforce readiness sessions, your work has greatly benefited our students.

— Jackie Varcoe, Benalla P-12 College



Our Board and Staff



Ben Watts
Chairperson



Sally Matheson
Deputy Chairperson



Denis O'Callaghan
Treasurer



Barry Norton
Member
Commenced May 2025



Steve Pickering
Member



Louise Pearce
Member



Nathan Tolliday
Member
Commenced May 2025



Kerry Stauch
Member
Resigned Feb 2025



Annette Borradale
Program Coordinator and
Event Director



Mel Elliot
Program Coordinator
Resigned April 2025



Renee Paola
Program Coordinator
Commenced September 2025



Jo Brett
Ovens Murray VET Cluster Coordinator



Julia Calvene
Administration Assistant



Tim Oliver
Chief Executive Officer

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In partnership with government, education, industry and community, we empower young people to actively engage, transition and succeed in education and the world of work.



Chair and CEO 2025 Report



Ben Watts

Chair, NE Tracks LLEN

2025 has presented a number of significant and promising changes for NE Tracks LLEN as we continue with our core work of “Supporting Young People to Succeed”. Our three major developments include:

The establishment of the Ovens Murray VET Cluster: in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Education. The preparatory planning that was well underway in 2024, culminated in NE Tracks LLEN being appointed Lead LLEN in April 2025, enabling the prompt formalisation of a VET Cluster Coordinator.

Office relocation from Benalla to Wangaratta: The LLEN board made a strategic decision to relocate operations as part of our VET Cluster submission and our team moved to new office premises at Tara Court, Ford Street Wangaratta in June. Being centrally located was considered critical to delivery of this placed-based program and was undoubtedly a key factor in our appointment. The new offices provide for the expanded team, with room for further growth.

Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) registration: With an eye to expanding funding sources in support of broader program delivery, NE Tracks LLEN sought a change to our charity sub type in 2025, applying for registration to the Australian Charities and Not-for Profits Commission as a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI). Approval was advised in November with an effective date from 12 May 2025.

PBI status enables greater collaborations and funding of programs by philanthropic organisations and allows donors to claim full tax deductibility for donations made to the LLEN. It also makes us a more attractive employer, as staff can access tax concessions increasing take home pay through arrangements exclusive to PBI employees. The approval required amendments to our Model Rules, approved at the Annual General Meeting on 12 May 2025.

Our Focus has been

- The establishment of the Ovens Murray VET Cluster
- Office relocation from Benalla to Wangaratta
- Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) registration



Tim Oliver
CEO, NE Tracks LLEN

The change to our Purposes were approved as follows:

The purposes of the Association are to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people with a priority of those experiencing disadvantage, discrimination, social isolation and from low socio-economic backgrounds in the Ovens Murray Region. We do this by brokering and facilitating strategic partnerships and programs to support sustainable outcomes and addressing gaps in our community; developing and facilitating collaborative approaches towards planned improvement and provision of education, training and employment; engaging with appropriate stakeholders from education, training business and industry, community and cultural organisations, government bodies and commissions, to achieve our vision across the community.

In 2025 our LLEN successfully delivered on the final year of the 3 year School to Work (STW) contract for the Victorian Education Department, exceeding all performance measures. The program supports senior secondary students from the Local Government Areas of Wangaratta, Benalla and Mansfield as they explore career pathways available in our region.

Throughout the year we focussed on connecting students to local employers through several additional initiatives including:

- Delivery of Career Events – Hands on Trades & Career Expo at Winton Motor Raceway, Food & Fibre Careers Day at Melbourne University Campus Dookie, Local Government Career Expo's in Wangaratta & Benalla and through a collaboration with the Zonta Club of Wangaratta we sponsor Boys & Girls Careers Breakfasts where students engage and network with local business mentors.
- Work Based Learning opportunities through Work Experience placements, Structured Workplace Learning, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships.
- Capacity Building activities Workplace visits, Business/ Employer networking, Guest Speakers in schools, Mock Interviews, Resume Reviews, Budgeting & work readiness and more.

Our popular hospitality program grew further in 2025, with 84 students successfully completing placements with local hospitality businesses in Wangaratta, Benalla & Mansfield. The 'Hands On Hospo' program saw work experience opportunities arranged and students completed the 'Do Food Safely' Certificate, meaning all program graduates were certified to accept part time work offers through the holiday peaks and some have gone on to Traineeships and School Based Apprenticeships in hospitality roles.

The new VET Cluster team hit the ground running, bringing VET coordinators together from the 24 member Ovens Murray schools, identifying key challenges and deliverables. Some new VET offerings will be available in 2026 as a result of the work already undertaken and our coordination of the Transport Fund will open additional VET opportunities, particularly for student from the more remote locations travelling to either Wangaratta or Wodonga TAFEs.

As 2025 draws to a close, I would like to sincerely thank our sponsors, regional business owners, community groups, school staff, students, and our board and staff for their ongoing support.

Industry contributions, through hosting work placements, presenting at events, mentoring, and sharing expertise, have created meaningful opportunities for young people to explore career pathways and prepare for further education, training, and the workforce.

We are especially grateful to our local partners and event sponsors for ensuring students have access to a wide range of career development experiences. From our new Wangaratta base, we look forward to expanding our network and continuing to connect students with the workforce of the future.



A Snap Shot

Our Core Work

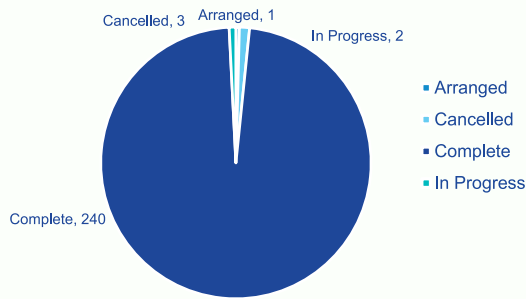
NE Tracks LLEN delivers the School to Work Program (STW) for Secondary Schools through the Benalla, Wangaratta and Mansfield local government areas. We connect schools and industry to create work-based learning opportunities that meet the needs of local students and employers.

During 2025, we continued the delivery of the School to Work Program, with the Work Based Learning program and our offering of career pathway focused events forming a key part of this Department of Education initiative.

The Program is designed to increase opportunities for young people aged 15–19 to develop their skills and workplace knowledge through practical, on-the-job experiences, including Work Experience placements, Structured Workplace Learning (SWL), and School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs).



2025 Work Based Learning Placements



84
2025 Placement target

246
Recorded placements

2025 Career Focused Events



7
2025 Event target

20
Events recorded

NE Tracks LLEN Workbase Learning Placements

246

Work Experience placements

10

Structured Workplace Learning placements

10

School based Apprenticeships & Traineeships

2,191

Student attendees (Yr 7-12)

NE Tracks LLEN Events

38

Regional Schools

132

Industry Partners (events)



Organisational Achievements for 2025

Overview



01

The Ovens Murray VET Cluster

The establishment of the OM VET Cluster will expand regional secondary students' access to VET through diverse, industry-aligned pathways that build practical skills and support informed career pathway choices.



02

Office relocation

In June, the LLEN Board strategically relocated operations **from Benalla to centrally located offices in Wangaratta** to support delivery of the VET Cluster, accommodate the expanded team, and plan for future growth.



03

Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) status

NE Tracks LLEN applied for and received Public Benevolent Institution (PBI) status, approved in November and effective from 12 May 2025, to support expanded funding and program delivery.



Ovens Murray VET Cluster



ABOUT THE CLUSTER

The Ovens Murray VET cluster was established in 2024 with a focus on expanding VET delivery to senior secondary school students across our region. An interim Governance Group was formed to work collaboratively in developing:

- A shared VET Cluster vision
- Terms of Reference for Governance and operations
- Memorandum of Understanding

The Cluster plays a critical role in expanding access to vocational education and training (VET) for secondary students across the region through a wide range of vocational pathways encouraging them to develop practical, industry-aligned skills that support informed career choices.

The network of schools that make up the Ovens Murray VET Cluster collaborate, with the support of NE Tracks LLEN (as the lead LLEN) and NELLEEN (as the support LLEN), to improve the availability of VET Delivered to Schools Students (VDSS). The purpose of the Cluster is to facilitate and expand student access to VET by fostering collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships and to reduce the administrative burden of VET on schools.

Ovens Murray VET Cluster operates using a two-tiered governance model that acts in accordance with Ovens Murray VET Cluster Governance Terms of Reference.

Cluster Governance Group - the Cluster's ultimate decision-making body. Responsible for determining the Cluster's strategic direction.

Cluster Operations Group - responsible for implementing the Cluster's operational functions which can escalate matters to the Cluster Governance Group for decision.



Ovens Murray VET Cluster is founded on a spirit of cooperation between all schools and will enhance vocational learning opportunities for students to achieve their full potential and succeed in their chosen pathways.

2025 Ovens Murray VET Cluster achievements

Successful appointment of Jo Brett to the VET Cluster Coordinator Position based out of Wangaratta

Mapping of VDSS provision data across the cluster has enabled cluster members to see potential opportunities for shared provision.

Ongoing support and advice provided to individual schools on their VDSS provision.

Opportunities to expand access to VDSS programs identified and progressed through negotiating provision with TAFEs and RTOs

Communication across the Cluster streamlined with circulation of a regular bulletin, website information for OMVET cluster schools and regular cluster meetings.

State Government Transport Fund: develop efficient routes and coordination of bus transport enabling 250 senior secondary students from 15 Cluster schools to access weekly transport to and from TAFE.

Schools aligned with the cluster include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Beechworth Secondary College | Mansfield Secondary College |
| Belvoir Special Development School | Mansfield Steiner School |
| Benalla Flexible Learning Centre (WSSC) | Marian College Myrtleford |
| Benalla P-12 College | Mount Beauty Secondary College |
| Borinya-Wangaratta Community Partnership | Myrtleford P-12 College |
| Bright P-12 College | Rutherglen High School |
| Cathedral College Wangaratta | Tallangatta Secondary College |
| Catholic College Wodonga | Victory Lutheran College |
| Corryong College | Wangaratta District Specialist School |
| FCJ College | Wangaratta High School |
| Galen Catholic College | Wodonga Flexible Learning Centre (WSSC) |
| Grace Christian College Wodonga | Wodonga Senior Secondary College |

Vocational Education and Training (VET) offers practical, hands-on learning that equips students with real-world industry skills. Completing a VET course at school provides a nationally recognised qualification that contributes to the VCE, VCE Vocational Major (VM) or Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC), while building confidence and creating pathways to employment, training or university.



Annual Achievement Awards and grant recipients

We proudly support and recognise student achievements from across our catchment schools, celebrating young people who have engaged, excelled and shown commitment through their learning journeys.



2025 Glenrowan Solar Farm Scholarship:

NE Tracks LLEN supports the Glenrowan Solar Farm Scholarship Program, part of an 11-year annual commitment to building skills and career pathways for young people in the region. The program initial phase for 2025 delivered three, \$5,000 scholarships to support young people as they transition into the workforce.

The 2025 recipients are; **Lauren Stone** (pictured top), 18, from Wangaratta, a second-year apprentice technician with McGregor Machinery who began through a school-based apprenticeship and will use the funding for tools and equipment; **Ruby Holland** (pictured middle), 17, is completing a Certificate III business administration apprenticeship with Wangaratta Pump School and plans to put her scholarship towards a car. **Noah Hansen** (pictured bottom), 17, who commenced a refrigeration apprenticeship with Unite Refrigeration and will also use his scholarship to support transport to work.



Wangaratta



Borinya Community Partnership
Wangaratta: **Henry Ross**



Wangaratta District Specialist
School (WDSS):
Kaiden Parr-Liddell



Galen Catholic College:
Jackson Roberts



Wangaratta High School:
Kaitlyn Gilliland

Cathedral College:
Eliza Best

Benalla



Australian Christian College:
Matthew Weaver



Edspace:
Sophie Scott



Benalla P-12 College:
Sophie Winkler

Benalla Flexible Learning Centre:
Samuel Hall

FCJ College:
Jazmin Booker

Our annual awards acknowledge students who were:

- identified by the LLEN team following participation in work-based learning activities or events, or
- nominated by a host employer after completing a LLEN-facilitated work placement, based on their performance and engagement.

Each award includes a certificate and a small financial award as a token of recognition and encouragement.

Congratulations to all nominated students – we're proud to support your next steps and future pathways!

Mansfield



Mansfield Secondary College:
Brianna Weight



Career Events

NE Tracks LLEN hosts a range of annual events in response to school and industry demand designed to promote student engagement with local employers.

These events provide hands-on experiences that help students explore career pathways and ignite their passion for future vocations.



Inspiring the future

NE Tracks LLEN supports a number of career-exposure focused events each year, bringing together industry professionals from a wide range of sectors to engage young people and showcase the possibilities for their future.

Food and Fibre Careers Day

30th May 2025
University of Melbourne Dookie Campus

Hands on Trades and Career Expo

14th August 2025
Winton Motor Raceway

Local Government Careers Expo

Benalla
Wangaratta

ZONTA Wangaratta

- International Womens Day Careers Breakfast
- Young Mens Careers Breakfast



Held at the University of Melbourne Dookie Campus, The Food & Fibre Careers Day, held annually since 2014, attracts more than 400 students interested in agriculture and related careers.

Up to 20 secondary schools attend from across the Ovens Murray, Goulburn Valley and Campaspe Shire.

Agriculture for the future

Food and Fibre Careers Day 2025

Technology and innovation in Agriculture, Horticulture, AgTech, Agribusiness

For many students who do not come from a farming background, the Food & Fibre Careers Day provides a unique opportunity to gain direct exposure to the agricultural sector.

As Dookie College graduate Emma Tadday noted, the event enables students “to be hands-on involved in their passion.”

Students engaged with a variety of agricultural career pathways across specialised learning hubs. At the FutureFarm HQ Hub, Field Master Systems drone pilots introduced students to emerging technology in precision agriculture.

The LivestockHustle Hub featured artificial insemination specialists who demonstrated contemporary breeding techniques, while the Hidden Careers Hub provided a farrier demonstration focused on horseshoe fitting and hoof care.

The success of the event reflects strong collaboration between local councils, education providers and industry organisations, including the University of Melbourne, GOTAFE, Greater Shepparton City Council, Rural City of Wangaratta, Goulburn Murray LLEN, Campaspe Cohuna LLEN, Dairy Australia, Rabobank, Charles Sturt University, 4upSkilling, NE Tracks LLEN and Wodonga TAFE.



Hands on Trades and Careers Expo

On Thursday, 14, August, NE Tracks LLEN presented the region's largest Hands On Trades & Careers Expo at Winton Motor Raceway, with over 70 exhibitors from various sectors, trades and technical industries bringing students an authentic and interactive working experience.

There were a variety of demonstrations and interactive exhibits, including those from ADF Careers, North East Tree Services, LS Quarry & LS Precast, Thales, Schneider Electric, Benalla Health, Glenrowan Solar, and CMV Truck & Bus among others.

We welcomed back GOTAFE as our Gold Sponsor embedded with industry exhibitors, and trainers were on hand to share information about further education and training opportunities supporting apprenticeships and other career pathways.

Crowd favourites this year around included the CFA, where students learned to use the fire hose, as well as various vehicle operating simulators, including the addition of a helicopter flying simulator.

1700 registered students had opportunities to try out truck driving simulators and learn about road safety via the trucking industry thanks to our supporters in Midland Freight and Steering the Future.

The Navy through ADF Careers also provided helicopter simulators, which were new to the event this year.

As always, the expo lends a fantastic opportunity for students to make connections with potential employers and gain practical insights into the workforce.

It continues to bring long-lasting outcomes for students, with previous attendees having gone on to undergo workplace visits, work experience placements, and even secure apprenticeships and employment.

NE Tracks LLEN also hosted a business networking lunch of about 300 people sponsored by CMV Truck and Bus, which invited exhibitors, sponsors, local schools, education department executives, mayors, and other guests into the corporate area to connect and discuss practices on supporting students pursuing career pathways.





Benalla & Wangaratta

Local Government Careers Expos

The Local Government Careers Expos held in Benalla and Wangaratta are always a popular feature of NE Tracks LLEN's annual events calendar, showcasing the breadth of career opportunities available within local government across the region.

Hosted by Benalla Rural City Council, held at the Town Hall and the Rural City of Wangaratta held at Galen Catholic College; the expos welcomed more than 300 secondary students from the five local schools in each municipality where students gained first-hand insight into the diverse roles, services and career pathways that exist within their local councils.

Each expo featured more than 20 council departments and was delivered in an engaging 'speed dating' format, with small groups of students rotating through 10 minute sessions at each department station. Council staff shared information about their roles, day-to-day work, career pathways and entry points into local government, while many departments offered hands-on and immersive activities that brought their work to life.

The expos provide pathways beyond the event itself, with many students participating in follow-up visits to council offices and depots to observe daily operations.

These small group visits, coordinated by NE Tracks LLEN, provided a valuable stepping-stone into work experience placements available throughout the year.

GOTAFE also supported both expos, providing information on locally available training and qualifications that support careers in local government, including apprenticeships, traineeships and trade pathways. The Country University Centre Wangaratta also attended the Wangaratta expo, highlighting the support services available to students undertaking post-secondary study while remaining in the region.

To recognise excellence and innovation, NE Tracks LLEN awarded perpetual trophies for the best departmental displays at each expo. This year's winners were:

- The Rural City of Wangaratta – Department of Environment and Sustainability
- Benalla Rural City Council – Compliance

The Local Government Careers Expos continue to play an important role in connecting young people with meaningful, local career opportunities and strengthening the future workforce within our regional councils.



The ZONTA Club of Wangaratta

Empowering Future Leaders:

NE Tracks LLEN was thrilled to support the Zonta Club of Wangaratta in 2025, proudly sponsoring and mentoring students at two inspiring events; the International Women's Day Career Breakfast for Girls and the Boys Career Breakfast.

A Resounding Success!
The feedback from both events was overwhelmingly positive.

The International Women's Day Career Breakfast was a powerhouse of inspiration!

Students explored diverse career pathways, gaining first hand insights from dynamic guest speakers and table mentors who shared their personal journeys. The atmosphere was electric with excitement, curiosity, and ambition.

Motivating Young Men for Success

The Boys' Breakfast was just as impactful, sparking meaningful conversations about career opportunities, leadership, and personal growth. This year, our very own CEO, Tim Oliver, took the stage, sharing his career journey and encouraging students to chase their goals with confidence and determination.

Students left feeling motivated, informed, and ready to take on the future! NE Tracks LLEN has a long association with Zonta Wangaratta helping to inspire and empower the next generation of students exploring their career pathways!

Inspiring the Next Generation of young men and women





Our Projects and Initiatives in Action

In addition to delivering our major annual events, NE Tracks LLEN is actively involved in a wide range of smaller programs, partnerships and initiatives that collectively make a significant impact on young people across our region. Throughout 2025, these activities strengthened pathways from education to employment, reduced barriers to participation, and built strong connections between schools, industry and community.

Mock Interviews

NE Tracks LLEN coordinated and delivered a highly successful Mock Job Interview program within local secondary schools. The program brings together LLEN staff and industry representatives to provide students with realistic interview experiences. Participants gain valuable feedback, build confidence, and develop practical skills to better prepare them for their transition from school to further education, training or employment.

Work Boot Library – in partnership with Master Builders Victoria

To support students undertaking work placements where personal protective equipment (PPE) is required, NE Tracks LLEN continued to operate the Work Boot Library. Through this initiative, students can access steel-cap work boots and workwear free of charge, easing the financial burden on families and removing a key barrier to participation in workplace learning.



Work Readiness and Career-Focused Workshops

The NE Tracks LLEN team delivered a range of workshops and presentations aimed at building students' employability skills and career awareness. In 2025, these included:

- Resume development workshops
- Facilitation of industry guest speakers
- Financial literacy sessions focusing on budgeting and money management

Grants and Scholarship Partnership

Through our extensive networks, NE Tracks LLEN is well positioned to promote grants, scholarships and special opportunities available to young people across the region. During 2025, we actively promoted a range of initiatives, including:

- Glenrowan Solar Farm Scholarships
- Zonta Women in STEM Scholarships
- Women in STEM opportunities
- YouThrive Scholarship





Industry Immersion and Workplace Visits

To give students first-hand exposure to the world of work, NE Tracks LLEN coordinated and provided transport for a number of industry immersion activities and workplace visits across the region. These experiences allowed students to observe real workplaces, ask questions of employers and employees, and gain insight into a variety of career pathways. Sites visited in 2025 included:

- Wangaratta Turf Club
- Rural City of Wangaratta Depot and Youth Services
- THALES Benalla
- Schnieder Electrical Benalla
- LS Pre-Cast
- Benalla Police Station
- Rovers Wangaratta Football and Netball Club

Workplace visits were further supplemented by employer incursions where groups of students met representatives from a range of local businesses discussing careers opportunities and pathways.

Embracing virtual careers learning VIC VICE Headsets

VIC VICE is an online digital platform designed to help inform students, teachers, and families about vocational opportunities while inspiring meaningful careers conversations.

The platform uses Virtual Reality headsets to create immersive, hands-on careers education experiences that bring industry pathways to life in an engaging way to explore career opportunities through immersive VR.

Using VR headsets, students experience 360-degree industry videos and interactive simulations that mirror real workplace tasks aligned with VET pathways.

The platform allows industries and businesses to showcase authentic “on-the-job” experiences in a format that resonates with young people making career decisions.

VIC VICE provides an innovative careers education tool that boosts engagement during the critical middle years.

Community Networks and Advisory

Involvement

NE Tracks LLEN staff actively participate in a broad range of community groups, advisory committees, business networks and industry forums. This involvement ensures we remain well connected, informed and responsive to local needs, while advocating for positive outcomes for young people. In 2025, our involvement included:

- Live4Life Benalla Committee
- Rural City of Wangaratta Arts and Cultural Advisory Committee
- Business Benalla
- Rural City of Wangaratta Sport and Recreation Advisory Committee
- Digital Technology Advisory Committee (DTAC)
- Victorian LLEN Network
- Business Wangaratta

Interview 2 Impress

Annette Borradales – Program Coordinator | September 2025

The Australian Business and Community Network delivered the Interview 2 Impress program, supporting students to build practical interview and employer engagement skills as they explore post-school pathways. This year, mentors were drawn from MinterEllison Lawyers.

NE Tracks LLEN supported 18 Year 11 and 12 students from Benalla P-12 to participate in the Melbourne-based program. Students engaged with staff across a range of MinterEllison divisions, gaining insight into diverse career pathways within a large, dynamic organisation. A key focus of the day was completing multiple interviews in different formats, allowing students to practise and reflect on their skills.

The experience also included networking opportunities, with students becoming increasingly confident and asking thoughtful questions. The program concluded with encouragement for students to stay connected with their mentors and submit resumes for feedback. Notably, MinterEllison currently employs staff who grew up and were educated in Benalla, reinforcing the real and achievable pathways available to regional students.

Case Studies

This year's case studies bring to life the impact of NE Tracks LLEN's core work delivering the School to Work program across our region. At the centre of everything we do is a simple goal: helping young people feel confident, capable and prepared for what comes next.

By working closely with schools, industry and community partners, we create practical opportunities that connect learning with real-world pathways and open doors to further education, training and employment.

A key strength of our approach is the strong outcomes we see from Work Based Learning experiences. Through Structured Workplace learning, industry partnerships and active school networks, students gain hands-on skills, build confidence and develop a clearer sense of direction.

Our connections with local employers give young people meaningful exposure to the world of work, while our continued focus

on up-to-date vocational learning ensures secondary students are accessing programs that are relevant, engaging and aligned with workforce needs.

The four case studies that follow are highlights from the past year. Each one showcases a different aspect of our work in action, demonstrating the power of collaboration, the value of real workplace experiences, and the difference strong partnerships can make. Together, they reflect our commitment to supporting young people in our communities to explore opportunities, build skills and succeed in their chosen pathways.



Case Study 1: CMV Truck and Bus

2025 Hands On Trades & Career Expo saw a new partnership develop between NE Tracks LLEN and CMV Truck and Bus (CMV). CMV recognised the benefits of establishing a relationship with NE Tracks LLEN as a key plank in their workforce development and engagement strategy.

CMV supported the Hands On Trades & Career Expo as the Business Networking Lunch sponsor and their exhibit was well attended by the circa 1700 registered students and there was great interest in our Transport Sector feature this year.

The Hands On Trades & Career Expo Business Networking Lunch hosted 300 guests comprising exhibitors, local dignitaries, school principals and industry leaders. During the lunch event, Jack Blythman, CMV Learning & Development Coordinator gave the guests a great opportunity to hear about what their business is doing in the northeast and detailed the opportunities available for the local workforce and young people entering the transport sector.

In addition to the Hands On Trades & Careers day time expo, 2025 introduced the evening industry get together aptly named Hands On Truckin'.

The new evening event delivered in collaboration with Midland Freight and Steering the Future saw local transport families, company owners and employees gather for a casual BBQ to discuss the northeast transport and trucking industry also attended by local students. During the event, Steering the Future actively promoted CMV through their live broadcast Truckin' Life garnering up to 22,500 listeners across their several platforms.

Jack was live on the air during the evening for approx. 30 minutes talking all things CMV and their connection to local students via Hands On Trades & Career Expo.

Our School To Work program coordinator was also interviewed live on air discussing Work Based Learning opportunities available across Victoria in the transport sector.

Shortly after the Expo, CMV launched their new showroom and workshop site at Shepparton. NE Tracks LLEN introduced CMV to Goulburn Murray LLEN and they will follow up on opportunities in their catchment as a result..

NE Tracks LLEN and GMLLEN have been promoting their open nights and apprenticeship information sessions and have maintained an ongoing relationship.

CMV are keen to build on their involvement with NE Tracks LLEN and the Hands On Trades & Career Expo well into the future.

By Annette Borradaile, Program Coordinator, August 2025





Case Study 2: Hands-On Hospo

In 2025 NE Tracks LLEN delivered the Hands On Hospo program and saw multiple businesses across Wangaratta, Benalla and Mansfield host 84 students to give them a hands on experience in a hospitality venue.

Abby Hart from Galen Catholic College Wangaratta was one student who applied to take up this opportunity. Abby met with our Hands On Hospo Coordinator and school career advisor to discuss the program and confirm her readiness.

Abby had identified that she would like a placement where she could experience both front and back of house with her personal goal of securing casual employment during the upcoming holiday period.

The Schnitz manager was eager to take on some students through the Hands on Hospo program and believed Abby would be a good match after conducting a pre-placement interview.

Abby undertook a full week of work experience learning front and back of house duties, customer service, hygiene skills, safe food temperature practices plus more.

Before Abby started the placement she had completed the Do Food Safely Certificate which helped her with understanding safe food handling methods.

We are pleased to report that the Hands-On Hospo program delivered all of Abby's goals, and at the conclusion of her placement she was offered casual employment with Schnitz Wangaratta.

The business is keen to engage with more students for WBL opportunities next year.

Nadine Service, Program Coordinator, November 2025





Case Study 3:

Drone Technology in Action: Student Pathways in Aviation

Demand for qualified Remote Pilots is growing across the Ovens Murray region. Drones represent one of the fastest growing technology-driven industries in the ‘work-force of tomorrow’, transforming industries such as agriculture, construction, emergency response, and media; improving safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness.

The program concept was presented at the August 2025 meeting of the Ovens Murray VET Cluster Operations Group, where representatives from SUAS ROV delivered an informative and engaging presentation. The proposal was well received, generating strong interest from Cluster schools.

In response, the Ovens Murray VET Cluster established a Certificate III in Aviation (Remote Pilot) Working Group, comprising VET Coordinators from six Cluster schools.

The group collaborated to secure program approvals and develop a delivery model comprising of:

- theory delivered via interactive, live online Zoom sessions facilitated by SUAS ROV instructors
- a Schedule of One morning session per week across 33 school term weeks
- practical training components delivered in one hands-on training day per term at a centralised location

18 students from four Ovens Murray Cluster schools are set to commence the program in 2026 providing access to an emerging, high-demand vocational pathway, industry-relevant skills, nationally recognised qualifications and exposure to real-world applications of aviation and drone technology.

The program demonstrates the strength of regional collaboration, with schools working together to deliver a high-quality VDSS program that would be difficult to achieve independently.

The initiative highlights the Ovens Murray VET Cluster's capacity to respond strategically to industry demand while maximising shared resources and expertise as the cluster plans to develop expanded offerings for students into 2027.





Case Study 4:

Matt Weaver: Turning Work Experience into Opportunity

Australian Christian College student Matt Weaver was recognised by NE Tracks LLEN for his initiative and enthusiasm during his Work Experience placement at the Benalla Ensign newspaper.

During his placement, Matt demonstrated a strong interest in photography and media. Ensign Editor Simon Ruppert said it was great having Matt in the office and that he quickly embraced opportunities to contribute. With aspirations of pursuing a career in photography or media, Matt stepped confidently into the role of taking photographs for the newspaper, showing adaptability and creative flair.

In recognition of his effort and commitment, Matt received an NE Tracks LLEN award, including a certificate and a \$200 prepaid Visa card. Matt said the prize will go towards purchasing a camera to support his growing passion for photography.

Matt also acknowledged the support provided through NE Tracks LLEN, which helped him take important steps toward his future career pathway.

NE Tracks LLEN delivers the School to Work Program, which includes connecting students with employers for meaningful industry placements across a wide range of sectors. These opportunities provide young people with real-world experience, build confidence and skills, and help them explore potential career pathways.

Experiences like Matt's highlight the value of work-based learning, inspiring and engaging students as they begin shaping their future career pathways.



photo credit: Benalla Ensign



In the spot light media



NEWS

Boys' breakfast connects students with career mentors

By Simon Ruppert
Mar 20, 2025



Tim Oliver from NE Tracks LLEN speaking at the third annual Zonta International boys' breakfast. Photo by Simon Ruppert.

After a successful girls' breakfast on March 6, it was the boys' turn to be inspired by mentors from a range of occupations, at a special event in Wangaratta on Thursday, March 20.

The third annual Zonta International boys' breakfast, sponsored by NE Tracks LLEN, was open to schools from across the north east — including Benalla P-12 College and FCJ College.

Following the same model as the popular girls' breakfast, scheduled to coincide with International Women's Day, the event linked students with mentors working in various occupations.



The boys also got to hear from three guest speakers. Tim Oliver from NE Tracks LLEN, paramedic Alex Vella and Leon Carter, who works in agriculture.

All three spoke of the journeys that had led them to their chosen career, with an emphasis on the importance of networking, making connections and finding the path that is right — which might not be the first thing they try.

Mr Oliver spoke to the students about the current skills shortage, and how they could take advantage of it.

"There's a skill shortage. There's not a shortage of unskilled workers," he said.

"If you need to leave school early because you just can't stick it, or you have to, whatever the circumstances, remember, you'll need to backfill on the education front.

"So don't ever think you're walking away. A lot of students say, no, I want to leave school, I want to get an apprenticeship.

"Well, guess what? You're signing up for more learning. But the good thing about that is that you're learning about the stuff you want to learn about.

"So have a think about where the skill shortages are and if there's anything in those areas that interests you.

"Make a point of talking to the various mentors here today and leave them with an impression about you and why you stand out from everybody else.

"And I wish you all the very best and good luck with that first interview."

wangarattachronicle.com.au

THE CHRONICLE, Monday, March 24, 2025 - Page 5

Get set for Future Ready



BY SIMONE KERWIN
skernin@benalla.com.au

WANGARATTA'S 'Future Ready: Advancing STEM Skills for Regional Students' project will be launched this Wednesday. The evening, which will run from 6pm to 8pm at the Wangaratta Regional Study Centre in Tone Road, offers locals the chance to get up close and personal with VEX robotics, try some coding, test robot arms, and see virtual reality headsets and the resident Robo Dog in action.

Future Ready is being funded by a \$40,000 Federal Government grant, which will help the Wangaratta-based Digital Technologies Advisory Committee (DTAC) and its partners with their efforts to prepare local students for the fast-evolving world of technology, engineering and programming. The Inspiring Australian Maker Projects - Community STEM Engagement grant will be used by DTAC and Wangaratta Tech School to advance STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) education for regional students and teachers. It will enable the acquisition of the Future Ready

kit, featuring cutting-edge VEX robotics AIM and CTR Workcell systems, which will bridge the gap between foundational and advanced robotics education, and deliver hands-on learning opportunities for students. DTAC and its partners, which include Wangaratta Tech School as well as Charles Sturt University Wangaratta, Galen Catholic College, NETracks LLEN and Education Advantage, are thrilled to have received the grant, and looking forward to celebrating the project on Wednesday.

Light refreshments will be provided at the Future Ready launch.



UPSKILLING OUR YOUNGEST RESIDENTS: Students from the Wangaratta district are set to benefit from the Future Ready project.

LAUNCH BOOKINGS: Be part of the launch of the Future Ready project on March 26 by registering via this QR code.



SKILLS TO THE TEST: Galen Catholic College students work on VEX robotics, which will be a feature of the Future Ready kit.

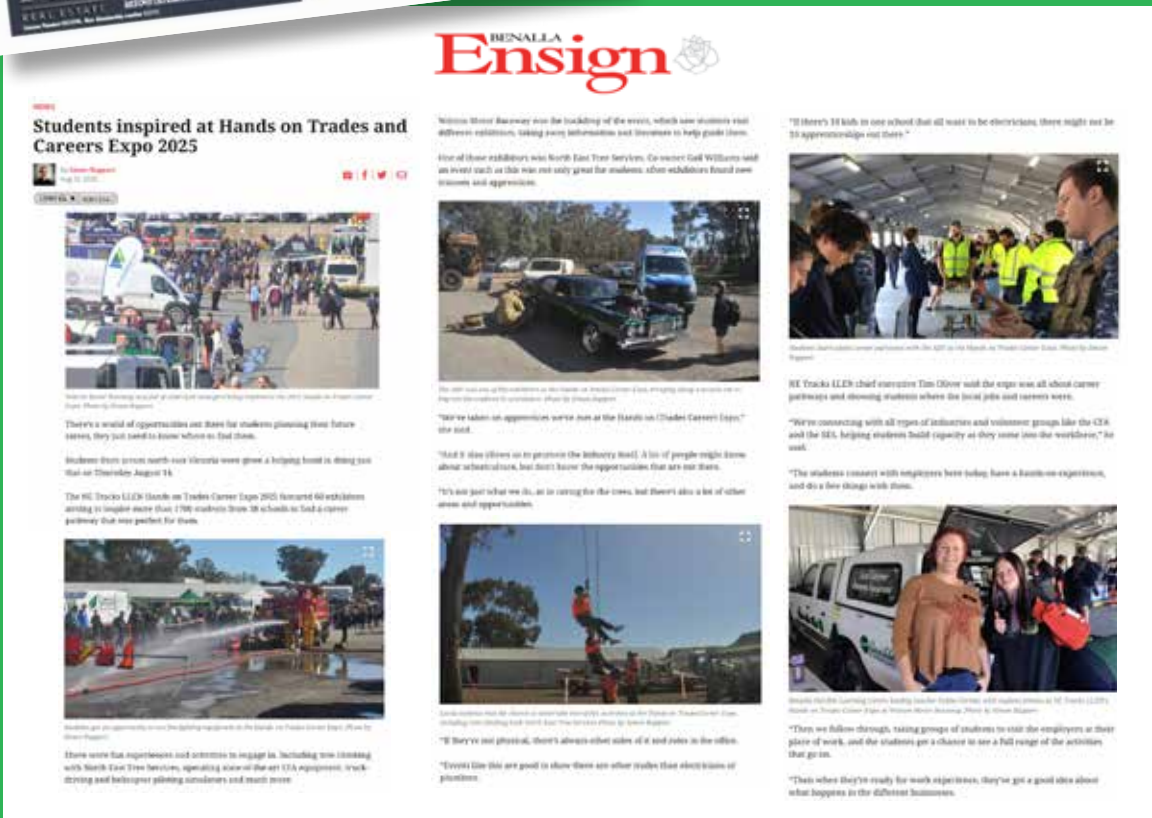




Our new-look website and social media platforms were launched this year which will assist in keeping our audiences connected and informed



 netrackslen.org.au
Access our 2025 Annual Report and other news and resources





Sponsors, Supporters and Partners

NE Tracks LLEN is a well-connected organisation in our region, collaborating with schools, local businesses and industries, as well as a wide range of community groups and not-for-profit organisations.

Thanks to our sponsors



HANDS ON TRADES & CAREERS EXPO





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Environment and Climate
Action | Pro Kidz Benalla |
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Catering) | Purcell Constructions |
| Arcade hair design | JCS Thoroughbreds | Ride Avenue Preschool |
| benalla buslines | K&M Automotive | Riverbank Farm |
| Benalla engineering | King River cafe | Robinson's Truck and Coach
Maintenance |
| Benalla ensign | Koffie Bean Cafe | Rose City Vets |
| Benalla golf club | Lima South Quarry P/L | Rural City of Wangaratta |
| Benalla health | Lovick Electrics | Schneider electrics |
| Benalla Kids Cottage | Magic Touch Barber Shop | Schnitz Wangaratta |
| Benalla P-12 Avon Street | Malcolm Blair Accounting &
Taxation Services | Spirited Party Shop |
| Benalla P-12 Waller Street | Mansfield automotive
specialist victoria | Spot 4 Coffee |
| Benalla Rural City Council | Mansfield Bakery Pty Ltd | St Joseph's school |
| Benalla Travel | Mansfield District Hospital | St. Mary's Primary School |
| Benalla Alpine Breads | Mansfield Shire Council | Stuck on Stationary |
| Bertolli Auto Agg | Mitre 10 Benalla | The Early Bird Cafe |
| Bill Pop Bo | Mulberry lane property styling | The Farmhouse |
| BNA | My little potting shed | The Winton Cafe & Events |
| Bouwmeesters Bakery | NE Tracks LLEN | Timberline Constructions |
| Brick by Brick | NERPSA | TJ's Roofing |
| Bridgestone | No. 49 Record Bar | Tomorrow Today Foundation |
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| Forest One | North East Water | Wangaratta Accident Repair
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| Cafe The Prevue | | |
| Cathedral Cafe | | |
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NE TRACKS LOCAL LEARNING AND
EMPLOYMENT NETWORK INC.

ABN:18 598 926 337



2025 Statement to Members

Committee Report

Your Committee Members present this report on the association for the financial year ended 31 December 2025. The names of each person who has been who has been a committee member during this year are:

Benjamin Watts

Chairperson - Committee of Management,
Administration Working Party

Sally Matheson

Deputy Chairperson - Committee of
Management

Denis O'Callaghan

Treasurer - Committee of Management,
Administration Working Party

Louise Pearce

Member - Committee of Management

Steve Pickering

Member - Committee of Management

Kerry Strauch

(Commenced August 2024, resigned
February 2025)
Member - Committee of Management

Nathan Tolliday

Member - Committee of Management
Commenced May 2025

Barry Norton

Member - Committee of Management
Commenced May 2025

Purpose:

The purposes of the Association are to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people with a priority of those experiencing disadvantage, discrimination, social isolation and from low socio-economic backgrounds in the Ovens Murray Region

We do this by brokering and facilitating strategic partnerships and programs to support sustainable outcomes and addressing gaps in our community; developing and facilitating collaborative approaches towards planned improvement and provision of education, training and employment; engaging with appropriate stakeholders from education, training business and industry, community and cultural organisations, government bodies and commissions, to achieve our vision across the community.

Operating Result

Surplus (deficit) for 2025 amounted to \$26,676

