



# **2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

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Small Organisation Big Impact



Inner Eastern  
Local Learning and  
Employment Network

# CEO & CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

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In 2021 Melbourne's lockdowns disrupted how we lived, worked, and learned. The second half of the year was especially tough, with the impact of lockdowns feeling greater than in 2020. We witnessed a rise in anxiety, psychological distress, financial hardship. The IELLEN acknowledges the challenges and realities of the year. However, this report largely focuses on the positives. For the organisation it was also a year to remember, to celebrate.

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## Victorian Jobs Advocates

In 2021 the IELLEN took a step towards realising a strategic vision: to expand and diversify our services. We were successful in securing funding from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) for the new Victoria Jobs Advocates program. This was a significant injection of funding (two contracts for adjacent areas), and for a really worthwhile new program available to anyone.

Holding two contracts with DJPR, the IELLEN was able to employ Advocates to work across five Local Government Areas (LGAs). The IELLEN is providing the new program in conjunction with many community partners, including our key partner organisation, the Inner Melbourne VET Cluster.

Our organisation shares with the Department a view that many people - those unemployed, under-employed, those seeking a new career pathway - may not be aware of the different supports available to them. Many among us simply do not know where to go for help and advice. Through this new program, information

people need can be provided in community settings, where members of the public may go to mix, to learn, or to shop.

Following signing of Agreements our team of Advocates commenced employment in May, meeting with members of the public, providing information and referral to employment, training, and other supports - including mental health. Outside of the lockdowns (when staff provided the service remotely) the team has been engaged in assertive outreach, out and about at community festivals, in shopping centres, libraries, and other community locations.

Through this program, we are now helping Victorians into work, or linking them with a range of services or programs in their local communities.

As we move out of COVID related restrictions, we will realise the full potential of this new program and see its impacts.

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## School - Industry engagement

2021 was the second year we delivered on our (two year) Common Funding Agreement with the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET). Like thirty other IELLENs across the state (VicLLENs) we provided two key school-employer engagement services:

- Structured workplace learning (SWL) opportunities/placements for secondary students and career-related events/activities (eg work readiness sessions) for students.
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These services were complemented by additional activities. The IELLEN led (as we did in 2020) three "Communities of Practice" or networks, which met throughout the year:

- **A VCAL Network** to support VET delivery, facilitating non mainstream education providers to discuss issues/strategies and opportunities
  - **A Pathways Partnership** (with schools; Learn Locals, and organisations holding employment service contracts) focused on students/learners with barriers to learning and/or work participation, and
  - **A Resilience and Wellbeing (RaW) Network** for staff from government, independent and Catholic schools to identify and address issues and challenges, to share strategies and resources; all aimed to support student attendance/school engagement and vocational learning/pathways
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In addition, IELLEN staff actively supported education providers and community initiatives via various Committees. Through these Committees, the IELLEN supported education providers and community initiatives:

- **Oakwood School Council**
- **Youth 2 Industry College** Board of Management
- **Prahran Community Learning Centre** subcommittees
- **Communities That Care (Stonnington)** Community Board Member

This work extends our support to young people (especially those at risk/those most vulnerable), and our commitment to addressing community needs, and organisational capacity building.

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## 20 years of the IELLEN

Last year we were pleased to celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Even better we were able to mark this milestone with a well attended event of 70 people, held at the Royal South Yarra Tennis Club. Attendees heard a presentation from the IELLEN CEO highlighting the range and depth of work by the IELLEN over the past two decades. We also heard from the IELLEN Chairperson, who cut a 20th anniversary cake with our long-serving previous Chair, Angela Stathopoulos.

In recognition of all the student placements she offered, we were pleased to publicly thank local employer, Karen Kim (of Hello Music). Our breakfast event concluded with IELLEN awards which were presented to six students for their resilience, notable achievements and positive contributions of the previous year.

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## Results

During 2021 the IELLEN achieved our key contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). We are certainly proud of our talented and committed team who engaged with 400+ stakeholders, largely schools, not for profits, and employers. More than 2000 young people and adults benefitted from our partnerships, programs and services. Our reach through social media was also the largest ever. All these statistics show the organisation to be more relevant, more impactful than ever.

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## Acknowledgements

The work we did and the results we achieved reflect on the talents, experience and diligence of our staff team and our Committee of Management. It reflects on the commitment we have to achieving targets, maintaining quality of service, and to responding to needs in the community. The IELLEN is unique, a small organization making a big impact.

Apart from two exiting Committee members, during 2021 there was continuity of service, with minimal changeover of personnel throughout the organisation. By mid-year we welcomed and benefitted from the addition of four new (Advocates) staff who brought enthusiasm to their new roles. Thank you, Hap Dan, Kelly Tran, Michelle Haintz and Siobhan Mitchell for your work. Our appreciation is also extended to Romilly Miller, who joined the team late in 2021, providing social media expertise.

A special note of thanks to Dennis Cindric and Tracey Fenton! The IELLEN continues to benefit from their knowledge and their range

of skills, and in another year of lockdowns and uncertainty, their contribution was significant, their efforts outstanding.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the Committee for its strategic oversight. We extend our gratitude to the Executive Committee: Bronwen Thompson, Gary Buckeridge, and David Paton. In all cases, they were accessible and performed their roles with professionalism. Our sincere thanks to the rest of the Committee - Angela Stathopoulos, Philip Javier, and Graeme Mawson - for their continued involvement and input. This is a Committee with a commitment to the organisation's objectives, a clear moral compass, and a sound financial understanding.

The IELLEN remains committed to improving lives through education, employment, and welfare support, especially for vulnerable and at risk - including young - people. As an organisation we started 2022 confident that we would build on our achievements, that we would continue to make a difference in our 21st year of operation.

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**Andrew Neophytou (CEO)**  
**Sam Joukadjian (Chairperson)**



**Committee of Management**, from L to R: David Paton (Treasurer); Angela Stathopoulos; Graeme Mawson; Andrew Neophytou (CEO); Sam Joukadjian (Chairperson); Philip Javier; Bronwen Thompson (Deputy Chairperson); Gary Buckeridge (Secretary).

## 2021 STAFF



From L to R: Andrew Neophytou, Dennis Cindric, and Tracey Fenton.



At our AGM event held 2021, the Advocates team with representatives from the Dept of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.  
From L to R: Alex McPherson (DJPR); Siobhan Mitchell; Georgia King; (DJPR); JT Bhuller; Michelle Haintz; Hap Dan and Fareed Ayub.

## 2021 STATS

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Staff Members

11

Partnerships, networks, projects and committees facilitated or supported

266

Young people who directly benefitted from our programs and services

401

Stakeholders engaged (schools, not-for-profits, employers)

1,742

Adults who directly benefitted from our programs and services

33,000

Reached through our Facebook page

# 2021 STUDENT RECOGNITION AWARDS

Recognising young people for their resilience, notable achievements or positive contributions



Zane



Ronnie



Antonia



Darcy



Emma



Ella



**Together we can improve lives through education,  
employment and welfare support**

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