



Improving lives through strategic collaborations

This report highlights our commitment to reaching out, working with schools, employers, community organisations, and areas of government. It's a reminder that partnerships can achieve results and outcomes, and make a real difference.

Last year Inner Eastern Local Learning & Employment Network (IELLEN) provided two key initiatives; the third year of the School to Work Program (STW), 2023-25, and the second year in which we auspiced the Inner East VET Cluster. Both initiatives have been funded by the Victorian Department of Education (DE). In 2025 we also provided two smaller short-term projects. These were our "Safer Families" and "Carer Engagement" projects. These were enabled by grants.

This Annual Report provides further details about all four, highlighting services provided and key achievements.



57

Schools Supported
(STW)



26

Number of vocations
(Work Experience)



4500+

Students engaged
(STW)



28

School-Industry
Events & Activities

Partnerships: placements and events

At the start of 2025 IELLEN staff met with over 20 local schools to identify their needs for the year, focusing on student placements and school-industry events and activities. By “local” we mean schools in our designated catchment (Stonnington, Port Phillip and Boroondara). Initial consultations with schools were followed up with ongoing communications throughout the year. The greatest Work Based Learning (WBL) need centred on access to Work Experience (WE) opportunities. We are pleased to report that during 2025 the result was that 9 of 11 government schools in our catchment were strongly supported by IELLEN, and in addition a further 9 independent and Catholic schools. WE placements sourced by IELLEN were varied, reflecting 26 different vocational areas. In addition to WE placements, we secured Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) placements for 10 local schools.

IELLEN supported 90% of government schools in our catchment. Even more noteworthy was our support to 39 government schools outside our catchment. All in all nearly 50.

A central state wide portal administered by DE has been a great boon to LLENs, to students and schools. Making placement opportunities and accessing them, regardless of location, resulted in wider benefit. In fact, over a three year period 332 students from outside IELLEN’s immediate catchment took up placements IELLEN sourced.

A second key focus of STW has been career related school-industry events and activities. In 2025 IELLEN delivered 28 of them. These consisted of ten multi school and 18 individual school events, across 7 different event types.

We are especially proud of the large number of student interactions. In 2025 this number exceeded 4,500.

IELLEN exceeding KPIs in both placements and career activities are great results.

We believe they generally mirror the performance of IELLEN organisations across Victoria. State wide targets have been exceeded.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS (STW)

PLACEMENTS



237 **317**

Target Achieved

+80 above target

EVENTS



19 **28**

Target Achieved

+9 above target

Partnerships: business and industry

For the results achieved, partnerships with business and industry have always been key.

For the results achieved, partnerships with business and industry have always been key. IELLEN staff continually engage with them, for WBL and school-industry activities. During 2025 IELLEN worked with over 130 different partners /stakeholders, some of whom were new employers. In relation to placement opportunities, among the occupational areas, new or ongoing, were IT, trades, architecture, fashion design, engineering, hairdressing and animal care.

Among the most noteworthy of our career related activities were Real Industry Job Interviews and industry immersions.

For each of the 28 school-industry events IELLEN provided, at least one external partner/stakeholder (usually an employer) was involved in delivery. IELLEN's role, to liaise and consult, bringing them on board, was pivotal. Some of the bigger activities involved multiple employers.

Real Industry Job Interviews event involved 65 external volunteers from 30 different employers and Group Training Organisations. This particular event engaged with 341 students on the day from 18 all school sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent).



This past year we also created **Industry Immersions** to promote VET careers for our students, which were supported by RTOs that deliver VETDSS programs locally. Event partners included employers, group training organisations, industry bodies, registered training organisations, tertiary institutes and employment services providers, Headstart staff, and also other IELLENs.

Partnerships: networks and memberships

IELLEN firmly believes in being part of networks and a member of relevant bodies. They are a key part of building partnerships and potential collaborative efforts.



IELLEN is an active member/participant of the **Yarra Careers Group (YCG)** which comprises over 100 stakeholders. They are mostly schools (34 out of the 45 schools in our catchment) and tertiary providers.

Meeting once per term the YCG has a focus on career pathways for secondary students, with meetings often including industry speakers.

As a non-school member IELLEN also promotes activities to schools. Group discussions assist IELLEN to develop events to address needs and challenges raised.

In 2025 IELLEN joined the **Australian Association of Graduate Employers**, which has 450 individual members representing a variety of large and small organisations across a range of industries in the private and public sectors. This network has given us direct access to the talent acquisition teams of these organisations, allowing us to promote our program directly to staff. These relationships have helped support both our WBL requirements and career engagement activities.

In 2025 IELLEN continued to convene the **Australian Apprentice Disability Network (AADN)**, a group that collaborates to improve Apprenticeship/Traineeship opportunities and sustainable employment for People with Disability.

AADN stakeholders represent about 65 apprenticeship and disability organisations, among them Apprentice Connect Australia Providers, Group Training Organisations, industry bodies, TAFE and RTOs, Advocacy Groups, Inclusive Employment Australia.

IELLEN has retained membership of key peak bodies. Among them is the **Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)**, the peak body for the social and community sector. We have welcomed the opportunity as a VCOSS member to attend and participate in various forums and on-line meetings they host.

Finally IELLEN has been a proud member of VicLLENs, a network of 31 like organisations across the state all committed to supporting young people. IELLEN has shared data, ideas, and information with external colleagues, also collaborating regionally with other LLENs.

IELLEN has always valued and championed local, place based service provision. This has been a central tenet of our work since our inception. We hope that this principle will remain front and centre in policy and be encouraged in day to day practice. Local, place based service provision is also highly valued by employers and industry and helps facilitate connection to and engagement with the services and activities we provide.

An enormous contribution is made by the stakeholders we engage with, and we would especially cite all those employers who give their time, knowledge and expertise to provide student placements or who actively support school-industry events.



Partnership with schools, RTOs: **IE VET Cluster**

The value for money and place based work of LLENs is not limited to the School to Work program. Since 2024 LLENs have been funded by DE to auspice VET Clusters. These are networks of schools in an area that collaborate to improve student access to VET Delivered to Secondary Students (VDSS). Funding has enabled the employment of a Cluster Coordinator who works with secondary schools, RTOs and TAFE, to increase access and provision of VET for secondary school students.

The IE VET Cluster is now well established with an increasing number of member schools, a Governance and Operations Group, and an operating portal that supports key administrative functions. In 2025 we continued to build upon our achievements of our first year, fulfilling a mission to improve access to high quality VDSS through strategic partnerships.

At the start of 2025 a new Coordinator started with IELLEN, and he has worked closely with stakeholders, building on the impressive start we made in 2024. With IE VET Cluster entering its third year we continue to leverage on industry, training and school connections. Results of these linkages is evidenced by growth in VET courses the Cluster supports, as well as participating schools and RTOs.

2025 concluded with a substantive IE VET Cluster report for DE, a report which included financials, proposed 2026 budget, a detailed implementation plan review, as well as Governance Structure, a stakeholder engagement plan, a professional learning plan, and the Cluster Coordinator's self assessment of activities.

“The Cluster goes from strength to strength.”



50+

Member schools (IE VET Cluster)



220

Students participated in 2025



250+

Students projected for 2026

Beginning 2025 with 45 member schools, the figure now exceeds 50. Through collaborative and co-operative efforts our Cluster is able to offer VET courses for the benefit of an increasing number of students. At the start of 2025 it was 220. For 2026 upwards of 250 are expected to participate in IE Cluster VET courses. The Cluster goes from strength to strength.

Partnership: Department of Education (DE)

IELLEN reports to DE (Central Office) and we also liaise with regional DE staff, across two DE Areas in positive and co-operative communications. As we've done in previous years in 2025 we also worked together on events.

Throughout 2025 IELLEN staff maintained relationships with DE Jobs Skills Pathway Managers (JSPMs) of Inner East and the Bayside Peninsula Area (BPA). This included regular meetings where we shared information for policy alignment. Our Cluster Coordinator also worked closely with a JSPM, responding to requests for data, and facilitating the circulation of information to schools.

IELLEN staff were active on an organising committee for the Inner/Outer East DE School Industry Round Table (SIRT). For 2025 this SIRT focused on Allied Health.

IELLEN staff not only attended and contributed, but supported the day with note taking and minutes of small group discussions. IELLEN staff (alongside two other LLENs) also presented at a Career Education Collaboration and Networking Professional Learning Day, hosted by DE's Bayside Peninsula Area staff. Another example of positive relationships with DE regional staff of IE and BPA was our attendance at Inner/Outer East JSPM collaboration meetings, to which LLEN Chairs were extended invitations.



Partnership: **BGKLEN**

During 2025 IELLEN continued to collaborate with our neighbours at Bayside Glen Eira Kingston LLEN (BGKLEN). We co-hosted events to support the VCE Vocational Major (VM) cohort and promote VET pathways, with the most prominent example being Real Industry Job Interviews. As IELLEN has relatively small VCE VM enrolments, these combined events meant employers/partners had access to a greater number of students. This made it most worthwhile for them to participate, helping to ensure these offerings are supported by industry partners.



Partnership: **Vic Police (“Safer Families”)**

Since 2021 IELLEN has had an MOU with Victoria Police, whereby police members (the Pro-Active Policing Unit in particular), refer young people and or their families to us.

This usually follows police members identifying that community supports/services would be appropriate and be of benefit. Our Safer Families Project (SFP) provides assessment of those referred, and individually tailored responses, linking up and matching clients with the most appropriate services, programs or groups.

In late 2024 a funding grant from Metro Trains meant that the SFP was able to continue with guaranteed funding, at least for the first six months of 2025.

SFP largely delivered on its objectives. Of the 65 young people referred, we were able to engage with 57. Where young people referred did not want to engage, we were able to interact with family members. Most referrals were first time offenders or had police intervention due to a family incident.

Assessments were held in various forms - the young person only, parents/carers only, siblings only, or young persons with family members.

Initial meetings took place in mutually agreed outpost locations such as community centres and cafes.

External services and programs to which young people and or family members were linked included generalist/youth counselling; drug and alcohol supports; mental health services; family violence services; and legal aid. Others included Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) specialist providers. Based on information provided by parents/carers, more than half of our referrals fell into this category.

Most significantly perhaps, 80% of those referred had limited or no attendance at school. As IELLEN has strong relationships with education providers, SFP worked with school staff, where possible, to develop targeted timetables to support re-engagement with education.

Young people were also linked to gyms or organisations that provide physical activities. Engaging in regular physical activity was found to be an effective strategy for managing and reducing aggressive behaviour. Family counselling was beneficial, helping to improve communication, strengthen bonds, and provide a safe space to develop coping strategies. Most importantly, it also supported families to navigate challenges together.

SFP also linked clients with Local Government Youth Services which provide activities and supports – on an individual or group level.

Despite our best efforts the reality is that some young people will re-offend, with various factors at play, among them a willingness to accept the support offered. Immature decision-making, impulsivity, and susceptibility to peer pressure are common characteristics of young people that can lead to reoffending. Family breakdown and exposure to violence can also increase the likelihood of re-offending.

“More than 50% of participants had no further interactions with Police or the Courts.”

Nevertheless, we are pleased to report that the project had positive results. Follow up with clients and or Police showed more than 50% did not have further interactions with Police or the Courts, demonstrating the effectiveness of the SFP model.

School partnership: Oakwood: (“Young Carers”)

At any one time there are thousands of young carer students in Victoria, with mental health and wellbeing, education, and employment outcomes being a concern. IELLEN has been active in trying to secure grants to support this cohort.

We welcomed a grant under the 2024/5 Victorian Government Connecting Carers in their Community program. IELLEN was approved funding for our **Carer Engagement Project (CEP)**, a partnership initiative with a campus of Oakwood, a government school. CEP largely involved our hosting a regular weekly lunch meeting with students. The project was able to build rapport with and provide respite to 15 young carers to increase confidence, reduce isolation, and build their skills and knowledge. We are pleased to report that CEP did make an impact in these areas, as well as improving school attendance of participants.

IELLEN: Annual Awards

In May IELLEN held its AGM & Awards breakfast at our favourite venue, the Royal South Yarra Lawn Tennis Club.

We had a record AGM turnout and also a record number of award winners. Awards were presented to partners, to employers, and to students.

We wish to thank MPs who attended and presented the nine **student awards**: *Jess Wilson* (Member for Kew) and *Rachel Westaway* (Member for Prahran).

Student winners were drawn from seven schools: *Camberwell Grammar, Oakwood School, Prahran High, Preshil, Swinburne Senior Secondary College, Xavier College, and Youth2Industry College.*

Congratulations once again to Daijon, Gene, Gabrielle, Lewis, Oscar, Phillip, Raphael, Will, and William.

IELLEN was delighted to present two **partner awards**, one to *BGKLLN* for co-hosting of school-industry events, and another to *Swinburne Senior Secondary College*, a key host school in the IE VET Cluster.

Businesses and NFPs were also recognised, for student placements and/or participation in our school-industry events:

CaSPA Care; Craig Family Centre; Silverfox Management (all for supporting student placements in 2024)

MEGT; National Tiles; NECA Education and Careers; Siemens Mobility (for supporting multiple school-industry events in 2024)

Hello Music; Italy1 Camberwell; AVFX; Vivienne Lorikeet; Aeralife; South Yarra BMW (in recognition of support of our work over many years)



Summing up and acknowledgements

We are conscious that work to improve lives remains both pressing and ongoing.

The IELLEN Mission, “to improve lives through strategic collaborations,” provided a framework to again guide our work in 2025. Statistics and tangible results are evidence of a small organisation that continues to make a big impact.

With less than five staff we worked to engage with 393 stakeholders. This figure is an increase of 25% on 2024. As a result IELLEN exceeded Key Performance Indicators in our STW Agreement with DE. At the same time we strengthened our relationships with all schools sectors: government, Catholic and Independent.

The IE VET Cluster grows in student numbers, school membership, and VET Courses made available. As shown, two smaller projects “Safer Families” and “Carer Engagement” also made an impact.

The total number of young people who interacted with our initiatives was over 5000. This was a 38% jump on 2024. All of this was achieved with no additional staff on the previous year, demonstrating effective collaboration and partnerships.

We wish to thank everyone who in 2025 contributed to IELLEN’s activities and results.



393

Stakeholders
engaged



38%

Growth from 2024

Among them are the hundreds we collaborated with externally: school staff, employers, community organisations and government, all of whom contributed to our improving lives, especially of young people.

As in previous years IELLEN brings together talented and highly skilled people, whether its on the Committee or paid staff team.

We acknowledge the Committee of Management for oversight and direction, including of the Strategic Plan. We extend our gratitude to the Executive Committee, Sam Joukadjian (Treasurer), Phil Javier (Deputy Chair) and Michael Coate (Secretary). David Paton, our long serving and dedicated Treasurer, retired from his role in May 2025 at the AGM. We also wish to thank Gary Buckeridge and Lilly Smolenskaya for another year of service. We welcomed Maria Di Dio and Jasmine Mishra and acknowledge their keen involvement and wise counsel as new Committee members.

We thank the IELLEN staff team. Firstly, Monica Mandy, John Broughton and Erica Page for their support in administration and book-keeping. They provided a vital backbone to our not for profit, and we acknowledge their consistent work. Key Programs staff Dennis Cindric, Tracey Fenton and John Cukier made outstanding contributions, leading and maintaining partnerships with key stakeholders. Thank you!

As an organisation we remain central to facilitating links between schools and industry, between young people and community organisations, between government and the community.

IELLEN is especially proud of our 2025 results.

We are also conscious that work to improve lives remains both pressing and ongoing.

Andrew Neophytou (CEO) and Bronwen Thompson (Chairperson)

