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| Higher Education and Skills Group**Participation Branch Memo****Department of Education and Training** |

***NUMBER:*** *2016 / September / 09*

**TO:**

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| Learn Local organisations *– ALL*  | ACFE Board | ACFE Regional Councils |
| Adult Education Institutions | Learn Local stakeholders  | Participation Branch staff |

**FROM:** Ryan Collins, Director, Participation Branch

**DATE:** 09/09/16

**SUBJECT:** *Winners of 2016 Victorian Learn Local Awards*

**ACTIONS / CRITICAL DATES:**

* *Please note and congratulate the winners of the 2016 Victorian Learn Local Awards.*

**The Minister for Training and Skills, the Hon Steve Herbert MP and the Chair of the ACFE Board, Sue Christophers announced the winners of the 2016 Victorian Learn Local Awards at a celebration of the sector at the Collingwood Town Hall on Thursday 8 September.**

**See** [the Minister for Training and Skills’ media release](http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/2016-learn-local-awards-winners-announced/)**.**

**The awards recognise excellence in the Learn Local sector across five award and one acknowledgement categories with winners sharing in a total prize pool of $50,000.**

**This year’s winners were:**

**The Rowena Allen Award: Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence – Matthew Agostinelli, Diamond Valley Learning Centre**

For the past four years, Matt, 20, has been a student at Diamond Valley Learning Centre (DVLC) in Greensborough. Despite battling every day with very high levels of anxiety, Eltham man Matt has turned his life around and is now a student mentor and valued volunteer, helping VCAL students reengage with education and assisting intellectually disabled adults in courses at DVLC. At the start, it was hard for Matt simply to be at school. But through hard work, persistence and courage, Matt has progressively won his battle to manage his anxiety, has completed a number of pre-accredited programs, his senior VCAL certificate and has commenced a Certificate II in Community Services. He now plans to undertake a Teacher’s Aide Certificate III and is interested in a career supporting students with disabilities to fully engage with all aspects of education and community life.

**Outstanding Practitioner – Marj Sjostrom, Keysborough Learning Centre**

Over 30 years, Marj Sjostrom has been teaching at Keysborough Learning Centre, dedicated to the delivery of education in a community setting and to the building of strong quality frameworks that empower students through learning. Marj has developed considerable eLearning skills which she uses as a tool in the classroom with great success. Her dedication and student support is evidenced in the respect and affection her students have for her – many from limited educational backgrounds, including people facing barriers due to disability and personal circumstances. Marj actively encourages students by developing classes that meet their specific needs and has implemented classes to develop interview skills, preparing them to enter the workforce. Additionally, Marj played a key role in establishing a unique partnership program with the local primary school, working with parents to improve their literacy, numeracy and computer skills and also their involvement in the school’s programs. This pre-accredited program is currently being delivered in three primary schools.

**Outstanding Pathways Program – Speaking Out, Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre**

The Voices of the South Side (VoSS) program targets people who experience significant disadvantage, such as homelessness, drug abuse or physical/mental illness, and who live in social and public housing in the City of Port Phillip. At the core of VoSS is the Speaking Out course run by Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre; a 10-week course teaching people public speaking, advocacy, communication and teamwork skills. Through one-on-one pathways mentoring, participants learn how to gain confidence in their own abilities and to make new connections within the community. Students are also referred to counselling services to help deal with mental health issues and lifestyle. This practical support, in combination with a nurturing learning environment, provides the foundation to begin the long journey of change. Out of the 20 participants that have completed the course, four have been able to obtain part-time employment and eight have obtained casual positions.

**Excellence in Creating Local Solutions – BA@Wyndham,** **Wyndham Community and Education Centre**

The first of its kind, the BA@Wyndham program provides access to higher education for people who have previously disengaged from mainstream schooling, within the safe and supportive environment of a Learn Local organisation. Launched in 2015, the program is a partnership between Federation University and Wyndham Community and Education Centre. It aims to address a trend that more than one in five young people leave school early in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay with Year 12 completion rates almost 2% lower than the state average. The program provides university pathways through the Bachelor of Arts. All 30 students who have entered the program so far were significantly disengaged from education and are now the first in their family to undertake higher education. In 2015, two students received a Dean’s commendation and one student was accepted into a Bachelor of International Studies at Monash University on the strength of her first year in the BA@Wyndham.

**AMES Diversity Innovation Award – CALD Education and Employment Pathways, Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre**

Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre’s CALD Education and Employment Pathways Program (CEEP) aims to enhance social inclusion, employment and educational pathways. Over 106 diverse learners from over 26 countries have been involved with the project. Supporting learners to understand their own strengths and weaknesses, setting goals and empowering independence is essential for the success of the program. Activities and resources are developed with a clear linkage to the overall purpose of the program: to increase employability of participants. Core programs include Living and Working in Australia and Make It Work, a program based around acquiring the basic skills for job seeking. The program continues to enable participants to better navigate Australian life, increase their participation in the community and build their capacity as individuals and members of the wider society

**Learn Local Legends:**

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| Barwon South Western Regional Council Bellarine Living and Learning Centre |
| Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council Vermont South Community House |
| Gippsland Regional Council Gippsland Employment Skills Training |
| Grampians Regional Council Nhill Learning Centre |
| Hume Regional Council Myrtleford Neighbourhood Centre |
| Loddon Mallee Regional Council Macedon Ranges Further Education Centre |
| North Western Metropolitan Regional Council Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services |
| Southern Metropolitan Regional Council Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre |

Congratulations to all of this year’s winners!