

2017 Victorian Learn Local Awards

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2017 Victorian Learn Local Awards

ACFE Board Chair’s message	2
Minister’s message	3
The Ro Allen Award – Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence	4
AMES Australia Diversity Innovation Award	6
Outstanding Pathways Program	8
Learn Local Legends	10
Learn Local Volunteer Champions	14
Outstanding Practitioner	16
Excellence in Creating Local Solutions	18
2016 Victorian Learn Local Award winners	20
2016 Learn Local Legends	21
Acknowledgements	22
Information	23



Chair of the Adult, Community and Further Education Board

On behalf of the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 2017 Victorian Learn Local Awards.

Tonight, we will celebrate some remarkable learners, practitioners and Learn Local providers. You will hear a few words from each of our winners and I am sure you will agree that there seems to be no end to the energy, innovation and creativity within this sector of education.

From Paynesville to Portland, our finalists come from right across the state and are fantastic examples of what learning at a Learn Local provider is all about. Congratulations to you all for your dedication to your own learning journey or for helping others to achieve their goals and dreams.

This year, the ACFE Board introduced a new Learn Local Volunteer Champion Acknowledgement Category with the aim of recognising the dedication and hard work of those people that we know Learn Local providers cannot do without.

And what a wonderful result we have with three very deserving Champions chosen. Thank you for your contribution.

Not all Victorians have the skills needed to participate meaningfully in our economy, limiting their options and constraining Victoria's ability to capitalise on the economic and social participation of all its citizens. Learn Local providers play a key role in this area - they are experts in delivering pre-accredited training and related services to Victorians facing learning barriers, developing their skills and starting them on pathways to employment or further education.

The sector takes pride in positioning learners for future success by developing the broad range of skills required for these important transitions. The funding of pre-accredited training programs is targeted to ensure that it is impactful and responsive to learner needs and local pathways.

The ACFE Board is proud to continue to support Learn Local providers to deliver such vital training and skills for thousands of Victorians each year.

These Awards have demonstrated yet again the resourcefulness and commitment that Learn Local providers bring to enhancing the lives of people in their communities. I commend you all for your dedication and hard work.

Thank you all for your support of Learn Local.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sue Christophers'.

Sue Christophers PSM
Chair, Adult, Community and
Further Education Board



Minister for Training and Skills

As Minister for Training and Skills, I am delighted to be here to support the Victorian Learn Local Awards.

The Awards celebrate achievements from across Victoria's 300 plus Learn Local providers; wonderful stories of training success, of people lifting themselves up through training, of commitment by teachers and wonderful programs that transform lives.

This annual event, hosted by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, is an ideal chance to pay tribute to the Learn Local sector and the success of learners and the providers who support them. Learn Local providers have a significant role in developing local individuals, local businesses and local communities throughout Victoria. Pre-accredited training underpins the inclusiveness of Victorian communities.

Working in partnership, the ACFE Board and the Learn Local sector improve outcomes for adults with a particular emphasis on key cohorts of need including women, those experiencing disadvantage, those from low socio-economic status localities, early school leavers, low skilled and vulnerable workers, Indigenous people, unemployed people and people with a disability.

This year, two acknowledgment categories, the Learn Local Legend and Learn Local Volunteer Champion, will be awarded to worthy recipients from across the State. That is in addition to the five traditional awards, including categories for Pre-accredited Learners, Outstanding Practitioner, Outstanding Pathways Program, Excellence in Creating Local Solutions and Diversity Innovation.

This is a great chance to shine a spotlight on the community training sector in Victoria and celebrate its success. Learn Local is responsible for great levels of training across Victoria. It is thanks to the hard work and enthusiasm of those at the coalface that more Victorians are developing the skills they need to get the job they want.

Your achievements will encourage others to follow in your footsteps, to embark on training to acquire new skills so we can build a healthy, productive and prosperous Victoria.

Victoria is leading the way nationally in delivering a high-quality training system, with our TAFE, community and private providers giving all Victorians the opportunity to develop the skills they need – and the skills employers want. With the introduction of *Skills First* this year, the Victorian Government is delivering a trusted training and TAFE system that delivers real training for real jobs. *Skills First* sets a high benchmark for training quality and supports the courses that are most likely to lead to employment.

I am proud of what this Government is doing for training and for every Victorian.

You, too, should be very proud of your achievements celebrated here tonight. I congratulate you all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gayle Tierney'.

The Honourable Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Training and Skills

This Award celebrates a significant personal achievement made by a pre-accredited learner. It acknowledges a person who, through taking part in Learn Local pre-accredited training, has made a significant improvement in their life, their career or study prospects. For each pre-accredited learner, there is much to discover about the personal journey on which they have embarked. The learner demonstrates a commitment to continuing their learning journey and being a role model for other people of what can be achieved by participating in a pre-accredited program. For each of the finalists in this award category, the Learn Local experience has been significant and life changing.



Brandylee Muscat

Berry Street

When Brandylee started the World of Work program at Berry Street in Morwell - aimed at helping young people enter the world of work - she was introverted, lacked confidence and a sense of purpose and assumed any dreams of one day being a beauty therapist would be just that - dreams.

Just getting the courage to enrol was a huge step for Brandylee who had been living in a Youth Refuge. Little was she to know that only months later she would be speaking publicly, presenting the views of young people at the Latrobe City's Youth Choices Committee's Just One Thing breakfast forum. She so impressed participants she received employment offers.

Brandylee was kicking goals in the Berry Street program from the get-go. She started overcoming her shyness and anxiety, became an active participant in class discussions and completed all assessments.

Her plan of one day being a beauty therapist is no longer a dream. She is currently undertaking a Certificate III in Beauty Therapy at Federation Training, has plans to enrol in a Diploma of Beauty Therapy and hopes one day to own her own beauty salon.

The Ro Allen Award – Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence



Christie Sinclair

Banksia Gardens Community Services

Christie felt he had reached rock bottom – but it was helping others as part of the Workskills/Get Set to Work program at Banksia Gardens Community Services that ultimately turned his life around.

Unemployed and in his late 50s, he thought any hope of working again – especially in the IT industry he was once in – was lost. He was struggling emotionally and financially, and his self-esteem and confidence had taken a nosedive.

He felt sure the Workskills program couldn't help. Christie's view changed when his group participated in workplace experience refurbishing a classroom for disengaged kids. Being part of a project that was making a difference was making him feel positive. He also rediscovered skills he had learned as a younger man fixing locks, and started learning new skills and how to use different tools. He enjoyed working in a team and his confidence and self-esteem grew. He started working for a landscaping company and is now in fulltime work, and planning to enrol in a Master of Business Management.

"Halfway through the program, I realised the real building was going on inside me," he says.



Michelle Hood

Dandenong Neighbourhood House

With her every stitch on every baby quilt to be donated to brighten the cots of premature and sick babies at Dandenong Hospital and Monash Children's Hospital, Michelle was unaware that she was not only helping to brighten the days of worried and stressed parents – she was embroidering the path to her own recovery and bright future.

Michelle was part of Mums 'n' Bubs – a visual arts pre-accredited program that involved a group of people on Community Service Orders at Dandenong Neighbourhood House (DNH) making quilts. Since 2015, Mum 'n' Bubs members have made around 140 quilts.

After finishing her Community Service Order, Michelle returned to DNH as a volunteer helping with hospitality skills development programs and later in programs for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. She was becoming well known and highly regarded for her skills and commitment as well as her "positivity and bubbiness". No longer a volunteer, Michelle now has a position at DNH teaching cooking skills to seniors with a disability.

Michelle is also studying a Certificate IV in Alcohol and Other Drugs at RMIT.

This award recognises the commitment of a Learn Local provider to deliver culturally inclusive training opportunities for learners from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds. It highlights a pre-accredited or foundation program or a special project specifically focused on the needs of CALD learners.

The winning Learn Local program/project provides an appropriate framework for CALD learners to achieve their learning goals such as further education and training, employment or increased engagement with their community. The program/project is one that has been developed either solely by the Learn Local provider, or in partnership with other relevant community organisations. This program/project enables learning for its participants in a supportive setting and demonstrates how the Learn Local sector provides flexible, quality and tailored training that meets the needs of CALD learners.

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AMES Australia Diversity Innovation Award



Paw Po Products Community Enterprise

Nhill Learning Centre

In the Karen language, Paw Po means little flower – a fitting name for an innovative community enterprise program for refugees that is blossoming in a little shop in the main street of Nhill, in the Wimmera.

In partnership with the Nhill Learning Centre the Karen women, who now call Nhill home, have come together to make and sell their beautiful handcrafted pieces in a retail craft space. The Karen women who are refugees from Burma, and had been stay-at-home mums since arriving in Nhill in 2009, chose the name for Paw Po Enterprises. They learned to sew at Nhill Learning Centre and it grew from there.

The program is helping the women sew new futures in Nhill building their confidence and community connections, improving their English speaking and providing education, training and employment pathways. The women weave their own textiles using traditional looms and design and make a range of products, including aprons, cushion covers and bags. The shop is full of conversation as the women weave, sew and work on their ever-expanding range.



Portland CALD Support Program

Portland Workskills

This migrant's story embodies the story of Portland Workskills and how it is making a powerful difference to the lives of newly arrived migrants and refugees.

Newly arrived in Australia, this migrant said she was upset and frightened because of her limited English. After attending English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes at the Portland CALD Support Program at Portland Workskills her confidence, happiness and sense of belonging improved, along with her English. She then went on to more courses at Portland Workskills including art, driving and food safety.

But the CALD Support Program offers participants much more. The weekly CALD Social Group, facilitated by a community volunteer, is a chance for migrants to meet each other and practise their English. Portland Workskills also ensures the pre-accredited EAL course has a number of pathways into a range of Learn Local options including learner driver permits, career development and Information Technology courses.

In the words of another migrant who participated in the program: "I learned more about the different cultures and mixing with more Australians."

Learn Local providers are the cornerstone of adult education in the community. They join people with their communities and provide a forum for the sharing of information, experience and knowledge. They work with local councils, support services and job agencies, and create an environment that is welcoming to all. These three Learn Local programs are pre-accredited or foundation programs being celebrated for the pathways they have created for learners. Through these programs, learners have moved on to further education and training or into employment.

The winning Learn Local program demonstrates the creation of these pathways for individuals to engage successfully with learning and employment (paid or volunteer) as a result of their participation in the program. It demonstrates the calibre of programs that the Learn Local network delivers and its expertise in supporting learners to engage or re-engage with learning.



Prepare for Work in Warehousing

Kensington Neighbourhood House

A partnership between Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH) and Linfox is paving a smoother pathway from disadvantage and unemployment to training and jobs.

Obtaining a licence to operate a forklift can be challenging, and even more so if you are an early school leaver, a recently arrived migrant or refugee or have never attempted accredited training. However, around 62 per cent of disadvantaged learners who have undertaken the pre-accredited training course - Prepare for Work in Warehousing - at KNH passed and obtained their Licence to Operate a Forklift Truck.

Before starting the KNH course, participants go to Linfox Operational Training to get familiar with machinery and practise forklift driving under supervision. The KNH course then goes through the theory and helps with enrolment in the accredited course.

Abdulrahman Moalim says the pre-accredited training with KNH made him feel confident to take on accredited training - Licence to Operate a Forklift Truck. "Having this licence has opened another door of opportunity for me," says Abdulrahman, who completed secondary schooling in Somalia but had no Australian qualifications.

Outstanding Pathways Program



Try a Trade Diversitat

What's it going to be like being a carpenter or a mechanic, a spray painter or a panel beater? Will I like it? Will I be good at it? Will I stick at it? Is it the right choice for me? These are the kind of age-old questions young people thinking about their futures have often pondered.

For many young people who have become disengaged from education and training, these questions can be a stumbling block in their pathway back into training. But what if you could actually try it in a realistic environment and be given a taste test of trades?

Diversitat's Try a Trade program is doing just that. The program offers disengaged young people in Geelong hands-on experience, where they have the opportunity to develop carpentry, mechanical, spray painting and panel beating skills in a realistic environment. They are introduced to workplace health and safety principles and a variety of trades to assist them in selecting their pathway into further education and training and ultimately employment.

And of the 17 learners that participated in the program, 16 of them have gone onto further education and four have gotten a job.



Your Next Step Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre

Taking the first step into training can be overwhelming if you have been unemployed, a parent looking to re-enter the workforce, an early school leaver not yet in training or employed, a newly arrived migrant or refugee or facing other barriers emanating from disadvantage. But what if there was a step in between to build confidence and skills within a supportive classroom environment strengthening pathways into further training or work?

Your Next Step training program at Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre (PNC) is doing just that by providing participants with a "taster" course in hospitality, event management and digital marketing. Participants gain experience and skills by helping to organise real local community events including the Cancer Council's Biggest Morning Tea, Adult Learners Week, Paynesville Art Show, Paynesville Craft and Patchwork Exhibition and the Bairnsdale Chamber of Commerce and Industry Christmas Parade. Former participant Taylor Cantwell is a good example of the power of Your Next Step, and says the course was the catalyst for positive change in his life and behind his decision to study a Bachelor of Accounting.

Of the 26 students that participated in this course in 2016, 10 have found employment in their local community, six have gone onto further study and another six have volunteered in local community organisations.

Learn Local Legends

One of the most remarkable aspects of this sector is the diversity of Learn Local providers. While all Learn Local providers are passionate about their commitment to adult learning, the eight ACFE Regional Councils have each selected an organisation within their area as an outstanding regional contributor to learners and the network.

Learn Local Legends are considered to have appropriate growth in learner participation in their ACFE Board funded programs and projects and have participated in professional development, information sessions, grant programs, and collaboration and knowledge sharing with other Learn Local providers. These eight organisations are this year's Learn Local Legends.

Banksia Gardens Community Services

Nominated by ACFE North Western
Metropolitan Regional Council



Beyond featuring in the list of Australia's most disadvantaged postcodes, the Broadmeadows community is brimming with ingenuity, cultural diversity, skills, hope and aspirations. Banksia Gardens Community Services (BGCS) is capturing and building this energy and potential through its wide range of programs and services. Specialising in support and services for disadvantaged people – including sole parents, low-income families and young people. The 80,000 people who come through their doors each year attend playgroups, homework programs, study groups, classes, training courses, workshops and celebrations.

As well as delivering pre-accredited training, BGCS helps facilitate training pathways through partnerships with local RTOs. The Management Committee, which includes public tenants of the Banksia Gardens Estate, has overseen many initiatives, including the development of the Hume Eco Living Centre, an Ambassadors Project for people with a disability, and Common Bean – a hospitality training and employment enterprise for young people in Hume.

Echuca Neighbourhood House

Nominated by ACFE Loddon Mallee
Regional Council



Echuca Neighbourhood House (ENH) brings people together to connect, learn and contribute in their local community through social, educational, recreational and support activities, using a unique community development approach. Through its strong partnerships with the Campaspe Education Partnership, Good Shepherd Microfinance, local government, the Mirrimbeena Aboriginal Education Group and other community organisations, ENH has developed specialised pre-accredited programs and a range of engagement programs and activities in targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged people including Indigenous people, vulnerable women returning to work, the unemployed and under-employed, the homeless and early school leavers. Programs include Information Technology, digital literacy, office skills and adult literacy and numeracy. In another service to the community, ENH is accredited with Good Shepherd Microfinance to provide loans to people on low incomes or pensions.

Dandenong Neighbourhood House

Nominated by ACFE Southern Metropolitan
Regional Council



Dandenong Neighbourhood House (DNH) is supporting people to make positive changes in their lives by providing lifelong learning and skills development. With 62 per cent of residents born overseas, DNH is focused on meeting the needs of this changing and diverse community, particularly for those who are socially or economically disadvantaged or isolated, have a disability, are Department of Justice clients, or migrants and refugees. Forming partnerships with other organisations or groups with similar aims in addressing disadvantage and building community empowerment is centre to the DNH philosophy and planning.

Their bridging visa/asylum seeker programs are increasing the life opportunities for people through self-help and mutual support activities and social interaction. DNH is a member of an active LGA cluster, which works collaboratively and shares tutors across the cluster, and has links with local service agencies, the local community and the local TAFE Institute.

Milpara Community House

Nominated by ACFE Gippsland Regional Council



Since 1979 Milpara Community House (MCH), which means Meeting Place, has been delivering adult education to improve skills and enjoyment of life to people living in and around Korumburra in South Gippsland. MCH runs a range of programs from crafts to literacy and numeracy to computers and technology. MCH provides government subsidised courses for people looking to increase their skills in order to return to study or find employment, for people wanting to learn English as an Additional Language and for those who have not completed Year 12 and would like to gain basic skills including literacy and numeracy skills. MCH also offers a range of community support programs, including an emergency food program in partnership with FoodBank, a part time Centrelink Agency, Resource Library and Job Bulletin Board. MCH holds regular social groups to help build community, including a Newcomers Luncheon held once a term.

Mountain District Learning Centre

Nominated by ACFE Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council



With its motto "It's never too late to learn", the Mountain District Learning Centre provides adult education and skills improvement classes. This includes adult literacy, digital literacy, business administration, English as an Additional Language classes and, in partnership with other providers, a "mix and match" of VCAL, VET and VCE programs tailored to meet individual needs. MDLC also hosts a wide variety of craft and discussion groups, personal enrichment courses and Home and Community Care Activity groups.

MDLC delivers the Back to Work Reconnect Program providing additional wrap-around support services for young people who have found themselves outside education and employment. The unique customised approach aims to build confidence and explore pathways to education, TAFE or work.

MDLC manages the "Community of practice" to support Learn Local organisations delivering VCAL/Youth programs and developed the Restart Program focussing on adults who did not achieve Year 10. It supports them to lift their numeracy and literacy skills to enhance their chances of better employment opportunities. The Career in Community Care program is designed to ensure students make informed choices after firsthand experience visiting workplaces across Early Childhood Education, Individual Support, Aged Care and Disability. A Transition to Work program, for those living with an intellectual disability or with special learning needs, is provided to support accessing further education or work.

The Centre for Continuing Education Nominated by ACFE Hume Regional Council



Equipped with its vision “vibrant communities that value learning”, the Centre for Continuing Education has a longstanding history of providing education and training in Victoria’s North East tailoring programs and services to meet the needs of individuals, business and the community, with a learner-centred approach at its core. The Centre caters for a large cohort of youth and adults in pre-accredited and accredited training, with literacy and numeracy, vocational and employment skills programs. The Centre works collaboratively with a range of Learn Locals, including in Mitchell, Mansfield, Benalla and Wangaratta, and other relevant stakeholders to address gaps in provision across the region in pre-accredited and accredited training. Accredited programs range from Industry and Rural Skills, First Aid, Aged Care and Disability, Education and Training, Business and Employability, Hospitality, Adult Literacy and VCAL. The Centre has formed many partnerships, including with Corinda to provide aged care courses in Benalla. The Centre also runs a free matching service for volunteers and not-for-profit organisations called Skillsbank, has developed a Manufacturing Skills Package to address employer expectations, and established a referral pathway with Gateway Health delivering administration skills.

Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre Nominated by ACFE Grampians Regional Council



From its humble start by a group of young mums 35 years ago, Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre (WNC) now offers a wide range of programs and classes linking people in the Ballarat community to social, recreational and educational opportunities, such as a Men’s Shed. WNC’s programs are particularly focused on unemployed and under-employed people aged between 15 and 45, and the Justice Project works with 15 to 25-year-olds using an innovative model of trust-building activities followed by robust conversations to determine individual career and learning needs. WNC takes a lead role in managing the Wendouree Alliance Network, a community partnership with Ballarat Health, local government, state government, support agencies and local community groups. This alliance is co-designing courses to successfully engage new learner cohorts. Along with Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre and Ballarat North Neighbourhood Centre, WNC is governed under a unique joint governance model that oversees the three organisations. The success of this arrangement is due in part to WNC’s outstanding commitment to maintaining strong partnerships focused on common needs.

Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre Nominated by ACFE Barwon South Western Regional Council



Located in the northern suburbs of Geelong, which are experiencing high unemployment, Rosewall Neighbourhood Centre offers pre-accredited courses in literacy, computers and employability skills. To strengthen the pathways from unemployment and under-employment to training and jobs, RNH has developed a range of new programs and partnerships to engage and support the specific needs of this community. This includes a community café to provide training and hands-on experience in food preparation and catering, a partnership with The Gordon TAFE to provide placements for Community Service students, delivery of accredited training in hospitality in partnership with a private RTO, a Karen Family Support program in partnership with CatholicCare, an Early Connections playgroup in partnership with Bethany and a partnership with MatchWorks to deliver work experience and training for Work for the Dole participants. RNC has also delivered a number of successful projects designed to support vulnerable workers transitioning from the closure of key manufacturing industries in the Geelong region. Developed in partnership with the local TAFE, these programs are engaging workers and their families in providing support and pathways into accredited training.

Learn Local Volunteer Champions

Introduced as a new category this year, this award acknowledges a volunteer 'champion' who works in a Learn Local provider registered with the ACFE Board. The Learn Local Volunteer Champion Award celebrates individuals who have shown outstanding commitment, enthusiasm or innovation in their volunteering work at their Learn Local provider.

The winners of this acknowledgement category are also put forward by the ACFE Board for consideration as part of the Victorian Premier's Volunteer Champions Awards.

These three individuals are this year's Learn Local Volunteer Champions.



Harry Ashton Rushworth Community House

Among the sparks and the metal being shaped and manipulated at a Saturday morning welding class in the Men's Shed at Rushworth Community House, Harry will most likely be helping someone with a technique or chatting to someone over a cuppa and making sure they feel welcome and valued.

Since Harry started the basic welding course at the Men's Shed four years ago as its volunteer coordinator, word has got around town and the popularity of the course has grown. Under the supervision of skilled welders sourced by Harry, participants learn the craft, while Harry ensures the role of the Men's Shed as a supportive and non-judgmental environment moulding valuable companionship is at the heart of each class. The idea is that while learning new skills, participants can share a cup of tea and sit and talk.

In addition to organising the welding classes, Harry also runs the Men's Shed two days a week. As well as being a carer to his wife, Harry volunteers in the broader community cooking meals and driving, and is a volunteer member of the Rushworth Community House Committee. Harry is well known for his positive approach to everything he does, and is always looking for ways to support people to do their best.



Joy Ferguson

Diamond Valley Learning Centre

There isn't much that needs to be done at Diamond Valley Learning Centre (DVLC) that Joy won't put up her hand for. Gardening, cleaning up, making flower arrangements, teaching learner drivers, being a member of the Centre's Board and approaching her Rotary Club to help fund a driving course for learners are a few examples of her commitment to the community.

Did we mention laundering tea towels, organising working bees and cleaning the kitchen? Joy also does these jobs for the Centre willingly and with a smile. And Joy's generosity doesn't stop there. She takes a personal interest in the students, she has donated to help with some students' fees, initiated networking opportunities via Rotary Leadership Conferences, helped one student find work and went with another to the 2016 Victorian Learn Local Awards and even helped him buy his first suit to wear to the Awards.

In the words of Luke Bryan, a current VCAL student who has been undertaking the L2P driver education with Joy: "I get to drive with Joy three to four times a week. She takes a lot of time for us. She also got me on a weekend Rotary Youth Enrichment Program camp and offered to nominate me for a Rotary Youth Leadership Award, and I am looking forward to it."



Melinda Hamilton

Springvale Neighbourhood House

Melinda had recently retired from a career in banking, when in November 2009 she responded to a call from Springvale Neighbourhood House (SNH) for volunteer tutors to help adults learn English. Since then Melinda has untiringly served the community by tutoring and mentoring students. Her conversation classes, held every Monday and Wednesday at SNH, started to grow in popularity not only for beginner learners of English but also for those enrolled in other EAL classes. In 2012 Melinda expanded her volunteering at SNH becoming a volunteer Committee Member and in 2013 she became volunteer Chairperson of the Committee.

In her time at SNH, Melinda has also created a Little Hobby group, mentored female Afghani students at Women's Health in the South East (WHISE), started a craft conversation class for asylum seekers in partnership with WHISE, volunteered with the Sewing/Conversation group and provided students with experiences beyond the classroom, taking them to places of educational and cultural interest in the community bus. Melinda, who has completed her Certificate IV in TESOL, also teaches two pre-accredited courses, Learn English-First Step and Learn English-Next Step. Melinda believes she receives rich rewards from volunteering. "While learning our language and culture, they also enrich my life by teaching me about theirs. I have made many lifelong friends through my volunteering."

The impact of Learn Local practitioners is often much greater than their role as teacher, trainer or administrator might indicate. To so many of their learners they become a mentor, an inspiration or a friend. Aside from the knowledge and skills Learn Local practitioners impart to learners, it is the guidance and affirmation they give that resonates long after classes end.

The Outstanding Practitioner Award recognises a practitioner with an exceptional commitment to the Learn Local network and ability to engage people in learning. This year's finalists have strategies and techniques in place that enable them to provide or support quality training to meet different learner needs and establish pathways for them to further education or employment. These people are role models for their colleagues and exemplify the dedication of Learn Local practitioners.



Craig Danswan **Campaspe College of Adult Education**

While his students are cooking up a storm as part of their Certificate III in Commercial Cookery at Campaspe College of Adult Education, as their teacher and mentor Craig is serving them his recipe for building confidence, self-esteem and self-belief.

When his students reach the three-month mark in their training, he gives each of them a polo shirt with "Taste Everything" emblazoned on the back and their name on the front. Craig knows that not all his students will follow a pathway into commercial cookery, and that is why he ensures they learn the value of training, how to work as a team, that being late is not acceptable, nor is swearing, that good manners and respect are essential, and definitely leave your mobile phone at the door.

To involve families, Craig encourages his learners make a meal at home every week, and give a presentation on what they prepared. At the end of the course, the class produces a four-course meal for 20 guests from local businesses.

Craig is a dynamic member of the team at Campaspe College and he supports other staff by progressively using and updating his community networks and local business connections and sharing these resources with all staff members.

Outstanding Practitioner



Leanne Fitzgerald Coonara Community House

The saying goes: If you want something done, give it to a busy person. But in the case of Leanne, this maxim could be extended to – and if you want innovative and creative ideas, give it to someone who is passionate about what they do. Leanne is known for linking seemingly unconnected resources and opportunities to create innovation. She is always on the lookout for partnerships and funding sources that will contribute to the development of quality learning environments.

One example is the creation of the Coonara Community House garden, in partnership with the local TAFE, where people learn everything from composting to cooking wood-fired pizzas to keeping chickens and bees. She led a team that produced *A House Around the Corner* – a series for Channel 31 showcasing Learn Local and Neighbourhood Houses across the state. And in another initiative led by Leanne – a trial of Pop Up adult learning at Westfield Shopping Centre and other locations in Knox City, to make connections with people who may never have heard of Neighbourhood Houses or Learn Local.

Leanne has been providing leadership and mentoring for her peers across the Learn Local sector for over 20 years and is unwavering in her passion and dedication to adult learning.



Lachlan McKenzie Jesuit Community College

It's more than the smell of great coffee and a perfectly made latte complete with leaf motif that ensures Lachlan has no shortage of learners enrolled in his barista courses at Jesuit Community College.

In almost four years, Lachlan has trained more than 660 students in the college's pre-accredited barista courses, and of those 310 have gone on to enrol in the accredited training unit – Hygienic Practices for Food Safety – also delivered by Lachlan.

Graduates of his courses are not only learning how to operate a commercial espresso machine and how to make a range of coffees, they are gaining confidence and self-esteem and learning there are pathways to further training and employment.

Lachlan's students are mainly refugees and asylum seekers, at-risk youth, involved in the justice system, have disabilities or long-term unemployed.

In 2004, Lachlan – who had a career in hospitality – enrolled in a computer course at his local Learn Local after an accident, and there began his appreciation of the power of Learn Locals in people's lives and a new career as a hospitality trainer.

The ability to identify and respond to a particular education or training need within a community is a distinctive characteristic and strength of the Learn Local sector. This award category recognises the key role of Learn Local programs or projects in creating 'local solutions' through strong partnerships with other organisations, business and industry or the community to provide solutions to local training needs. The winning program or project demonstrates the use of different expertise, technology or program arrangements to create these local solutions.

Through their programs, each of the finalists has enabled learning for its participants and exemplified how the Learn Local network provides flexible, quality and tailored training that meets local needs.



Community Work Partnership Program

Dandenong Neighbourhood House

Offenders completing a Community Service Order are benefiting from a win-win partnership between Dandenong Neighbourhood House (DNH) and the Department of Justice and Regulation.

And offenders are not the only winners in this partnership, which started in 2013. Another big winner is the local community and society in general, which benefits from offenders developing new skills to support their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community, and reducing their risk of reoffending. DNH has already provided more than 3,300 offenders with pre-accredited training programs to develop their skills, and increase their chances of going on to further training or employment.

The programs – Landscaping Connections, Mum 'n' Bubs, Card Making, English for All, Chippies, Connecting Creative Communities and Community Cookers – are also benefiting local community organisations. For example, quilts made by offenders in the Mums 'n' Bubs program are donated to special care nurseries at Dandenong Hospital and Monash Children's Hospital, and DNH has a redeveloped front garden and entrance, new paving, new community garden and pergola created by offenders in the Landscaping Connections program.

Excellence in Creating Local Solutions



Linking Learning to the Land Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre

It was a problem that needed a creative solution. Although many East Gippsland growers wanted to employ locals, they said they didn't have the time to train unemployed or young people and looked to 457 visa workers to address their labour shortages. On the other side, many job seekers carried negative perceptions of working in the agri-business sector, perceptions in some cases built on myth. Enter – Paynesville Neighbourhood Centre (PNC) and an innovative connection between training and the local food industry.

PNC found that farmers were open to explore ideas on how people's lives could be improved through work and learning, and growers were willing to form partnerships to work on the problems associated with entrenched unemployment, skills and labour shortages. PNC partnered with East Gippsland Food Cluster, Federation Training, Moe Neighbourhood House, Traralgon Neighbourhood House, East Gippsland Shire Council, Landcare groups, farmers and industry representatives to design a pre-accredited education and training course to build pathways from unemployment to jobs on farms.

The resulting Linking Learning to the Land course is providing local solutions to local training needs and will play a significant role in helping to generate the economy in East Gippsland.



Manufacturing Entry Level Worker Program

The Centre for Continuing Education

The five-day Manufacturing Entry Level Worker program was born out of concerns raised by manufacturing businesses in North East Victoria that they were experiencing difficulties recruiting suitable staff. The Centre for Continuing Education listened, consulted and engaged all key players to find an innovative solution. In consultation with the North East Industry Workforce Development Group, comprising the AI Group, local economic development teams, industry and local training providers, the Centre designed an entry-level worker skills development program to help job seekers gain the practical work ready skills manufacturing employers were looking for.

The program – delivered in partnership with MADEC Jobactive, Australian Country Spinners and Australian Textile Mills (ATM) – includes understanding employer expectations, employee responsibilities and work instructions, as well as workplace safety, routine maintenance and cleaning of equipment, working independently, communication and team work. In the words of Allan Collins, ATM Human Resources Coordinator: "It's a win-win situation. It was a win for us because we got some good employees and it was good for the participants because they saw the manufacturing environment."

In 2016, over 60 learners completed the program and as a result over 80% of these learners gained employment.

2016 Victorian Learn Local Award Winners

Outstanding Pathways Program

Speaking Out,
Port Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre

Outstanding Practitioner

Marj Sjostrom,
Keysborough Learning Centre

The Ro Allen Award - Recognising Pre-accredited Learner Excellence

Matthew Agostinelli,
Diamond Valley Learning Centre

AMES Australia Diversity Innovation

CALD Education & Employment Pathways,
Ballarat Neighbourhood Centre

Excellence in Creating Local Solutions

BA@Wyndham,
Wyndham Community and Education Centre

2016 Learn Local Legends

Bellarine Living and Learning Centre

Nominated by ACFE Barwon South Western Regional Council

Vermont South Community House

Nominated by ACFE Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council

Gippsland Employment Skills Training

Nominated by ACFE Gippsland Regional Council

Nhill Learning Centre

Nominated by ACFE Grampians Regional Council

Glen Eira Adult Learning Centre

Nominated by ACFE Southern Metropolitan Regional Council

Macedon Ranges Further Education Centre

Nominated by ACFE Loddon Mallee Regional Council

Djerriwarrh Community and Education Services

Nominated by ACFE North Western Metropolitan Regional Council

Myrtleford Neighbourhood Centre

Nominated by ACFE Hume Regional Council

The full list of previous Learn Local Award Winners can be viewed on our website:

www.education.vic.gov.au/learnlocalawards

Acknowledgements

Pre-ceremony entertainment

Wild at Heart Community Arts program, Port Phillip Community Group

The pre-ceremony entertainment was performed by Eddie Ink, Ruth Parker and Noah Chong, singer songwriters from the Wild At Heart Community Arts' weekly Learn Local songwriting program based in South Melbourne. In partnership with the Port Phillip Community Group, the Wild at Heart program provides opportunities for people who experience disability, mental illness or other disadvantage to find their own "voice" through music and art.

Wild at Heart's workshops, ensembles, projects and mentoring programs enable people to make friends, improve their well being, develop as artists and engage in the community through paid and voluntary artistic work.

www.wildatheart.org.au

www.ppcg.org.au

Catering and hospitality

Charcoal Lane

Charcoal Lane, a social enterprise of Mission Australia, is a restaurant and catering service which provides guidance and opportunity to young people, many of whom are Aboriginal, and in need of a fresh start in life. The aim of the program is to create a skilled workforce for the hospitality industry, providing leadership and mentoring to help vulnerable young people achieve their potential and gain long-term independence. Charcoal Lane's contemporary menu is seasonally driven and draws on the best of native Australian food.

www.charcoalane.com.au

Table Centrepieces

Diamond Valley Learning Centre

The table centrepieces have been designed and created by students undertaking the Introduction to Floristry course at Diamond Valley Learning Centre. The Floristry course is very popular at the Centre, with varied and beautiful arrangements made by students each week.

Diamond Valley Learning Centre has offered learning opportunities to the Greensborough community for over 40 years. Its vision is to nurture possibility and stir change by caring for their students' individual needs.

www.dvlc.org.au

Information



www.education.vic.gov.au/learnlocal

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