



10 May 2021

## **All boats rise in a safe harbour: Partnering to Make a difference**

More than 50 people from across the Buloke, Loddon and Northern Grampians Shires attended the North Central LLEN's 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in the beautiful outdoor courtyard area of the Bridgewater Hotel last week.

The theme for the evening was "All Boats rise in a safe harbour" and focussed on the work of the LLEN to support children and young people to thrive in education, work and life.

The evening began with a welcome to country and traditional smoking ceremony by Aunty Kerry, a Dja Dja Wurrung elder as the sun set over the majestic Loddon River.

This was followed by the AGM itself where members were presented with the 2020 Annual Report, and accounts of the year from the Chair Ellen White, Executive Officer Jane Hosking, and Treasurer Kelvin Baird.

The other important item of business was to consider a motion to amend the organisations Rules of Incorporation to provide clarity into the future, including a resolution to formally change the name of the organisation to North Central LLEN Inc. (formerly North Central Local Learning and Employment Network).

Outgoing Board Members Cr Tony Driscoll, Cr Cheryl McKinnon, Loretta Beattie, Christine McKersie and Paula Noble were thanked for their service, and new Board Members Cr Dan Straub (Loddon Shire), Cr Eddy Ostarcevic (Northern Grampians Shire) and Tony Hand (North Central Principals Cluster) were welcomed.

The evening concluded with a panel discussion on partnerships that make a difference, especially in small rural communities featuring Christine McKersie (Careers Education Partnership), Wendy Gladman (Strong Families Strong Children Loddon), and Trent McCarthy (How Work works).

The evening was emceed?? by Grace Hosking, an intern with the 'How Work Works' youth action research project, and members of the newly established North Central Youth Advisory Council were in attendance.

It was also an opportunity to formally launch the new five-year North Central LLEN strategic plan which was formally adopted by the Board in December - a roadmap for ensuring our children, young people and their families are supported from cradle to career.

Chair Ellen White said it was great to see so many North Central LLEN stakeholders in attendance this year, after the previous AGM was held online during Covid-19 restrictions.

"It was a pleasure to share with our members and stakeholders our 2020 Annual Report and a video highlighting the amazing array of projects and initiatives undertaken by the LLEN over the last 12 months," she said.

"We know all boats can rise on the tide in a caring, strong community, and our challenge is to work with our stakeholders every day to ensure that education is indeed an equaliser, and that a successful future will be equally on offer to both the luxury yacht and the wooden rowing boat" said Ms White.

Chair of Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks (VicLLENs), Trent McCarthy described the North Central LLEN as delivering work that is profound and far-reaching.

Speaking as part of the Panel discussing partnerships that make a difference, he said that doing things a bit differently can create something extraordinary and used the example of the 'How Work Works' project that took place last year.

“This was a collaboration across four rural and regional LLENs to undertake a youth action research project, with funding support from Loddon Campaspe Regional Partnerships, to understand how we can get young people into growing industries,” he said.

“The outcomes have been far reaching with a number of the interns offered employment by the businesses that took part in the project, and the results of the research being presented far and wide by the interns at important forums such as The Age Education Summit earlier this month,” said Mr McCarthy.

Wendy Gladman, Director of Community Wellbeing at Loddon Shire Council, spoke about the Strong Families Strong Children (SFSC) Loddon project which was purpose built to support families to ensure their children start school ready to learn.

“Prior to SFSC Loddon we were all working really hard, but we weren’t changing the statistics,” she said.

“By working together we are able to have much greater impact, working cohesively toward changing the system one child and family at a time,” said Ms Gladman.

Principal of Wycheproof College Christine McKersie is a passionate advocate for rural schools and communities, and this showed when she spoke about the Careers Education Partnership during the panel discussion.

“Our schools wouldn’t function the way do without this partnership,” she said.

“When we work in partnerships we are able to leverage opportunities that otherwise would be out of reach to us working alone. By working together our young people reap the benefits,” said Ms McKersie.

Summing up the thoughts of the panel, Wendy Gladman said that without the work we do together our communities miss out, but together we can really make a difference.

“As long as there is a strong values alignment between the partners and a willingness to work together, the benefits to our communities are enormous,” she said.

For more information about the North Central LLEN, and to read a copy of their Annual Report or view their highlights video, visit <http://www.ncllen.org.au/2020-agm.html>

-- ends --

For more information, please contact Jane Hosking on 0439 886 339