



North Central LLEN

Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Foreword

"History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday life of children"
Nelson Mandela

Since 2002, the North Central LLEN has been working to support young people across the region to be the best that they can be.

More recently, we have become a registered charity with DGR status which has seen our focus expanded to include young children, recognising the importance of a strong foundation to a child's success in education, work and life.

We know that a child's health, family relationships, where and how they live, the quality of parenting they receive, how they perform at school, their social interactions, and whether they are safe from harm are among a multitude of factors that can have lifelong effects (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare).

To help inform our new Strategic Plan, the North Central LLEN undertook extensive consultation with our stakeholders through a series of 8 Focus Groups, two workshopping sessions each with Board Members and staff, and an on-line survey. In total we spoke to 79 stakeholders, 9 Board Members, and 13 staff who shared their thoughts and ideas on priorities to support children and young people over the next 5 years.

From this process, this document has been created and looks to consolidate the remit of the North Central LLEN further to take a cradle to career approach to supporting and empowering children and young people with the addition of the middle years as a key focus area.

The NCLLEN remains committed to working in a place-based way with north central children and young people, from birth through to twenty-one years and their families. a whole of life-course approach to education and pathways where smooth, supported transitions are prioritised.

We will continue to work with our valued partners to facilitate the addressing of inequity and vulnerability in its many forms so that all children and young people can be confident, resilient and thrive in education, work and life.

"Young people who feel connected, have opportunities to participate in meaningful activities, are included in decision making and feel safe and secure in supportive environments report better health and mental health.

As a result they are more likely to be engaged in schooling, family life, positive peer relationships, civic activities, employment and contribute to the shaping and building of better communities".

– Burns et al



North Central LLEN est. 2002

OUR VISION:

All children and young people are confident, resilient, and thrive in education, work and life.

OUR MISSION:

To create opportunities for children and young people to be confident, resilient and thrive in education, work and life by:

- ensuring children, young people and their families get the support they need when they need it,
- fostering quality partnerships and connections, and
- advocating for strong equitable communities.

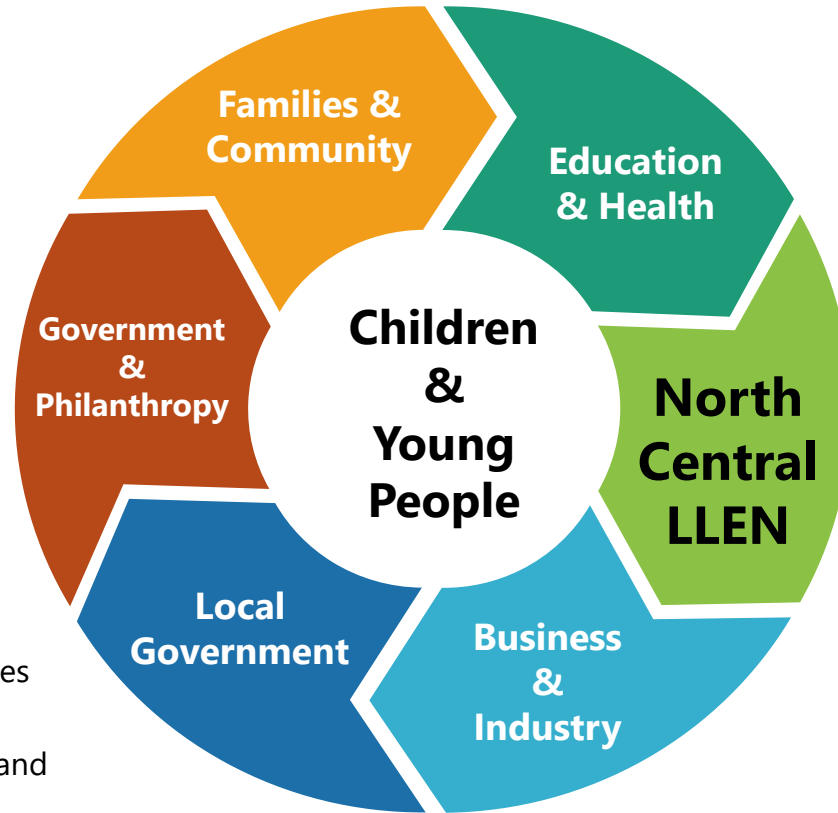
OUR VALUES:

Integrity: We are knowledgeable, ethical, trusted, respected, accountable, and authentic

Equity: We operate in a transparent and respectful manner, we are inclusive, and have social justice at the heart of what we do

Collaboration: We form partnerships, develop networks, we are connected and connecting, and actively advocate for (and with) young people

Innovation: We are strategic, creative, curious, resourceful, dynamic, and effective in our work



WHERE:

The North Central LLEN works across the Shires of Loddon, Buloke, and the community of St Arnaud in the Northern Grampians Shire.

WHAT WE WILL DO:

Our priority is to support children and young people and their families, particularly those experiencing rural, social or economic disadvantage through programs and initiatives that build:

- **Solid Foundations (0-8)**
- **Resilient Middle Years (9-15)**
- **Strong Careers and Pathways**
- **Confident Youth Voice**

TO DO THIS, WE WILL FOCUS ON:

<p>Amplifying Voices</p> <p>Empowering children and young people to actively participate and be heard</p>	<p>Fostering Connections</p> <p>Developing partnerships and networks that make a difference</p>	<p>Growing Capacity</p> <p>Building on knowledge and expertise across the region</p>	<p>Expanding Knowledge</p> <p>Engaging and supporting research to inform and advocate</p>	<p>Creating Solutions</p> <p>Facilitating systems change and a culture of continuous improvement</p>
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Key Focus Areas:

Outcomes:

Solid Foundations (0-8):

We will invest in the earliest years of a child's life by building the capability of families, services and the community to ensure all children begin school ready to learn and actively participate in community life.



- Maternal Child Health, Kindergarten, Playgroup and School attendance in the early years will improve
- More children will be on track developmentally when they start school
- More parents and carers will tell us they are feeling confident about knowing what is needed for their children and how to access or provide for this

Resilient Middle Years (9-15):

We will work with families, schools, and the community to support young people to feel safe, supported and empowered to learn, develop and maintain friendships, and make informed decisions regarding their future.



- Young people report increased confidence and optimism
- Young people are connected and active community participants
- Young people actively explore careers & pathways to align with interests and aspirations

Strong Careers and Pathways:

We will support young people to explore their future, encouraging them to focus on career pathways that align with their interests, equipping them with a range of skills to help them navigate their way.



- Increase in the number of students finishing school with Year 12 or equivalent
- Increase in the number of school leavers who continue their studies in VET or University Courses
- Increase the number of employed youth in our region

Confident Youth Voice:

We will provide opportunities for all children and young people to amplify their voice, participate and influence.



- More skilled and supported young people willing to express their voice
- Community groups including more young people in their organisations for mutual benefit
- Young people have participated in local, regional, and statewide conversations and decisions on important issues

A Dynamic Organisation:

We will be relevant, proactive and effective: Strong governance will underpin a strategic, values-driven organisation working to achieve our vision.



- Research and advocacy foundation for all work
- High performing Board with a proactive risk appetite to explore opportunities
- A well-resourced organisational structure of highly capable staff with a diverse range of skills and leadership abilities
- A culture of innovation and continuous improvement

STRATEGIC GOALS:

Building a Solid Foundation (0-8 years)



North Central LLEN

We will invest in the earliest years of a child's life by building the capability of families, services and the community to ensure all children begin school ready to learn and actively participate in community life.

GOAL ONE: Participation

Increase voice, influence and participation of children and families in Early Year's activities:

- Improve family knowledge and confidence to access the supports they need - when they need it
- Ensure our work and the changes we need to make will be based on what children and their families tell us is needed to make the service system better for local families.
- Resource & support services and the community to partner with families

GOAL THREE: Education

Elevate family and community understanding and expectations of education

- Build confidence and capacity of parents to be their child's first and most important educator
- Educate communities on the importance of investing in the early years and the role we all have in supporting all child
- Support children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning

GOAL TWO: Health and Wellbeing

Facilitate a whole of community approach to early childhood development where all children are happy and enjoy healthy lifestyles.

- Develop quality connections, conversations and relations with children, families and services to make it easier for families to get the support they need when they need it.
- Foster a strong early childhood sector that collaborates, shares resources and expertise and bends to meet the needs of families
- Connect families early to build social capital (e.g. Ante-Natal Classes, New Parent's Groups, Playgroups)



STRATEGIC GOALS:

Resilient Middle Years (9-15 years)



North Central LLEN

We will work with families, schools, and the community to support young people to feel safe, supported and empowered to learn, develop and maintain friendships, and make informed decisions regarding their future.

GOAL ONE: Resilience

Provide opportunities for children to develop their confidence and unique character in a safe and supported environment

- Support children and young people to face challenges and apply learnings towards living a healthy, happy life
- Work with local schools and the community to strengthen capacity and support the personal growth and development of children and young people through the significant cognitive, social and emotional changes that establish their lifelong identity
- Create opportunities for the community to model skills that foster resilience in children and help them build optimism

GOAL THREE: Aspirations

All children living in the North Central region are supported throughout their education journey so they can reach their full learning potential

- Work with schools within the north central region to support smooth transitions, participation and engagement in education
- Provide earlier opportunities for children and young people to dream big when exploring interests and potential career pathways
- Facilitate programs and initiatives that address barriers to education, participation, and developing aspiration in order to provide young people with the best possible chance to succeed in education, work and life

GOAL TWO: Connections

Build strong connections between children, young people, families, community and schools.

- Continue to work with families, children and service providers to look at ways to break the cycle of disadvantage early focusing on education, resilience, aspirations, community participation, health and wellbeing
- Support mentoring/buddy programs to build connections between children and young people and members of the community beyond their family circle
- Connect children and young people to community projects for mutual benefit
- Expose children and young people to the world of work through linkages with local industries earlier



STRATEGIC GOALS:

Strong Careers and Pathways



North Central LLEN

We will support young people to explore their future, encouraging them to focus on career pathways that align with their interests, equipping them with a range of skills to help them navigate their way.

GOAL ONE: Career Exploration

Providing a safe space for students to take a holistic approach to careers and pathways development

- Work with students to explore different pathways, identify skills and interests, and help them define their own career journey
- Strengthen the capacity of schools to support young people's pathways
- Continue specific programs to support young people explore their pathways including Careers Education Program, Structured Workplace Learning and the Broader Horizons program, looking for ways to continuously improve these

GOAL TWO: Industry Engagement

Facilitate better engagement between young people, families, schools and industry

- Work with employers across the region to identify opportunities to connect with young people, their families and schools
- Create stronger linkages with past students, community leaders and new people joining our community to share the story of their pathways with young people
- Advocating for, and with, young people in relation to the changing economy and the work environment

GOAL THREE: Work Experience

Support students to access a broad range of work experience opportunities and employability skills.

- Focus on employability skills (soft skill) opportunities – e.g. volunteering, work experience, casual work, etc
- Facilitate Internships and mentoring programs to enable young people to develop skills and experience outside the classroom
- Work with industry to provide more opportunities to explore careers available both locally and further afield to expand horizons for all young people



STRATEGIC GOALS:

Confident Youth Voice



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GOAL ONE: Skills Development

Provide opportunities for all children and young people to learn how to use their voice for maximum impact and influence

- Ensure an equity approach to enable all children and youth voice to be heard
- Facilitate a range of personal development initiatives to empower young people to actively engage – leadership skills, activism, public speaking, debating, governance, project planning, grant writing, diversity, etc.
- Be clear on the purpose of what we are engaging with young people for – let them know their role at the outset and involve them in being part of the solution as well as articulating the problem
- Continue specific programs to help support young people to amplify their voice, participate and influence including the Youth Advisory Council, Flexible Learning Options (FLO), Engage, MATES Mentoring, and Buloke Loddon TAC L2P and support new initiatives



GOAL TWO: Influence

Support stakeholders to better listen to, and include, youth voice in their decision-making processes

- Enable training and resources for community groups and organisations to help them provide meaningful opportunities for to include young people in their activities and projects
- Facilitate and support mentoring and internship programs which encourage the broader community to engage with young people on a diverse range of issues
- Build the capacity of families and the community to better understand their role in the development of young people for strong communities

GOAL THREE: Create Opportunities

Facilitate networking events for young people to collaborate with a diverse range of people across the north central region and beyond

- Look at ways to develop shire-wide and regional events to enable young people to engage with a diverse range of teenagers from all walks of life on a diverse range of topics for both education, personal development and social purposes.
- Provide opportunities for north central youth to attend events beyond the region to engage with a diverse range of young people on a variety of topics for both education, personal development and social purposes.
- Support young people to co-design opportunities that will help them develop skills, explore interests and contribute to the community

STRATEGIC GOALS:

A Dynamic Organisation



We will be relevant, proactive and effective: Strong governance will underpin a strategic, values-driven organisation working to achieve our vision.

GOAL ONE: Access and Equity

Ensure access and equity underpins everything we do, with vulnerable children and young people always included and heard

- Evidence informed work for all NCLLEN programs and initiatives to ensure best practice
- Apply a social justice lens to our work to ensure no child or young person is excluded
- Facilitate opportunities for a diverse range of children and young people to co-design and participate in the development our work where possible

GOAL TWO: Relationships

Facilitate trusted partnerships and strategic alliances which are solutions focused to ensure a whole of community approach to education and social change:

- Implement place-based initiatives with a rural community development focus with the NCLLEN as the "bridge builder"
- Undertake regular engagement with stakeholders about our work and outcomes, and explore opportunities to collaborate for the benefit of children and young people
- Form Strategic Alliances with stakeholders to create solution focused approaches to education and social change

GOAL THREE: Advocacy and Research

Advocate for change in relation to rural disadvantage, and access & equity for all children and young people at local, regional, state and national level.

- Implement a strengths-based team approach to program delivery - both internal and external (stronger together)
- Lead public debate on rural disadvantage, and access & equity issues for all children and young people
- Implement an ongoing communications program to ensure our stakeholders and the broader community understand our work, why we do it, and outcomes achieved



Measuring our Success:

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