

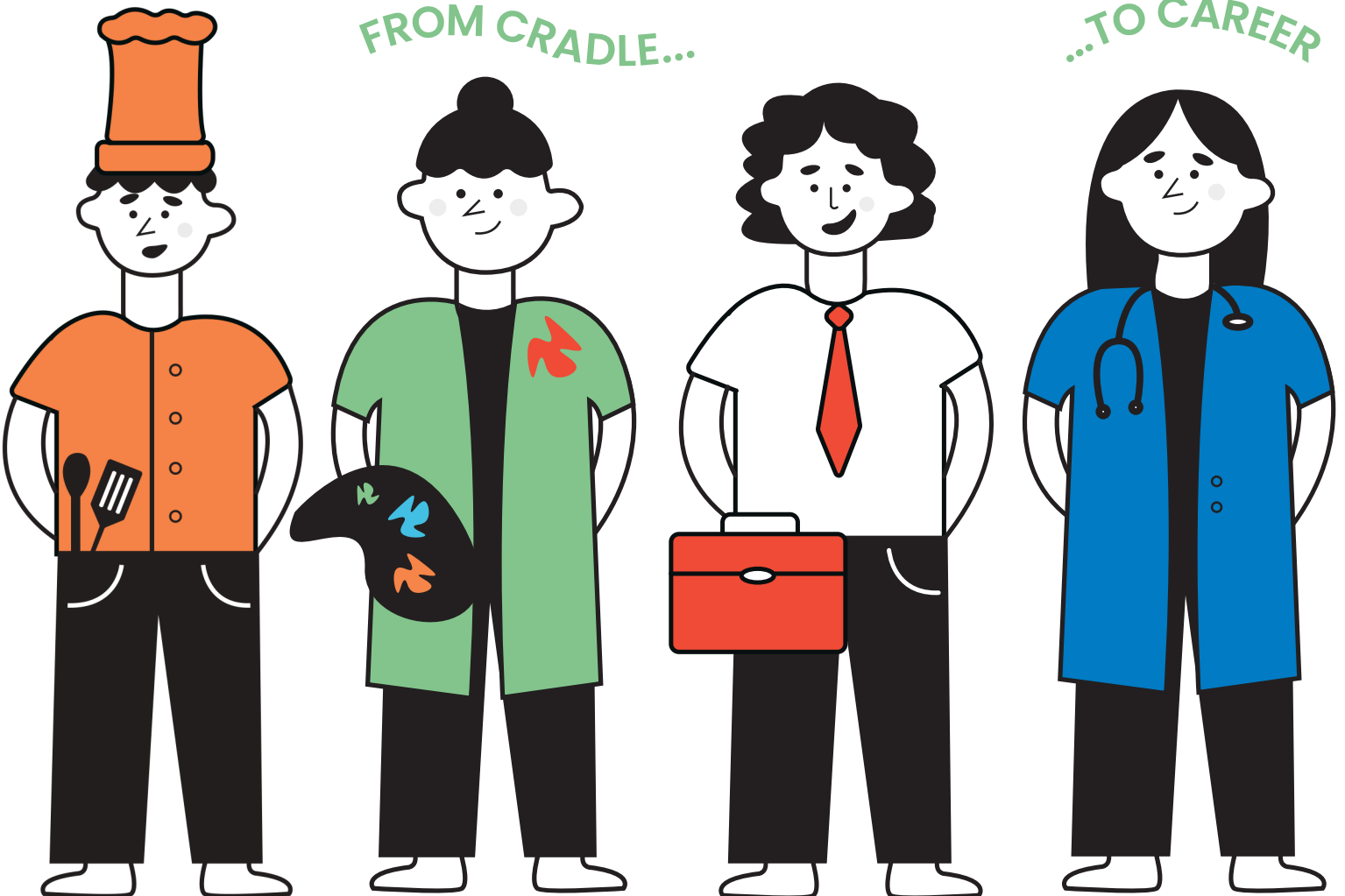


Annual Report

January - December 2025

FROM CRADLE...

...TO CAREER





The North Central LLEN respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this land where our work takes place, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

For many centuries Aboriginal people have met and cared for children and young people on the lands on which we work, learn and play.





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Word from the Chair



In 2025 the North Central LLEN has continued to focus on providing cradle to career services and programs for children and young people in the region. The landscape in which we operate is somewhat uncertain, but the CEO Jane Hosking and the staff remain committed to their roles despite the distractions.

The major governance focus for the Board this year has been planning and preparing for structural change. It is more important than ever that we continue to look at models that encompass and describe the work of the North Central LLEN more accurately.

The organisation has been very successful in expanding and diversifying its offerings since LLENs were established in 2001/2002. To continue this growth, the Board, CEO and staff members believe that we need a bolder strategy and structure to take us forward. There will be more information on this topic at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

I would like to thank each and every Board Member for their commitment to the organisation. They are well prepared for Board Meetings, having read the detailed meeting papers so that they are ready to ask relevant questions and contribute to decisions that are made.

At this Annual General Meeting we farewell two Board Members – our Treasurer, Anthony Hogan, and Early Years specialist, Brooke Arnold. We thank them for their strong contribution over the last four years, and we wish them well for the future.

The Board is fortunate to have such a capable and conscientious team at the North Central LLEN led by CEO Jane Hosking. They deliver services with passion and commitment, and they also provide on-time comprehensive reports to government, funding bodies, and the Board.

Whilst the government funding landscape continues to be uncertain, I am optimistic that the North Central LLEN will be able to continue to support children and young people to thrive for many years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Straub', written in a cursive style.

Dan Straub
Chair

Word from the CEO



The theme of our 2025 Annual General Meeting, “Planting Seeds for the Future,” reflects a simple truth: the decisions we make today shape the opportunity, equity, and resilience of our communities tomorrow.

In 2025, the North Central LLEN Board and team continued to strengthen our role as a responsive, future-focused organisation, adapting to emerging needs while remaining firmly grounded in local communities. Our purpose remains clear: to collaborate to deliver measurable impact across the cradle-to-career continuum and improve outcomes for rural children and young people across North Central Victoria and beyond.

This year, we strengthened core programs while introducing system-level initiatives across our four refreshed strategic pillars: solid foundations, strong careers and pathways, empowered children and young people, and a dynamic organisation, enabling long-term impact. In doing so, we remained guided by a belief in the power of place and the critical importance of collaboration, recognising that in a complex rural context, strong partnerships are essential to lasting impact.

I extend my sincere thanks to our Chair, Dan Straub, and the Board for their steady leadership and strategic guidance, and to our dedicated staff whose professionalism, care, and commitment continue to drive impact every day.

I encourage you to explore this Annual Report, behind every number is a child, a young person, a family, and a story of rural resilience and possibility.

As we look ahead, our focus is simple but ambitious: to deepen impact, strengthen systems, and expand opportunity so every child and young person can thrive. We invite you to stand with us as we continue to plant, nurture, and grow the bright futures our children, young people, and communities deserve across our rural region.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jane Hosking".

Jane Hosking
CEO

About the North Central LLEN

Since 2002, the North Central LLEN has proudly dedicated itself to supporting children young people across our region to reach their fullest potential.

Our journey has evolved significantly over time. In 2016, becoming a registered charity with Deductible Gift Recipient status marked a pivotal expansion of our mission. Philanthropic funding enabled us to embrace the vital importance of investing early, recognising that the foundation built in a child's earliest years is key to lifelong success in education, work, and life.

We understand that a child's future is shaped by a complex web of factors: health, family, community, schooling, safety, and relationships, all of which leave lasting imprints on their lives.

Guided by this insight and a deep commitment to equity, the North Central LLEN continues to work to create an ecosystem of place-based approaches from cradle to career. Supporting rural children and young people from birth through to 24 years, we prioritise smooth, supported transitions at every stage, ensuring no one is left behind.

Our strength lies in collaboration. Together with our valued partners schools, families, community organisations, and industry, we strive to break down barriers, address vulnerability, and create opportunities that empower every child and young person.

In practice, a cradle-to-career approach brings together schools, families, community organisations, industry, and government to ensure that no child or young person falls through the cracks, especially in rural or underserved communities. It focuses on equity, continuity, and local solutions to create long-term, positive outcomes.

SOLID FOUNDATIONS

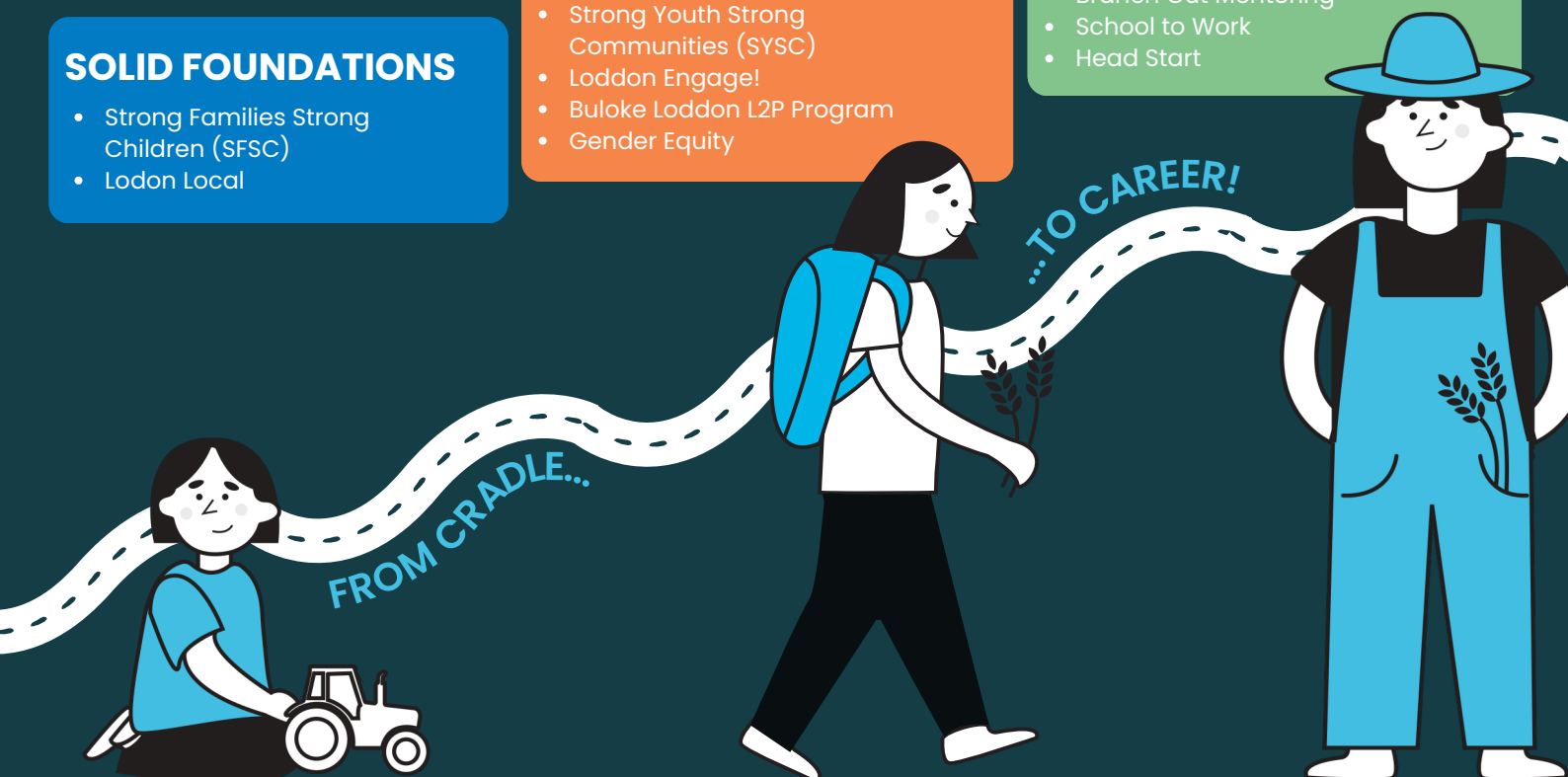
- Strong Families Strong Children (SFSC)
- Lodon Local

EMPOWERED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Strong Youth Strong Communities (SYSC)
- Loddon Engage!
- Buloke Loddon L2P Program
- Gender Equity

STRONG PATHWAYS

- NC Careers Education Partnership
- North Central VET Cluster
- North Central VET Transport
- Branch Out Mentoring
- School to Work
- Head Start



Board and Governance

Throughout 2025, the North Central LLEN Board maintained a strong focus on guiding the strategic direction of the organisation. This included a refresh of the Strategic Plan, alongside beginning a comprehensive review of the organisation's branding and identity.

This work has been an important step in shaping a clear and future-focused direction, ensuring the organisation is well positioned to continue supporting children and young people into the future. The outcomes of this process are expected to be realised in the coming year.

Maintaining strong governance remained a priority, with ongoing attention to compliance requirements, including the retention of Deductible Gift Recipient status. The Board also continued its commitment to best practice governance through the regular review and updating of policies and procedures.

At the AGM in May, we farewelled long serving Board Member Colleen Condliffe and North Central Principals Cluster (NCPC) Representative Tony Hand, and welcomed new representative Fiona Moon and Kevin O'Dea to the Board. Co-opted Board Members Simone Christie and Joe Collins also become Board members.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our committed board members: Cr Dan Straub (Chair), Win Scott (Dep. Chair), Anthony Hogan (Treasurer), Brooke Arnold, Cr Bernadette Hogan, Cr Karen Probst, Simone Christie, Joe Collins, Fiona Moon, Kevin O'Dea. The Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Sub-Committee Members were Anthony Hogan (Chair), Cr Dan Straub, and Cr Bernadette Hogan.

Staff & Projects

The North Central LLEN has a small, dedicated team that collaborates to create opportunities for children and young people.

Solid Foundations: Jerri Nelson, Julie Martin, Jess Turner

Careers and Pathways: Jacinta Sutton, Mary-Ann Sait, Julie Bourke, Sue Clay, Angela Poxon, Susan Gould, Claudia Cox

Empowering Children and Young People: Pam McConville, Molly Meadows, Tori Gentle, Peter Aurisch.

Dynamic Organisation: Jane Hosking, Julie Slater, Julie Roberts

We said farewell to Tori Gentle, Molly Meadows & Angela Poxon in 2025 and welcomed back Fiona Hall and Abby Mulquiny for 2026.



Our Impact in 2025



700+

Individual student career sessions



25

Head Start SBATs supported throughout the year



62

Children & Families supported through the Loddon Local



448

Learner driver hours gained as part of the L2P program



50+

Career resources provided to teachers and students



250

Students supported to undertake valuable work experience



14

Events linking schools to industry attended by **500+** students



400+

Young people taking part in Engage! activities



57

Students supported to undertake Structured Workplace Learning



Our Partners



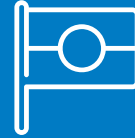
900+

Children and Young People



31

Schools, Pre-school, Playgroups & Maternal Child Health Centres



3

Aboriginal Corporations/ Services



150+

Rural and Regional Businesses



10

Neighbourhood Houses



8

Local, State, Federal Government Departments across three regions



100+

Volunteers



30

LLENs across Victoria



10

Healthcare Groups/ Services



Solid Foundations



Throughout 2025, the North Central LLEN continued to strengthen collaborative, place-based approaches that support children (0-11 years) and families across the region through our Strong Families Strong Children partnership.

STRONG FAMILIES STRONG CHILDREN (SFSC)

The Strong Families Strong Children framework continues to guide our work in the early years. Our growing range of early years initiatives aim to build stronger systems, more connected services and improved outcomes for families. This is achieved by investing time into the earliest years of a child's life through building the capabilities of families, services and the community to ensure all children begin school ready to learn and actively participate in community life.



SMALL RURAL EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC) TASKFORCE

Alongside ByFive Wimmera Southern Mallee, we continued our partnership with Regional Development Australia (RDA) Loddon Mallee and Grampians, and Regional Development Victoria (RDV) Loddon Campaspe & Mallee, to progress the Action & Advocacy Plan and sustainable rural ECEC Model.

SADEY NETWORK

Educators, health and early childhood practitioners and community champions, continued to meet regularly in Donald as part of the SADEY (Supporting and Advancing Donald Early Years) project, working together to find local solutions to meet the needs of children and their families, with support from the North Central LLEN.

This is an excellent model of place-based action with the case study providing a Framework for use in other small regional communities both in the Buloke and Loddon Shires and other areas of rural Victoria.



BETTER HEALTH SYSTEMS FOR CHILDREN IN MALLEE

We are collaborating with the *Better Health Systems for Children in Mallee Strategic Reference Group (SRG)* which is driving a systems-based approach to improving support for children 0-17 years in Out of Home Care (OOHC) in the Mallee.

We are grateful to have received seed funding from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) to connect up and support a strengthened rural access model for children in the smaller rural LGAs of Buloke and Gannawarra throughout 2026.

LODDON CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING LOCAL

We rolled out the first full year of the Loddon Children's Health and Wellbeing Local (The Local) initiative to support children across the Loddon Shire to have the best start to life. The innovative Local's nine partners are focused on improving access to timely health and developmental support for children - ensuring services reach families most in need.

This program has ongoing funding thanks to joint funding by the Victorian and Australian Government through the Head to Health Kids initiative.

Early referrals have come via the local Care Coordinator, and broader Strong Families Strong Children partners programs. Plans are now underway to expand access more broadly across Loddon schools, kindergartens, and through direct family referral, with the hope of it rolling out to other regions in the future

COMPREHENSIVE MONITORING SYSTEM – AN AEDC EXTENSION PROJECT

We are excited to again be a community partner on the next stage of the a life course initiative that tracks the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people (0–21 years) through eight evidence-based surveys.

Grounded in decades of longitudinal research, the Comprehensive Monitoring System (CMS) reinforces that every age and developmental stage within the first 10,000 days is critical to healthy outcomes.

Newly awarded National Health and Medical Research Council funding will support Deakin University's data collection across our rural Buloke, Loddon and Gannawarra region, alongside a regional (Mildura) and metropolitan (Yarra Ranges) site.

62



Children and their families supported through the Loddon Local during 2025.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

A Strong Families Strong Children Forum "Connecting Communities" brought partners together to identify key challenges and opportunities across the system.

Participants highlighted barriers faced by families and then focussed on enablers.

The outcomes reinforced the importance of early intervention, "No Wrong Door" access to services, and strong cross-agency partnerships.

Practical enablers such as transport assistance, brokerage support, childcare, telehealth and in-home service delivery were also recognised as critical to improving access for families, with collective actions developed.





Strong Pathways

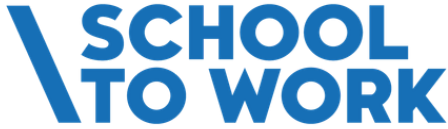
Throughout the year, North Central LLEN continued to strengthen career education, industry engagement and applied learning opportunities, supporting young people to make informed decisions about their futures. Through a range of programs and partnerships, students were provided with meaningful, real-world experiences that helped bridge the gap between education and employment.

SCHOOL TO WORK

A strong focus remained on connecting students with industry through practical, hands-on experiences. Quality structured workplace learning and work experience opportunities were facilitated to give young people valuable insights into different occupations.

A wide range of engagement activities, including work experience in a small group setting through our broader horizons program, VIC VICE virtual reality program and guest speakers, strengthened connections between schools and local industry.

In 2025, North Central LLEN, Murray Mallee LLEN and Northern Mallee LLEN partnered to support the Victorian Government’s commitment to creating an additional 10,000 work experience placements. Together, we focused on expanding opportunities for Year 9 and 10 students across government and non-government schools, with a focus on priority industries.



469
additional work experience placements delivered across the Mallee region (target 352)

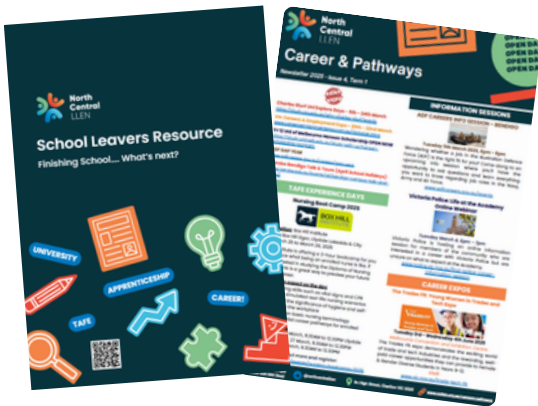
SCHOOL INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE

Collaboration remained a key theme throughout the year, highlighted by the School Industry Roundtable, which brought together representatives from education, industry and government to foster collaboration between education providers and local employers to improve education, training, and employment pathways for students in the region. These discussions reinforced a shared commitment to strengthening local pathways and identified practical opportunities to further connect young people with the world of work, utilising the Careers Explorium framework to support innovative ideas.



CAREERS EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP (CEP)

The Careers Education Partnership continues to play an important role in bringing together schools, students and families to deliver high-quality careers education. Our team of dedicated career practitioners provide individual career support to students in Years 9–12, including the development of personal career plans and up-to-date resources, including a School Leavers Guide & weekly Careers Newsletters. This is supported by a Career Tools portal for each school that supports each student’s career journey.



BCG MAIN FIELD DAY

We continued building on trusted and aligned partnerships in priority sectors, and a shared a culture of innovation and continuous improvement through collaborating and supporting Birchip Cropping Groups (BCG) student stream in their 2025 Main Field Day.

The action-packed program encouraged students to get involved with soil structures, weed identification and increase their knowledge of the agricultural industry and local opportunities through presentations and conversations with local growers and passionate industry specialists.



BRANCH OUT MENTORING

Delivered in partnership with You thrive Victoria, this peer-led initiative helps Year 12 students build confidence and develop skills needed for life beyond school, including navigating employment, finance and independent living.

90

Year 12 students undertook Branch Out Mentoring.



NORTH CENTRAL VET CLUSTER

The North Central VET Cluster continued to build momentum this year, deepening collaboration across schools and strengthening connections with local industry partners.

Through shared planning, the Cluster identified both current training pathways and emerging priorities, ensuring young people have access to opportunities that are relevant and future-focused.

The VET Taster Day proved to be a highlight for students, giving them a hands-on introduction to the full range of programs available at the North Central Trade Training Centre. The experience empowered students to make informed decisions about their VET subject selections for the year ahead.



HEAD START – SCHOOL BASED APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINEESHIPS

A Department of Education initiative facilitated by the LEN in the North Central region, Head Start supports students in Years 10–12 to undertake a School-Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (SBAT) while completing their VCE, VCE Vocational Major or VPC. This combines employment and on-the-job training with their secondary schooling, while working toward a nationally recognised qualification and building real-world skills along the way.



HEADSTART

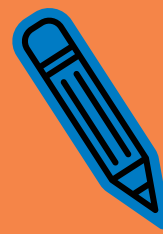
APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

25

students supported to undertake a Head Start SBAT throughout 2025, with 17 new sign ups across the year.



Empowered Children and Young People



During 2025, the North Central LLEN continued to deliver a broad range of youth engagement activities designed to strengthen connection, leadership, inclusion and wellbeing of children and young people.

LODDON ENGAGE!

Throughout the year, the Loddon Engage! initiative continued to create meaningful opportunities for young people to connect, contribute and grow within their communities. A strong focus on inclusion and belonging was evident through a range of community events and activities that brought young people together to celebrate diversity and promote respect.

Celebrations such as Harmony Day in Boort, alongside Wear It Purple and IDAHOBIT activities across several towns, provided safe and supportive spaces for students to explore identity, inclusion and what it means to build welcoming communities. Similarly, RUOK? Day activities encouraged open conversations about mental health, and strengthened peer support.

The Youth Active Bystander Project involved a group of local young people co-designing a student version of the workshop in partnership with Women's Health Loddon Mallee. Through this initiative, young people developed the skills and confidence to respond safely to concerning behaviours and help create respectful, inclusive environments.



INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT

The North Central LLEN partnered to deliver an intergenerational wellbeing initiative connecting Year 9 students from Boort District School with aged-care residents at Boort District Health. Creative experiences including painting portraits, making bouquets, playing golf encouraged teamwork, communication and empathy between generations. By the conclusion of the program, students reported improved confidence, communication skills and empathy, while residents experienced increased social connection and enjoyment.



400+

Young people took part in an ENGAGE! activity during 2025

- 37 participated in youth voice and leadership activities
- 321 young people took part in Inclusion and Belonging events
- 127 young people attended social awareness activities
- 285 young people were involved in Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Safety initiatives



TAC BULOKE LODDON L2P PROGRAM

The TAC Buloke Loddon L2P Program played an important role in supporting young people to gain the skills, confidence and experience needed to become safe, independent drivers.

The program facilitates consistent support to learner drivers through a committed network of volunteer mentors. These mentors generously gave their time to learner drivers to build not only their driving skills, but also confidence and independence along the way. The strength of these relationships remains at the heart of the program's success.

It was a year of positive outcomes, with a number of participants obtaining their probationary licences, and a number of new learners and volunteer mentors joining the program. The training of new volunteer mentors further strengthened the program, enabling more young people to access the support they need.

A key highlight for the year was the development of a new partnership with the Donald Learning Group. Through shared access to a community vehicle, this collaboration has improved flexibility and availability for local driving sessions.



448

hours of supervised driving experience

- 31 active learners
- 20 active mentors
- 7 new P Plate drivers

A Dynamic Organisation

Supporting children and young people

The North Central LLEN has continued to play a leadership role in supporting children and young people to thrive through active advocacy, sector leadership and strong stakeholder engagement across the region and beyond.

ADVOCACY AND SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Throughout the year, the organisation contributed to key policy and sector conversations focused on improving education, training and employment pathways for young people. This included a submission and speaking at a hearing of the Victorian [Inquiry into Student Pathways to In-Demand Industries](#), exploring how best to support young people into emerging and in-demand industries in our rural region. We also held meetings with Members of Parliament, reinforcing our role as trusted partners in delivering improved equity, education and skills outcomes.

The North Central LLEN also shared local innovation and practice across the education sector, showcasing regionally developed initiatives that support applied learning and vocational pathways. Presentations at sector forums highlighted practical, hands-on approaches that are helping young people build skills, confidence and real-world experience.

CAREERS EXPLORIUM

The [Careers Explorium](#) continues to form the backbone of our rural career education model. It provides a curated evidence-based, industry-embedded set of resources which continues to be expanded across Loddon Campaspe and the Mallee.

The Careers Explorium provides a flexible framework for schools from upper primary to Year 12 to design tailored, curriculum-aligned career experiences. Students explore local industries, develop career interests, and build work readiness through practical, real-world exposure. Industry and community partners play a key role by showcasing careers, sharing real-world pathways, and contributing expertise and resources.

YEAR 5-6



Build career ambition early

- Young people at centre
- Early Careers Education
- Self Exploration Tools
- Classroom speakers/ videos

YEAR 7-10



Explore options with Industry

- Virtual reality workplace tasters
- Come and try events
- The re-invented careers night
- Industry tours

YEAR 10-12



Get vital work experience

- Full year work readiness program
- Work placements (Individual)
- Work placements (small group)
- Industry challenges

YEAR 12



Prepare for work

- Work explainer lessons
- Micro-credential courses
- Pathway support
- Local jobs

STAKEHOLDER EVENT – FROM LITTLE THINGS, BIG THINGS GROW

A key highlight of the year was the stakeholder event, “From Little Things, BIG Things Grow: Celebrating Children and Young People,” which brought together Board Members, Staff, Educators, Young People, Industry Representatives, Government and Community Stakeholders.

Held following the Annual General Meeting, the event explored the importance of a cradle-to-career approach in supporting children and young people to thrive in education, work and life. Through storytelling, creative presentation and a keynote address from leading education researcher, Jeanette Pope, the evening reinforced how early experiences and coordinated community action can shape aspirations, pathways and long-term outcomes.



COMMUNITY REACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The organisation continued to strengthen its community reach through consistent communication and engagement. Social media platforms enabled broad sharing of stories, opportunities and program outcomes across the region, reaching a wide and diverse audience.

Regular newsletters were also distributed to key stakeholders, ensuring schools, industry partners, community organisations and government stakeholders remained informed and connected to the work of the North Central LLEN.

IMPACT:

- 254,000 Facebook views
- 703,000 Instagram views
- 488 newsletter subscribers



2025 Financial Reports



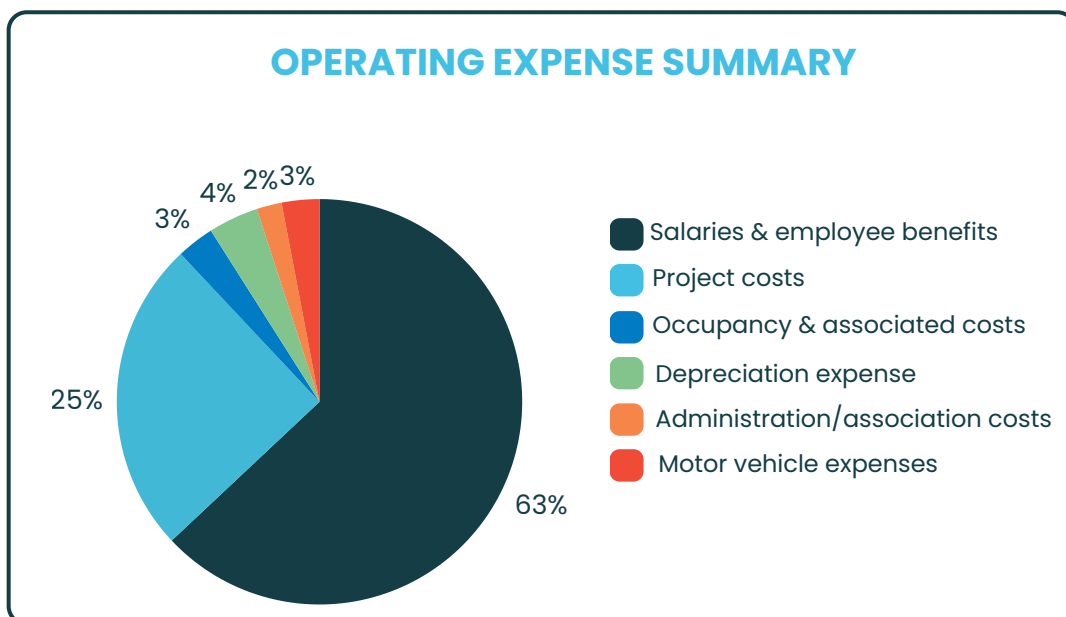
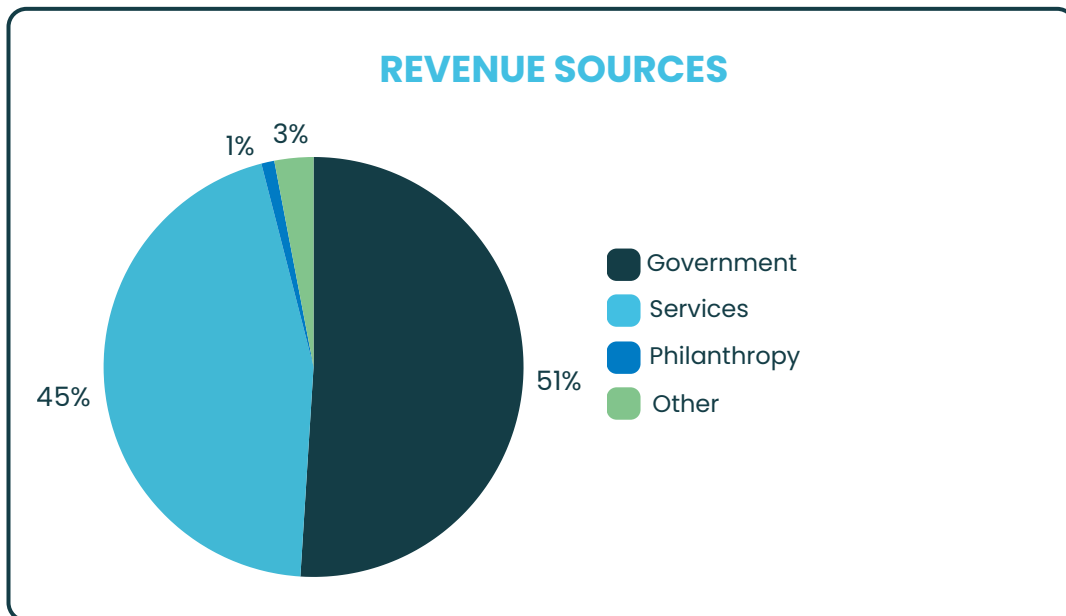
Total Revenue
\$1,603,828



Operating Expenses
\$1,680,067



Gross Profit
-\$76,239



A copy of the full audited financial statements prepared by AASB Accounting & Audit Solutions Bendigo can be downloaded from our website: <https://www.ncllen.org.au/publications> > Financial Reports or [Click Here](#)



Thank you

to our key partners & funders for their continued support



Department of Education
Department of Families, Fairness & Housing
Department of Transport

