



Inquiry into combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions

Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network (BGK LLEN) Response

About the BGK LLEN

The Bayside Glen Eira Kingston Local Learning and Employment Network (BGK LLEN) is part of a network of 31 Local Learning and Employment Networks across Victoria; funded by the Victorian Government to support their objective that 90% of all young people will achieve Year 12 or its equivalent by 2010. Established in 2002, the pivotal role of the BGK LLEN is to act as a regional strategic and facilitation body, bringing together the entire BGK region to collaboratively contribute to improving the education, training and employment outcomes for local young people. The BGK LLEN works in partnership with secondary schools, community members, social and welfare organisations, youth agencies, local government and employers to find local solutions to the local issues facing our young people, and in particular the issues which affect their transitions through school and into further education, training and employment. There are 30 Secondary schools in the BGK LLEN with over 21,000 young people in years 7 to 12 and across the region. On average 3000 young people complete year 12 each year.

Terms of Reference Response

Providing opportunities to recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part time or casual work

Anecdotally we know that a significant proportion of secondary students in our region combine part-time or casual employment with their senior secondary school studies. While some students undertake Australian School-Based Apprenticeship (ASBA) training with their employer and receive credits into their senior school certificates, others do not undertake any formal accredited training as part of their employment and therefore do not receive school-based recognition for the employability skills developed.

With so many students participating in employment while still at school, and a widely-held view that part-time employment positively impacts on the employment prospects of the majority of students, it is important that mechanisms which accredit employment skills are explored.

It is important to note, however, that schools find the administration associated with non-integrated ASBAs (those not done as part of a student's chosen subject load, but completed independently after school hours with an employer – eg. McDonalds) extremely cumbersome. Schools are required to enter in all training plan information and results onto the statewide assessment and reporting database, which can take a considerable amount of time and effort. Schools receive no additional support or assistance to do this, and in schools with a significant number of students participating in non-integrated ASBAs this can be extremely time-consuming. In fact at least two schools in our region advise that they have over 100 students each participating in such ASBAs. With the inputting process taking approx. ½ an

hour per student, sometime more if information is not readily available, this can significantly cut into or add onto a teacher or administrator's workload.

Identifying more flexible, innovative and/or alternative approaches to attaining a senior secondary certificate which support students to combine work and study

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is an innovative approach that allows students who are hands-on learners to combine work and study. The VCAL easily accommodates integrated ASBAs and other forms of structured workplace learning because of a generally flexible approach to subject timetabling.

In our experience in this region, it is much more difficult for students pursuing an academic senior secondary certificate to integrate employment into their study program. This is largely due to school cultures which impose a very rigid timetabling system that does not facilitate students spending time away from school in a workplace. Despite the best efforts of our organisation, our ASBA Partnership Network and our Local Community Partnership (Youth Connect) we are experiencing a reduction in the number of students undertaking a fully integrated ASBA. In many cases students undertaking an ASBA are required to undertake training or workplace experience during their school holidays because their school timetable will not accommodate the program. Similarly, students undertaking a VETiS program are often required to undertake structured workplace learning in school holidays so as not to interfere with their timetabled subjects. Why should some students lose their school holidays because they want to gain industry and employability skills whilst still at school?

What some schools and educators fail to realise is that a genuine and integrated workplace experience can be extremely beneficial for a student, can help them to connect what they are learning in the classroom to the outside world, and support student engagement and retention.

So, any new approaches to attaining a senior school certificate that combines work and study would need to be combined with professional development and support for schools to change cultures which currently do not always support students undertaking work and study.

It is important to involve Local Community Partnerships (and LLENs in Victoria) in future planning and discussions around this issue. Both types of organisations have worked at the coalface in local communities trying to address this issue over many years and have considerable knowledge, models and approaches that could be examined further.

Support that may be required to assist young people combining work and study to stay engaged in their learning, especially where work and study intersects with income support

While every student's needs are different, it is important to ensure that all students have access to transition support as they move through their final years of school. For many students this support is most suitable in a school setting (eg. through a Careers, VET or Welfare Coordinator) whereas for others it is best placed in an external non-school setting. The ongoing provision of federally funded programs such as Local Community Partnerships and Youth Pathways is therefore vital. Both of these programs have strong links with both schools and industry, and can act as an intermediary support for students while maintaining a philosophy that encourages senior school (or equivalent) completion.

BGK LLEN Contact Information

Address: Suite 4, 115 – 117 Bluff Road, Black Rock 3193
Phone: 03 9598 5105
Email: research@bgkllen.com.au