



Operation Newstart Victoria & Inc

Annual Report 2018

2018 has been another successful year, our twenty-second, for Operation Newstart. One hundred and fifty students graduated through one of the five Operation Newstart programs. This is an excellent result, consistent with recent years, and a reflection on the commitment of our facilitation teams, the agencies that continue to support us, and in particular, the many State Secondary Colleges who value the unique offerings of Operation Newstart programs.

Of students entering a program, nearly all successfully completed the course. While we have the potential to provide services to a maximum 164 participants, it should be remembered that some students fail to graduate for reasons that are out of their control, and several leave the program very early in the term. In 2018 thus, ninety-one percent of all entrants graduated. This chart provides a clearer picture of the overall success of programs.

Program	Schools	Grads	Male	Female	12-14 yo	15-17 yo	CALD	Indigen	Disabled	LGBTI
ONG	12	27	14	13	18	9	0	4	2	2
ONSE	17	31	19	12	3	28	4	0	0	2
ONN	13	31	17	14	18	13	6	2	2	0
ONC	7	32	16	16	18	14	6	3	0	3
ONW	13	29	14	15	18	11	8	4	0	0
Total	62	150	80	70	75	75	24	13	4	7
Percent			53	47	50	50	16	8.7	2.7	4.7

It is important to acknowledge that while sixty-two schools referred students into a program, the opportunity remains with other Victorian State Secondary Colleges to avail themselves of the services that Operation Newstart currently provides. It is equally important to acknowledge that Operation Newstart provides a service to nearly 20% of all Government Secondary Schools in Victoria.¹

To assist in mental health and wellness, special thanks go once again to Headspace, YSAS, Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Unit, Orygen Youth Health, the Reach Foundation, Barwon Health and school psychologists. Their collective expertise over many years is invaluable. Highlighting our dependence on professional mental health support, a survey undertaken by Operation Newstart South Eastern in March 2018 of sixty-one (all) participants enrolled in programs 46 to 53 (2015-2017), was designed to assist us in better understanding the mental health needs of this cohort. Seventeen were diagnosed pre-entry by a medical practitioner as suffering a range of mental health issues including anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, self-harming, and/or were ADHD medicated. A further thirty-one were considered by their school and by highly experienced program facilitators to have similar issues to varying degrees, but at the time of entry to the program were undiagnosed. Combined, this data indicates that perhaps as many as 80% of entrants are at risk on the mental health front.

Determining suitable careers pathways remains a key component of programs, and TAFE Tasters are still a vital component of our work. We are indebted once again to Kangan, Gordon, Chisholm and Holmesglen TAFE's. Thanks also to Victoria Police, Local Learning & Employment Networks, and the Magistrate's Courts.

Success is built on partnerships, particularly at the local level. I had the opportunity to list the agencies and organisations that assist three Operation Newstart programs in 2018 (Geelong, Casey and Western) as a component of a grant application. Facilitators listed a total of 86 such bodies, many of which provide services on a pro-bono basis. This is testament to influence that Operation Newstart has at the local level.

The Engage Program (\$90,000 per year) has been renewed for three more years (2018-2020) making provision for youth workers in Operation Newstart Casey, South Eastern and Northern. Caroline Wagner, Ashley Scott and Jessica Todero have made important contributions to the success of each of these programs and we thank them sincerely for their service and commitment. Thank you also to Sally Moonie (Project Manager of the Department

¹ Summary Statistics for Victorian Schools, July 2018: 244 Government Secondary Schools; 80 Primary/Secondary Schools.

of Health and Human Services) for her on-going support for Operation Newstart. Philippa Weetman, Operation Newstart Geelong has been funded through the Give Where You Live Foundation (\$30,000 in 2018/19) as well as the Percy Baxter Charitable Trust (\$31,500 over three years).

It is pleasing to see the continued involvement and financial support shown, especially to Operation Newstart Northern, by the LGA's within Northern's catchment areas. The Cities of Hume, Yarra, Banyule, Moreland and Darebin are regular contributors. With Engage funding support, the youth worker position is close to being fully funded as a consequence of Council assistance.

It is vital that the second staff member, be that person a youth worker, social worker or teacher (we have representatives of each profession in 2019), is fully funded either by Government, by the schools themselves or through philanthropic contributions. While we get by, and have been doing so for some years, and can claim some success here once again (funding is secured for 2019 all programs, and 2020 for Casey, Dandenong, Northern and Geelong)), the sustainability of Operation Newstart continues to be dependent on sourcing funding beyond the schools and the Department of Education and Training. We could not have coped this year without the support of the Percy Baxter Foundation, Give Where You Live, R.E Ross, Jack Brockhoff and the many smaller local service clubs, especially Rotary (Geelong, Endeavour Hills and Narre Warren).

The accepted Social Return on Investment for Victoria is \$3.68 for each one dollar invested in an Operation Newstart program². Our expenses per student in 2018 were \$6,800.00 and with 164 students entering a program, the financial benefit to the Victorian community exceeds four million dollars. The investment in a better future life for each participant can be measured well beyond the immediate and direct benefit to the student and their families.

In September, Operation Newstart South Eastern in conjunction with Dandenong High School commenced extensive work on mapping the relationship between an Operation Newstart program and the Victorian School Curriculum, F-10. While the purpose of this is to confirm what we have long known, it is important to specifically map all program components with what is explicitly taught and assessed within a school environment. Operation Newstart has always believed the Victorian School's Curriculum is embedded within critical learnings within each program. The program has a particular focus on the learning areas around health and physical education and makes important contributions to critical and creative thinking, and to personal and social capabilities.

The importance of this work cannot be overstated, since its primary aim is to have schools, and also the Department of Education better understand that the work of Operation Newstart does not sit outside the school curriculum.

Peter Hill has once again given freely of his time to maintain and enhance the Operation Newstart Victoria website in 2018. A part of the strategic plan, we have made some major changes to the website this past year, recognising the diversity of stakeholders who have an

² Operation Newstart Shepparton: Evaluation: the Nous Group. 2011

interest in regularly visiting the site, and in recognition too of the complexity of our organisation. It is difficult to meet the needs of all where digital communication is so ubiquitous. It is pleasing to see each program utilises modern social media to keep the communication channels open with past and present students.

As well as the Annual General Meeting, Operation Newstart Vic and Inc held four most productive Board and Committee meetings during the year. I would like to thank all Board members for their support and encouragement. It should be noted that some Board members are also members of other affiliated committees. In particular, the Committees of Management of local Operation Newstart programs meet each term, and School Council meetings are held monthly. The organizational chart of Operation Newstart remains as complex in 2018 as it has for many years, reflecting the original “ground-up” impulse for building and sustaining programs.

Dave Finnerty has now retired, and as a consequence has resigned his role as Chairman. I thank Dave sincerely for his many years’ service to Operation Newstart Victoria, and also to acknowledge that Dave has been Chairman of Operation Newstart South Eastern, and Operation Newstart Casey since their establishment. We wish him a long and happy retirement. I thank Dr Pamela St Leger for agreeing to act as Assistant Chair for the time being.

I would also like to acknowledge the support given by Frank Cresia for many years. Due to his work commitments, Frank has resigned from the Board, and thus as Secretary, but continues his close association with Operation Newstart Casey and Operation Newstart South Eastern through the support of Waverley Industries.

We have for many years relied on Organisation and Field Manuals that were written way back in 2005. They have served us well, but it is time for renewal. The manuals have been completely revised and edited, and take account of the changes to the various models over the years. It has been a useful exercise for no less than it demonstrates how little the underlying values, objectives and theory have changed since the founding of Operation Newstart in 1996. The manuals will be published on our website, and any member of the community is welcome to read them. The founder of the theory of Narrative Therapy, Michael White, wrote many years ago that “People are not the problem: the problem is the problem.” It still constitutes the essence of Operation Newstart.

The management, direction and sustainability of Operation Newstart programs rests heavily on the work of their local Committees of Management, and especially the host schools (Travancore, Matthew Flinders GSC, Narre Warren South P-12, Dandenong High School, and Collingwood Alternative School) and we thank them, and in particular their Principals, for their support in 2018. Each program faces significant and unique challenges in meeting the needs of their participants and referring schools, as well as their own local communities, but the bedrock of our success rests with the commitment of the host schools.

In 2019, we welcome Hampton Park Secondary College as the new host school for Operation Newstart Casey, and sincerely thank Narre Warren South P-12 for its strong commitment since the founding of the Casey program in 2007.

Again, the heroes of Operation Newstart programs remain the facilitator leaders – the Program Managers- who work so professionally to produce the wonderful outcomes for student participants, schools and the families. Jimmy Seeary (Casey), Declan Denny (South Eastern), Nick Sack (Geelong), Shane Le Fevre and Jane Beattie (Western), and Brendon Delaney (Northern) have worked so hard, often outside normal working hours to build those special relationships needed to reengage their students in education. No-where is this more evident than in the many graduation ceremonies (20 this year) that celebrate the attempts students are making to change to a new and more positive outlook on life.

And nowhere too was this more evident when we heard that Operation Newstart was a finalist in the 2018 Victorian Education Excellence Awards. These awards celebrate Principals, teachers and support staff who have shown leadership, excellence in teaching and learning, and who build a positive climate for learning and community engagement. That's us!

Best wishes to all.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'P. Wheatley'.

Phil Wheatley OAM
Executive Director
Operation Newstart Inc.

02/04/2019