

The logo consists of the words "life" and "skills" stacked vertically in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is contained within an orange parallelogram that is slightly tilted to the right. A green parallelogram is positioned behind the orange one, also tilted in the same direction, creating a layered effect.

life
skills

La Trobe Lifeskills Annual Report

2012 - 2013

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Participant artwork



Our Mission

Our Mission Statement, Vision, Values, Business Plan and Philosophy, underpin the operations and future image and development of *Lifeskills*.

www.life-skills.net.au

Mission Statement:

We aim to provide opportunities for people living with a disability that enable them to define and realise their goals and maximise their potential.

Our Vision:

People with a disability achieving independence to the best of their ability, living a quality life and realising their potential.



Participants in computer class

Our Values

Express, Create, Grow.

The more extensive Values and Ethics Statement of the organisation remains unchanged. These include the underlying principles of integrity, respect and fairness to participants, their families and each other. *Lifeskills* management is firmly committed to articulating and demonstrating these values both internally and externally, as well as implementing them in our day-to-day operations. The values of all aspects of our service and business embrace:

- **Respect**
- **Care**
- **Growth**
- **Flexibility**
- **Individuality**
- **Creativity**
- **Vision**

To underpin our Mission and Values we also have a Code of Conduct for both our staff and participants. The current participant Code of Conduct is clearly articulated in the Participant Handbook. The current Code of Conduct for staff is contained within our Policies and Procedures Manual which is located at the *Lifeskills* Office.

We are now involved in a number of statewide networks. These networks are of benefit to us in a range of ways, e.g., ensuring that our Policies and Procedures are relevant and current, information exchange, developing partnerships and co-operative arrangements with other organisations and individuals.



Heidelberg School of Art class

Defining Features and Objectives

Our objectives identify the features that *Lifeskills* wishes to emphasise, in its day-to-day operations. These defining “operational features” are as follows:

- Providing pathways for people with disabilities, which focus on educative development, independence, meaningful community participation and creating opportunities for work in the future.
- To offer individual choices within a structured learning environment, which develop skills and confidence in a variety of tasks and provide an outlet for creative expression.
- To develop skills whereby participants have the confidence and ability for further growth and development in order to participate in vocational, recreational and leisure and other activities in the broader community.
- To develop an educative and vocational learning environment which emphasises innovative teaching, excellence in professional practice, scholarship and research in all aspects of our activities.
- To provide opportunities for socialisation, friendships and communication with the flow on effects of increased self esteem and personal satisfaction.
- To provide a stimulating environment whereby excellence is encouraged and developed, and to create opportunities for innovative approaches to teaching and learning.
- Teaching and learning that is both participant centred and is informed by professional practice, scholarship and research, and also develop programs and activities which provide the basis for considered decision making.
- The pursuit of equal opportunity.
- To address the needs of adults with a range of different abilities (e.g., academic, social, vocational, recreational, preparation for work etc.).

Corporate and Staff objectives to compliment the “operational features” are as follows:

- The development of a financial structure which enables the achievement of our objectives, providing a base to offer incentives to our staff, reinvest for the future longevity of the organisation and provide a financial return which guarantees security for the future.
- The development of staff to provide a curriculum conducive to a rich and varied range of participant activities.
- A high quality administration infrastructure to support learning, growth and development.
- Outreach programs and partnerships embracing local communities, other service providers and other sectors.
- The development of a marketing strategy that raises the profile of *Lifeskills*.
- To develop a reputation for excellence that extends beyond the Bundoora and Bendigo Campuses of La Trobe University into the broader community;

...creating
opportunities for
work in the future



Woodwork at Bundoora



Cooking classes at Bundoora

Development and Growth

Development & Growth has been a key component of operations over the last 12 months, and indeed a vital component for the future if *Lifeskills* is to survive in the current turbulence of the sector.

Lifeskills successfully completed the Department of Human Services Quality Framework Audit early in 2013. Congratulations to Pauline, Rebecca and their team for the work they undertook to have this complex task completed successfully.

The Management Team in particular has always had a Strategic Plan which we have worked to, formulated and/or revised at the beginning of each Calendar Year. In recent years the Strategic Plan seems to evolve and change within each year, due to opportunities which arise that we had not envisaged when we formulated/revised the current Plan. The Financial Year 2012/2013 has not been different in this respect however it has been more dramatic in the changes taking place within the sector.

We commenced operations at Bendigo in January, 2012 and after some initial teething problems, the program has grown and developed in a positive sense during 2013. The 2014 Calendar Year is currently under consideration in terms of enrolments and growth of current operations.

The Seed2Feed Program has also established itself as a favourite core component of our service delivery at Bundoora, and as a source of fresh vegetables for the *Lifeskills Café*. The garden is now well developed, and the supply of fresh vegetables has been prolific over the last 12 months.

August 2012 saw the Participant Formal at Bundoora, and in November we again had a camp at Queenscliff. Both events were successful with participants excited about both events. Lots of photographs were taken at both events and some of these are contained within this Report.

Our Art Exhibition was again held at the La Trobe University Art Museum at Bundoora in 2012. This event has always been a great success.



Development and Growth (cont.)

Both the *Lifeskills Vegetarian Café* at Bundoora, and the *Lifeskills Coffee Lounge* at Banyule Community Health Centre continue to grow successfully over the last 12 months. The area of most growth has been the catering emanating from both centres.

In the next 12 months, projects in development include:

- Greater choice of timetable options including consideration of evening and weekend service provision;
- Exploration of e-learning options utilising computers and remote learning opportunities;
- Increased emphasis on individualised program options and choices;
- Development of research opportunities in partnership with La Trobe University and other tertiary institutions;
- Other emerging projects in partnership with other disability service providers.



Knitting class

Looking forward, the opportunities are almost endless, with the major focus on our core business, plus the development of projects which will provide growth for *Lifeskills*.



Queenscliff Camp 2012



Lifeskills Formal 2012

Special Features

Scope of Registration

Originally we only offered Certificate I in Transition Education, but since 2003 we have also offered Certificate I in Work Education.

Since 2007 *Lifeskills* has expanded its Scope of Registration so that we could provide additional courses and learning outcomes for our participants.

The courses we are now accredited to offer are:

- 22129VIC Certificate I in Transition Education;
- 22128VIC Certificate I in Work Education;
- SIT10207 Certificate I in Hospitality (Operations);
- SIT20307 Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations);
- 22012VIC Certificate I Vocational Preparation;
- BSB10107 Certificate I in Business;
- AUR31708A Carry out vehicle detailing;
- AURV231786AA Wash/Clean vehicle and door cavities.
- UEENEOP008B Conduct in-service safety testing of electrical cord assemblies and cord connected equipment.

Lifeskills frequently reviews its Scope of Registration and applies to add qualifications where relevant to participant needs.

Enrolments have been constant over the last few years, at around 8 or 10 per year and exiting participants usually around 4 - 5 each year.

This year we provided five Fee For Service participants with individually tailored programs.

Community Engagement & Partnerships

This year *Lifeskills* has continued to work with the wider community to provide greater opportunities for participants wishing to find employment but who are not ready to work with a Disability Employment Service (DES). Individual Participant Plans have been reviewed and revised every ten weeks and participants have requested more independent living skills be added to their program. We have also noted a growing interest in developing social and relationship skills as participants are encouraged to engage and interact with different groups of people.

The Ready2Work Co-ordinator Marie Stevens, left us early in the year and has been ably replaced by Paul O'Dea. Paul is a certified trainer, plumber and horticulturalist and brings a wealth of experience and skills to the Ready2Work Program. Paul is assisted by participants in managing the vegetable and herb garden surrounding our administration building which yields abundant produce for our *Lifeskills Vegetarian Cafe*. The additions of 'power' produce,

e.g. wheatgrass, kale and beetroot, etc. have proved very popular.

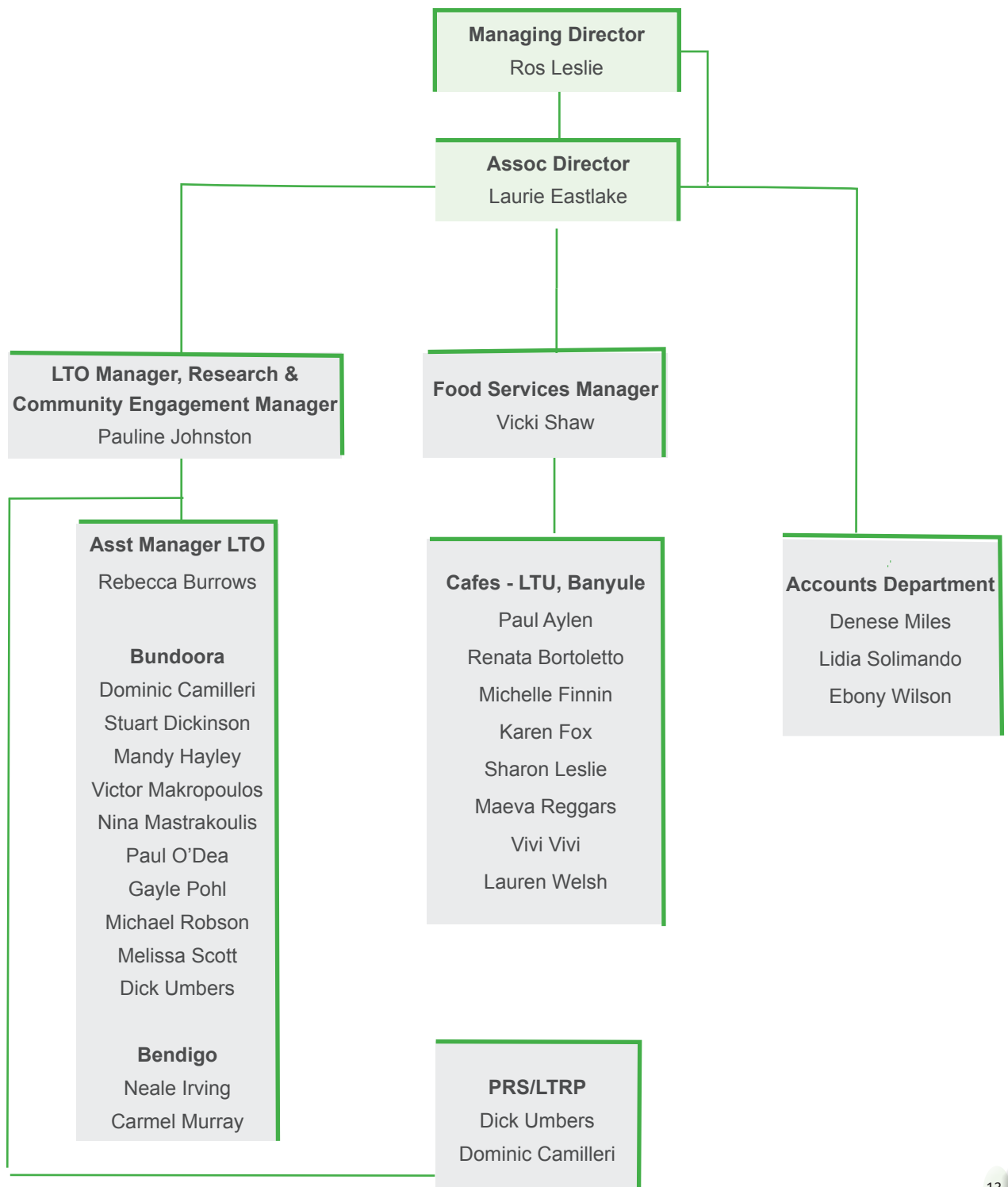
Opportunities on the La Trobe University campus in Bundoora continue to grow and this year we have worked in partnerships with the Environment and Sustainability Bike Share Project. This university Project provides bikes to member students and *Lifeskills* provides regular maintenance and upkeep on the bikes.

Whilst continuing to source relevant work experience and practical placements for participants Paul has concentrated his efforts on trying to gain paid employment for those participants who are hoping to be employed in the long-term. Many participants have been unable to secure regular employment with a DES as they require more long term support. Employers have also appreciated the additional support that we have been able to offer.



Lawn bowls at Hurstbridge.

Organisational Structure



Introducing our Staff

Executive	
Ros Leslie	Managing Director, M.Sp.Ed., MBA
Laurie Eastlake	<i>Associate Director</i>

RTO/Day Programs	
Pauline Johnston	Manager - Lifeskills Training Organisation, Research & Community Engagement
Rebecca Burrows	<i>Assistant Manager (Teaching Staff)</i>
Dominic Camilleri	<i>Car Wash Supervisor (Teaching Staff) - PRS/LTRP and Bundoora</i>
Stuart Dickinson	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff)</i>
Mandy Hayley	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff)</i>
Neale Irving	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff) - Bendigo</i>
Victor Makropoulos	<i>Hireworks Supervisor / Music Program</i>
Nina Mastrakoulis (from Mar 2013)	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff) - Art Program Co-ordinator</i>
Carmel Murray (from 28 May 2012)	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff) - Bendigo</i>
Paul O'Dea (from Mar 2013)	<i>Ready2Work Co-ordinator</i>
Gayle Pohl	<i>Receptionist / Admin Officer</i>
Melissa Scott	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff)</i>
Marie Stevens (till Feb 2012)	<i>Ready2Work Co-ordinator & Program Manager (Teaching Staff)</i>
Tamara Tallent (till Feb 2012)	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff) - Art Program Co-ordinator</i>
Richard Umbers	<i>Program Manager (Teaching Staff) - PRS/LTRP and Bundoora</i>

Introducing our Staff

Cafe/Catering	
Vicki Shaw	<i>Food Services Manager</i>

LTU Cafe/Catering	
Paul Aylen	<i>Chef</i>
Michelle Fynn (from April 2013)	<i>Front of House</i>
Karen Fox	<i>Front of House</i>
Sharon Leslie	<i>Front of House</i>
Maeva Reggars	<i>Front of House</i>
Vivi Vivi	<i>Front of House</i>
Michelle Baker	<i>Lifeskills Vocational Placement & Banyule Cafe</i>
Jessica Collin	<i>Lifeskills Vocational Placement & Banyule Cafe</i>

Banyule Cafe	
Renata Bortoletto	<i>Front of House</i>
Lauren Welsh	<i>Front of House</i>

Finance/Administration	
Tania Hopkins (till Oct 2012)	<i>Accounts</i>
Denese Miles (from Jan 2013)	<i>Accounts</i>
Lidia Solimander (from Oct 2012)	<i>Accounts</i>
Ebony Wilson	<i>Accounts casual</i>

Professional Development

Lifeskills values all its staff and aims to provide a comprehensive professional development program. Relevant opportunities are offered to staff as they present during the year. In addition all staff members are encouraged to apply for professional development sessions i they believe it would increase their skills and experience whilst benefitting participants. The Managing Director and the Manager of the *Lifeskills Training Organisation* also took a Study Trip to the UK and USA to visit innovative programs and attend a British Institute for Learning Disabilities (BILD) Conference in Oxford.

Professional Development included:

- First Aid Level II / CPR - Premium Health;
- Orientation to the NDIA (NDIS/DCA) - Pilot Project Barwon Region;
- Person Centred Planning - DHS;
- Positive Relationships;
- Certificate IV in Hospitality (NMIT);
- Leader's Training Program - Coaching Young People For Success;
- Advanced Diploma of Community Services Coordination
- Converge Conference (E-Works)
- TAE Certificate IV in Workplace Training & Assessment - 4 staff
- NDS WHS Forum: Risk Minimisation



Bendigo Fire station



"Changing Gears" Program

Ros Leslie

Director's Report

Managing Director's Welcome and Thank You!



It is my privilege to write a report for the *La Trobe Lifeskills* 2012/2013 Annual Report.

This last 12 months has been a year typified by change. These changes include:

- The bi-partisan introduction of the NDIS across Australia;
- The announcement of the Victorian Trial of the NDIS in the Barwon Region;
- A change of Federal government which has implications for policy and funding changes;
- A re-structuring of the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS);
- A change in the nature of the DHS audits, compliance and reporting functions;
- The increasing emphasis at both Commonwealth and State levels of disability funding directly related/managed by the targeted person (individualised funding);
- A contraction of the number of organisations within the disability sector.

Individualised funding, the reduction or elimination of support to significant numbers of our participant group, the closure of TAFE's, and the closure of a number of service providers has been a reality check which some of us predicted, most of us hoped would not eventuate and none of us really understood who would survive or otherwise. This change is likely to impact even more significantly over the next couple of years and so working collaboratively, with other service providers, is a priority for *Lifeskills*.

We are increasingly working with other organisations across the state to share information, work collaboratively on possible projects/future directions, and possibly share back office functions in the future. In doing this it has been necessary to upgrade our IT systems, and again we are increasingly working in the changing environment of Social Media and communication(s).

Our commencement at Bendigo at the beginning of 2012 has consolidated over the last 12 months and our presence in this geographic area has opened up new working arrangements, and many ideas for growth and development into the future. The 2013 calendar year has seen the emphasis on maintaining and growing the *Lifeskills* brand in Bendigo and its environs, and on building this location into a sustainable operation.

The LTO at Bundoora has had a particularly busy year with the successful completion of both DHS and AQTF audits, and the extension of our Scope of Registration. The work involved in maintaining our accreditation, insuring that our reporting and compliance systems are kept up-to-date, is ongoing and ever changing. This has been a challenge to all, and a definite stretch for the internal resources of staff, systems and technology.

With the restructuring of DHS, effective and/or efficient communication with them has become ever more difficult. Changes at the DHS end, in staff, in communication/reporting systems/requirements, have all become impediments to effective communication and problem solving ability. This aspect of effectively managing our business, in a professional way, has become an ongoing, and time consuming, task for the Management Team.

Ros Leslie

Director's Report

The effect on our participants, and their families, of the profound and rapid changes taking place within this sector is also recognised. No longer can young people with disabilities expect to receive support from the Government after they leave school. It only seems like yesterday, and certainly less than 10 years since the State Government promised "lifelong support" for those with disabilities. Now the political climate does not even guarantee any support for many of these young people who are leaving school. Indeed the most that many of them can expect is "transition to work" in a very short period of time. *Lifeskills* certainly supports the approach of supporting all who can, and who wish to, into a transition to work. Indeed *Lifeskills* has demonstrated its commitment to this approach over many years, by virtue of its Ready2Work program. However the lack of recognition by government, that this transition may take an extended period of time, is not in our experience, a true reflection of the support required to attain lifelong positive outcomes for this cohort of people. We also believe that those with disabilities deserve, and indeed have the right, to make choices – other than work (mainstream, supported or as volunteers).

I wish to acknowledge the families of our participants who have also supported us over an extended period, particularly the last 12 months. Once again we have had their support in a range of ways, and this is most appreciated. We are very conscious of the changes and pressures which are impacting on them also. Indeed over the last 12 months the amount of support our staff have had provided to our own community, and particularly over ongoing funding problems, has increased enormously, making everyone's job more complex and challenging.

At the beginning of every Calendar Year, the *Lifeskills* Management Team undertakes a concentrated period of Strategic Planning. At the beginning of 2013 this was again undertaken, with this process identifying a range of new initiatives which we have targeting for development and implementation in future years. This has kept this small Management Group extremely busy, but excited about how we are growing and developing. Indeed "Change" seems to be the culture of the day, and like any disability service provider which wishes to survive, we are fast changing the way we do things, and understanding our business more in the process.

I would like to thank the range of people within La Trobe University who have worked with us, and assisted us over the last 12 months. This support ranges all the way from the Vice-Chancellors office, across the University to include the Security Staff, Maintenance staff, and others too numerous to mention. La Trobe University itself is undergoing change, and similarly to *Lifeskills*, the pressures (financial and otherwise) are immense. Nevertheless I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those who have been supportive, and assisted us, over the last 12 months.

As mentioned earlier, over recent years we have also expanded our network of colleagues and organisations with whom we work and collaborate. Because we are now working in 4 DHS regions, i.e., 3 city (Northern, Eastern and Southern) and 1 country (Loddon Mallee) region, our networks have grown and the information sharing has been enormously beneficial. In addition we have been fortunate to be part of a number of syndicates comprised of service providers across Victoria, and again the information sharing and support has been very beneficial to all of us.

Ros Leslie

Director's Report

I also wish to thank our loyal staff, no matter where they are working. Because we now have a number of operating centres, the staff are located in a range of geographic areas and work places. The positive way in which they provide support and advice to our participants and their families, and the way in which they have worked together to problem solve has been most impressive and appreciated. On behalf of the Management Team I wish to thank them for their contribution and the positive way they approach everything. I also wish to acknowledge and recognise that their hard work is demonstrated by the outcomes our participants achieve.

Ros Leslie
Managing Director
October 2013



Formal - *Lifeskills'* Music Group
"No Returns"



Art Class

Pauline Johnston

LTO Manager Report, Research & Community Engagement

Each year I comment on how busy the year has been as though it is a surprise or a rare occurrence, this year I will refrain and say only that there was never a dull moment and silver linings were in abundance. Sadly, at the beginning of 2013 we said farewell to Tamara Tallent, our art teacher and Marie Stevens our Ready2Work Coordinator. Both have been valuable members of the *Lifeskills Training Organisation* (LTO) team and we look forward to seeing them again in the future. Participants are always glad to re-acquaint with past participants and staff members to the various social functions and presentations throughout the year.

The commencement of the NDIS Pilot Project (Barwon Region) means that the anticipated changes in funding assessment and allocation has already begun to filter to the wider Department of Human Services (DHS) regions. Across the Northern Region the protocols for interacting with schools, planners, participants and families varies. In Bundoora we worked hard with the neighbouring schools, attended Career Forums, Expos, etc. in order to ensure that as many students, transitioning from school, were aware of who we are and what we offer. We also engaged in many 'look-see' opportunities and 'trial days' for interested Year 11 and 12 students and welcomed for transition periods those who wished to attend our program in the following year. In Bendigo the planning for students transitioning from school to other opportunities still resides with the DHS planners which has meant that there is less opportunity to engage directly with the broader 'family' of interested parties.

The LTO Strategic Planning Meetings have taken into consideration the changing environment and the anticipated future needs and requirements of people as they make the shift to the NDIS/NDIA. We attend as many updates as possible to ensure that we are abreast of the progress of the Pilot Projects as possible.

The 2013 intake was larger than past years both in Bundoora and Bendigo. In December 2012 a record number of participants achieved their goals, attained their qualifications and for some the transition into employment was the realisation of a long-term endeavour. We welcomed Paul O'Dea as our new Ready2Work Coordinator and he has found it an increasing challenge to source appropriate practical placements and assist young people into paid employment. However, not to be easily deterred Paul has managed to source several new employers willing to offer opportunities to our participants.

Carmel Murray and Neale Irving worked with a large cohort of participants in Bendigo. This is essentially a Transition to Employment (TTE) program and most of the participants are undertaking accredited courses and qualifications. We were lucky enough to be able to offer a horticulture program at the Junortoun Trade Training Centre. This is a state-of-the-art facility allowing participants to hone their horticultural skills by landscaping the front area of the Centre and also work with the many animals on site. We have been lucky to work, at the Centre, with some of students and staff at the Catholic Secondary College.

“Freedom is nothing but a chance to be better.”

Albert Camus

Pauline Johnston

LTO Manager Report, Research & Community Engagement

Bendigo participants in our Hospitality and Independent Living Skills (Cooking) program also benefitted from the use of the industrially equipped kitchens at the Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE (BRIT). There has been a growing demand, both in Bundoora and Bendigo, from people wishing to take part in our Independent Living Skills program. The program at BRIT provides skills in budgeting, meal planning and preparation.

At the Presentation Evening many participants were presented with their Certificate I and II in Hospitality, the success of these participants is able supported by the staff at our *Lifeskills Vegetarian Cafe* and Banyule Coffee Lounge as well as the teaching staff. The practical application of the skills they are learning cannot be underestimated and we are fortunate to have our own facilities to offer these practical placements.

Under the able guidance and support of Rebecca Burrows the Changing Gears has gone from leaps to bounds. We offered this program, designed to enable participants to gain the Learner Permit, in Bundoora and Bendigo. Several participants gained the 'L's and went on to obtain their 'P' plates. In the future we will work with Nillumbik Council to provide the L2P program to further support participants wishing to gain a full driver's license.

We have continued to expand our integrated opportunities with La Trobe University (LTO). This year we again worked with Professor Chris Bigby and her students who are undertaking undergraduate courses. Our participants value and look forward to this annual interaction with her students.

As we move towards the new year we will continue to ensure that we provide quality programs that seek not to over service but to guarantee that we meet the variety needs of our participants who work towards optimum independence and self-advocacy.

Pauline Johnston
Manager - Lifeskills Training Organisation,
Research & Community Engagement

“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”

Albert Einstein





Staff

Teaching and Learning

Strategic Direction

To attract, develop and retain staff of high calibre.

The reputation and standing of any organisation rests with the quality of its staff. *Lifeskills* has a workforce that is committed to the growth and development of our participants and organisation.

Strategies

- Maintain and improve the workplace environment for staff.
- Increase staff professional development opportunities.
- Establish policies which engender a culture of participation, ownership and inclusion.
- Ensure equal opportunities for all staff including a work environment free of discrimination.

Outcomes

- Attraction of well trained, creative experienced and innovative staff.
- Increase and maintain staff satisfaction.
- Ensure that excellence in performance is recognised and rewarded.
- Increase the number of staff participating in professional development opportunities.
- Participation and ownership in the future of the organisation.
- Maintenance of a work environment that offers equal opportunity and is free of discrimination.

Strategic Direction

To maintain the commitment of *Lifeskills* to facilitating quality learning outcomes while ensuring that the curriculum offers a flexible and innovative mix of educational, vocational and recreational programs, which enhance participants journey towards independence and life opportunities.

Strategies

- Adjusting the curriculum to the varying needs of students.
- Building on the strengths of the long term programs to provide worthwhile daily activities that grow independence in daily living, and pathways to life long opportunities.
- Equipping those who choose vocational education with the skills to enter into a range of employment options.
- Refining overall objectives for each stream to accurately reflect their unique focus and outcomes.
- Monitoring and reflecting on our teaching methods and practice to ensure that the highest quality teaching is provided.
- Integrating planning and coordination across the curriculum.
- Recognising and rewarding teaching excellence and innovation.

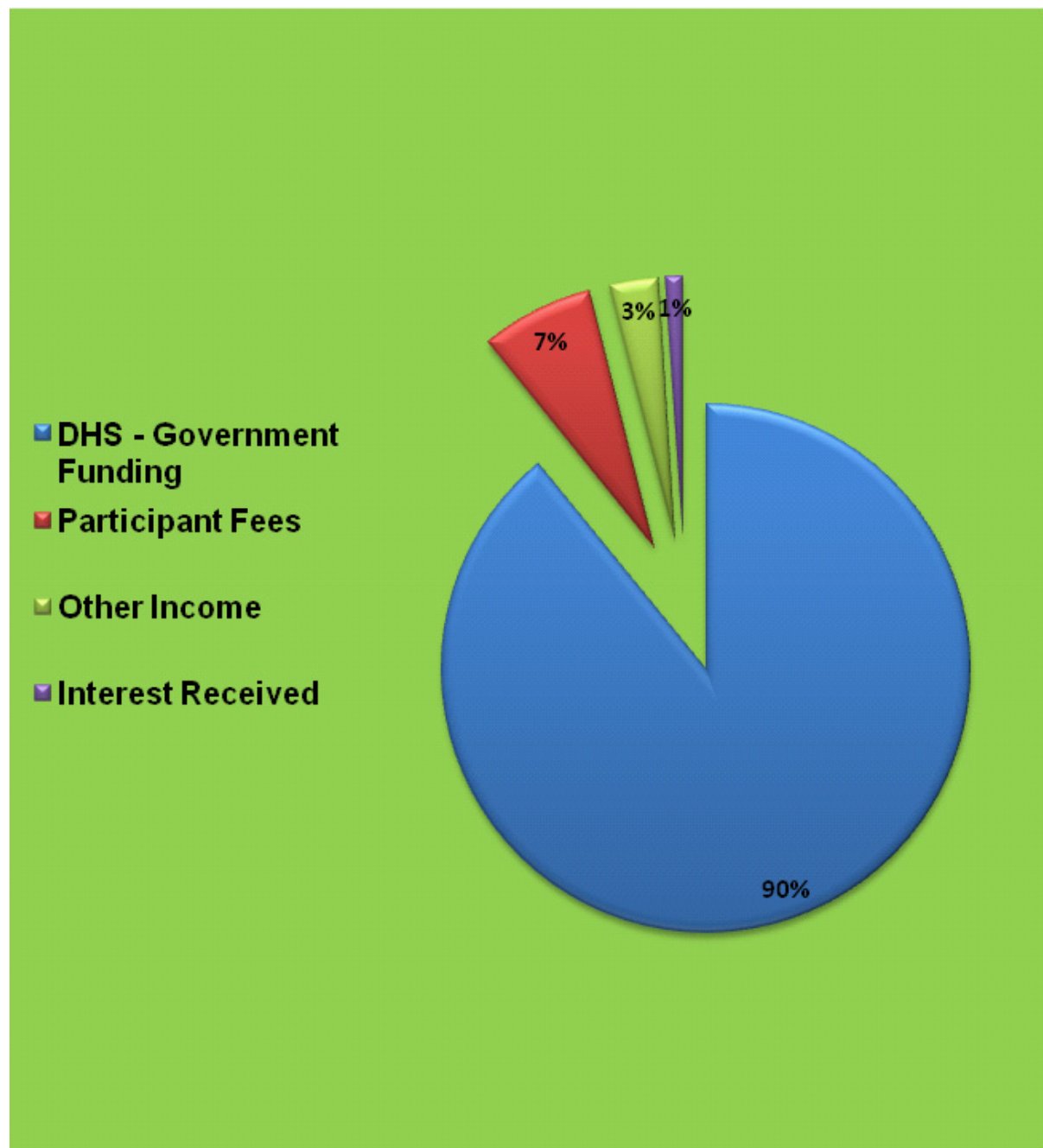
Outcomes

- Adjustment of the profile of the curriculum options undertaken in a planned and strategic way.
- Encouragement of innovation and creative teaching.
- Systematic reporting on learning outcomes.
- Enhanced learning outcomes.

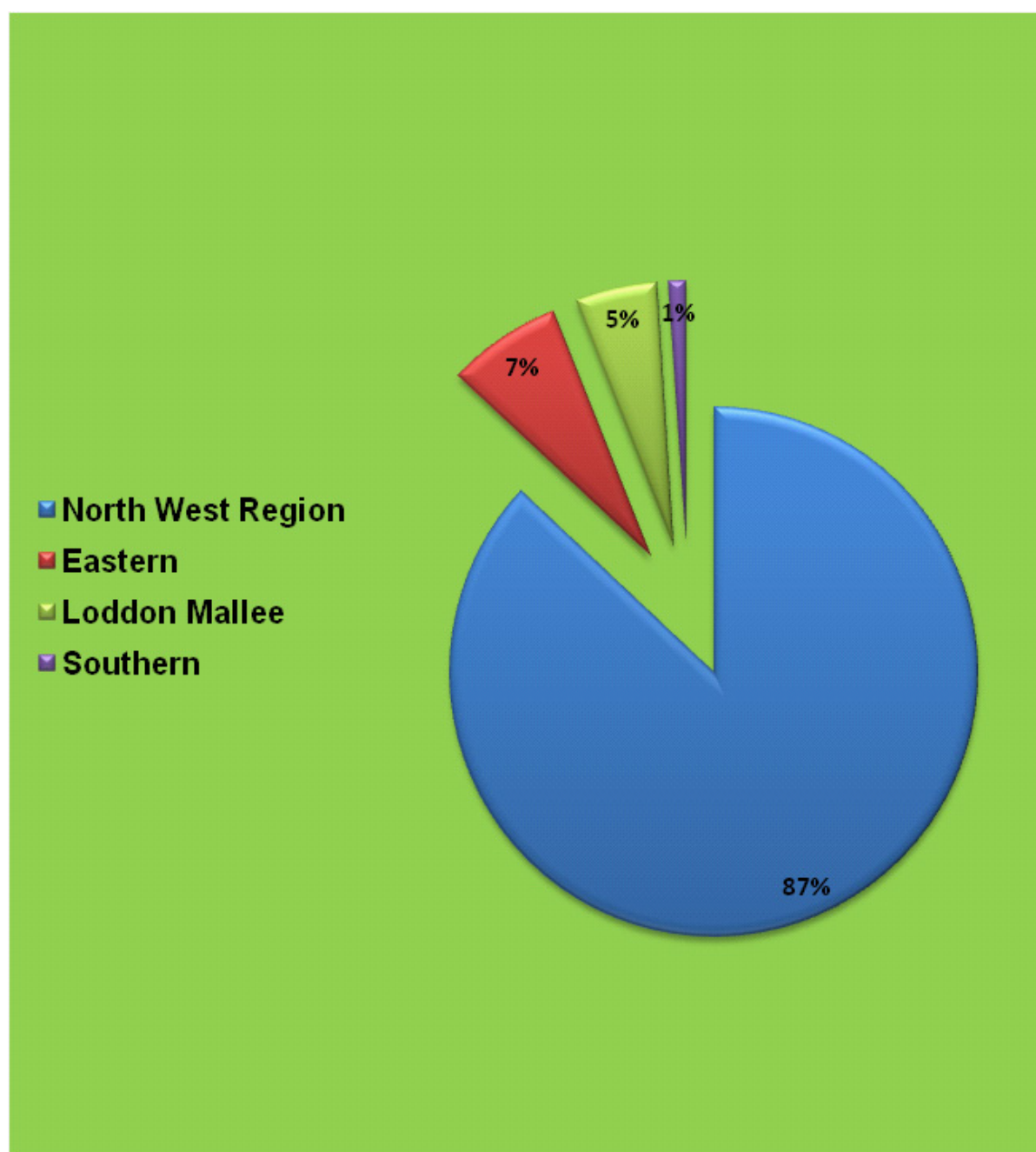
Expenditure



Income and Finance



Income and Finance by DHS Region





Lifeskills Participants' Artwork





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