

What's it REALLY Like...

Introduction to WIRL

Matching Learning with Jobs

wirl.nellen.org.au

Branded as 'What's It REALLY Like...' (WIRL), The Workforce Development Project supports young people to experience workplaces early, at Year 9, before they select their senior school study areas that lead to their vocational and academic careers. It is a strategic solution to the mounting need for a locally trained and skilled workforce.

WIRL has the capacity to address workforce shortages by systemising the mechanisms that showcase local entry-level employment opportunities. 'WIRL delivers industry experience workshops and Certificate II / III learning as part of the Year 9 curriculum, connecting young people to local businesses that enable them to develop practical work skills and meaningful mentor relationships in a 'real' work environment. WIRL provides place-based solutions for rural and regional workforce needs in the health, community services, agriculture, horticulture, and food & fibre manufacturing sectors.

WIRL delivers two forms of engagement:

- 01 **Industry Experience Workshops** that connect students to practical industry activities through site visits to local businesses. The students participate, as a group, in practical and interactive activities that involve the equipment, processes, and tasks typical of the industry. The students meet the business owner – the employer – and, where possible, the employees, trainees, or apprentices in the business. The students can observe, ask questions, and undertake 'hands on' learning about that industry *from the inside*.
- 02 **Class-based Certificate II / III** study delivered as part of the Year 9 curriculum. This engagement connects students to local industry and mentors through workshops and placements and supports the development of practical work skills in a *real* workplace whilst attaining formal qualifications.

The school circumstances and resources will inform which of these initial engagement strategies are implemented, or if a combination of the two is possible once the business relationships are developed and embedded in their school community.

The Workforce Development Project (and WIRL) grew out of a model trialled and developed by Mansfield Secondary College from 2009-2015. A Regional Development Victoria Regional Skills Fund grant introduced the model into 19 schools across seven local government areas in the Ovens Murray Region of NE Victoria. The project was delivered from 2018-2022 as a partnership between NE TRACKS and NELLEN.

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