



Youthrive Victoria Winter Newsletter

A Message from our CEO

First semester has been a period of continued expansion and experimentation at Youthrive Victoria. We continue to grow our reach and impact all across the State. In this newsletter you will hear about a variety of programs and the many new partnerships that are evolving.

Along with onboarding 50 new scholarship recipients, a major focus has been expansion of Branch Out Mentoring (BOM) to more young Victorians. We now have a team of nine Rural Engagement Coordinators (REC) working across the State from Warrnambool to Shepparton and Ararat to Leongatha. Thanks to many strong local partnerships we are well on the way to offering BOM to more than 140 rural secondary schools within two years. Most recently we commenced working with Tomorrow Today Benalla, NE Tracks LLEN Wangaratta and the South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN Leongatha to bring BOM to their local schools.

I am also excited to share news about a partnership we have formed with the Federation University Future Regions Research Centre (FRRRC). FRRRC is partnering in a new research project over the next two years to assess the impact of Branch Out Mentoring. Whilst also gaining the opportunity to hear from hundreds of year 12 students from rural Victoria about the challenges they face as they transition beyond secondary school. As part of this project, we will be engaging a master's student to conduct significant aspects of the social impact research. We anticipate this will provide major insights into the effectiveness of our programs and inform ways we can continue to improve and evolve.

Thanks to support from the YMCA Open Doors program we hosted a June long weekend snow camp at Falls Creek and in July we held the second four-day Rural Leaders' Summit funded through the Gidleigh Foundation. Each residential event was well attended and enjoyed by all. The ongoing support of many individuals, foundations and funders continues to ensure that our work can expand to impact more young rural Victorians.

On Wednesday July 23rd we hosted the annual supporters event, at which several scholars and alumni shared their stories. It was another great opportunity to hear firsthand about the impact of our work. Thankyou to Equity Trustees for providing the venue for the evening and to all who were able to attend. I wish to thank all of our supporters, partners and friends for their generous support.

Warm regards,

Andrew McGuckian
CEO, Youthrive Victoria



2026 Scholarships now open for rural and regional students!

Two incredible opportunities are now available for young people living in rural and regional Victoria, thanks to YouThrive Victoria.

The YouThrive Victoria University Scholarship round is now open for Year 12 students planning to attend university in 2026. Valued at \$30,000 over three years, the scholarship also includes access to mentoring, leadership development, and a lifelong support network. Applications close on 15 August 2025.

For young people aged 16 to 24 planning to study at TAFE or start an apprenticeship, the Rural Chances Scholarships offer support to kickstart a career in trades or vocational training. With over 30 scholarships available, each worth \$5,000, funds can be used for tools, travel, course fees and more. The application process is simple with applications open until 20 October 2025.

These scholarships are designed to support young people who are passionate about contributing to rural communities and need help to overcome the financial barriers that come with further education.

To find out more or apply, visit: www.youthrivevictoria.org.au/scholarships





Celebrating Young Rural Leaders at Scholars' Luncheon

Youthrive Victoria's 2025 scholars were recognised on Sunday, March 16, at The Mill Castlemaine during Youthrive Victoria's annual Scholars' Luncheon.

The event brought together scholarship recipients from across Victoria to celebrate their achievements and future aspirations. Youthrive Victoria presented 2025 University and Rural Chances scholars with their scholarship certificates.

The scholarships have been made possible through the generous support of philanthropic supporters, individual donors, and charitable organisations who are passionate about fostering education aspirations among young rural people.

Many of our donors, supporters and Board members attended the event, giving them a chance to meet the inspiring young scholars they have supported through donations, in-kind support and mentoring.

The Scholars Luncheon not only celebrates individual achievements but also highlights the importance of mentorship and community collaboration in fostering success among young people.

In line with Youthrive Victoria's mission to support young rural leaders, a total of 49 new scholarships have been awarded for 2025.





Empowering conversations, big ideas, and positive teamwork shine through in our latest regional visit

Youthrive Victoria's Dream Seeds program aims to build aspiration, resilience and connection for students leaving primary school, to better prepare them for secondary school and the challenges they may face. The workshops are presented by young volunteers who have shared lived experience growing up in rural Victoria.

On June 2 and 3, the Dream Seeds team hit the road for an action-packed visit to Benalla P-12 College, delivering four workshops over two days to more than 130 enthusiastic Grade 5/6 students.

Led by volunteer presenters Mia, Ariel, Kat, Lateisha, and Kayla, the team explored values, aspirations, and how young people can shape their futures with purpose and confidence. With Mia, Ariel, and Kat stepping into the presenter role for the first time, it was inspiring to see new and experienced team members working together effortlessly to deliver engaging, thoughtful, and fun sessions that left a real impact.

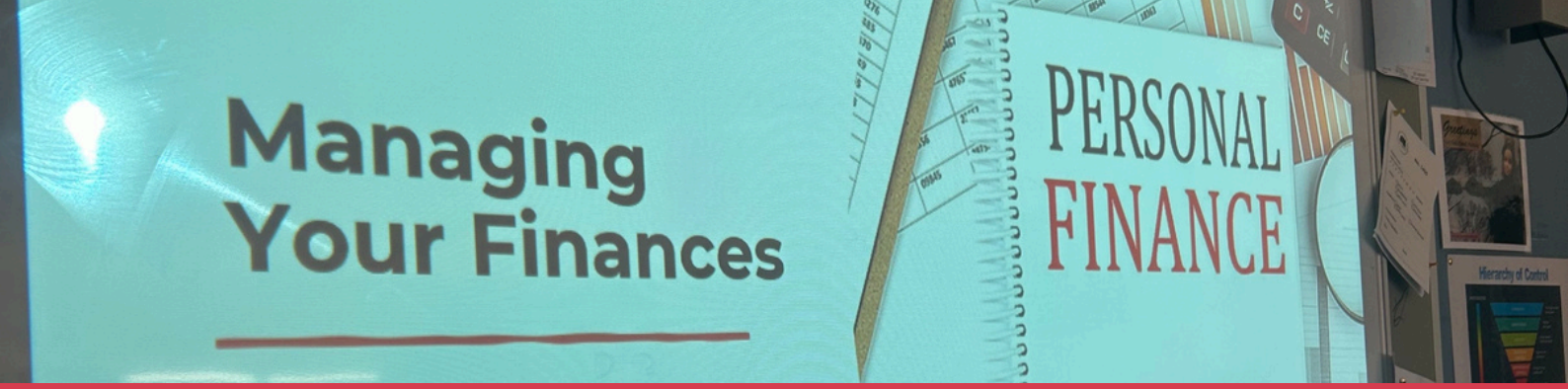
The Dream Seeds team returned to Benalla later in June for workshops at St Joseph's Primary School, delivering four sessions to groups of around 35 Grade 5/6 students.

Led by Rural Engagement Coordinator Paige Pickering, our volunteer crew – Lateisha, Katherine, Ariel, Bella, and Jacob – worked seamlessly together, forming a close-knit team and delivering meaningful, engaging workshops. Each presenter brought their unique style to the sessions, creating a fun and supportive space for students to explore their values and futures.

One highlight? The ever-popular "This or That" game, where students chose between two different opinions (like dogs or cats!) and discussed where they stood. It was a brilliant way to show that it's okay to think differently – and that respectful conversations can help us understand each other better.

The Dream Seeds program continues to provide rural students with the tools to dream big, think differently, and grow in confidence.

We would also like to acknowledge the Tomorrow Today Foundation for their contribution to this Dream Seeds program, and past programs in Benalla.



**Managing
Your Finances**

**PERSONAL
FINANCE**

Branch Out Mentoring: Rural Engagement Coordinators on the Road!

It's been a busy and productive few months for our Rural Engagement Coordinators – Jacob, Paige, Courtney, Claudia, Marnie, and Lacie – as they've travelled across Victoria delivering Branch Out Mentoring sessions in schools and connecting with students about life beyond Year 12.

From Centrelink and finances to scholarships, gap years, and moving out, these sessions are packed with real-world advice and personal insights.

Here's just a snapshot of what they've been up to:

Paige has delivered sessions in the Ballarat Region at Woodmans Hill, Damascus College, Daylesford College, Loreto College, and Phoenix, with highlights including group discussions on rental options, budgeting chats over snacks, and even a surprise pizza shout from a teacher!

Courtney, in the Central Goldfields region, returned to her hometown to run sessions at Highview College and Maryborough Education Centre, where she shared her own moving-out experience and was met with enthusiastic students and supportive staff.

Jacob, covering the Warnambool region, visited Mortlake P-12, where students explored Centrelink payments and discovered the Student Start-Up Loan.

Claudia, based in Charlton, wrapped up her program at Boort, delivering four sessions with a bright and motivated group of students who are already making exciting post-school plans.

Marnie has been busy in the Greater Shepparton region, running sessions at Numurkah Secondary College and Cobram Anglican Grammar School. A highlight has been the gap year discussions, and she has found her time at the schools to be fun and full of great conversations.

Lacie has been laying the groundwork in the Ararat and Hamilton areas, delivering initial presentations and locking in Branch Out Mentoring sessions for the term ahead. She also ran her first session at Stawell Secondary College.



Youthrive Victoria & Parliament of Victoria team up to strengthen connections with regional youth

Recently, nine other young people and I attended the South West Coast Young Leaders Program; a collaboration between Youthrive Victoria and Parliament Victoria. The program was designed to equip young people with a better understanding of parliamentary processes, show us how to engage with MPs for future initiatives, and give us a platform to support our local South West Coast community. During the program, we met one-on-one with various MPs and parliamentary staff, learned about processes like the Legislative Process and Question Time, and ultimately developed a three-part project we hope to launch in Warrnambool.

At the program's conclusion, we pitched this project to a room of parliamentary staff. The first part of the project involves creating a networking platform to connect MPs with youth groups across regional Victoria. The second is an online toolkit containing resources and information about Parliament and how young people can engage with their MPs. The third component is an event — ideally a concert in the South West Coast — to promote our first two initiatives and officially launch the project.

From speaking with other participants and reflecting on my own experience, it's clear this program was a huge success. We gained valuable confidence in interacting with Parliament Victoria and engaging directly with MPs.

There's often a perception or stereotype surrounding Parliament and its members, but this program helped break down those barriers for many of us. One of the most impactful, and surprisingly fun, moments for me was the morning tea with the MPs. I'm hopeful we can move this project forward with the continued support of Youthrive Victoria and Parliament Victoria, and make the most of this incredible opportunity.

Jacob, Rural Engagement Coordinator

Photo: Supplied by Parliament of Victoria



Youthrive Rural Summit 2025 - An Experience to Remember!

From July 17th to 20th, I had the opportunity to be a Program Leader at the Youthrive Rural Summit, and it was truly an unforgettable experience. The group was made up of amazing individuals who were supportive, inclusive, and so much fun to be around.

One of the highlights was the Youthrive Amazing Race. The group was so competitive, and it made for some really fun moments as we all worked together and pushed ourselves to new limits. It was wonderful to see everyone step up and support each other in such a high-energy challenge.

We were also fortunate to have some incredible guest speakers. The “CTRL your scroll” session really hit home for me. It made me realise just how much time I spend on my phone and how important it is to be present in the moment. The impact was immediate—everyone at the camp, myself included, made a conscious effort to be mindful of our phone use and really embrace the experience while we were there.

Another speaker who stood out was Tom Dunn, whose story of kayaking the Murray River for Aurora was really inspiring. His journey wasn't just physically demanding but also a huge mental challenge. Hearing about his experiences really put life into perspective for all of us. It made us realise that if we put our minds to it, we can achieve anything.

Beyond the activities and the inspiring speakers, what stood out the most was the connections that were made. The camp really enabled everyone to feel closer to one another and allowed them to have experiences that they will remember for the rest of their lives.

Overall, it was a wonderful experience that helped me to strengthen connections to the alumni, as well as seeing them build connections and life long friendships with one another.

Paige Pickering - Rural Engagement Coordinator



Youthrive Victoria's Supporter Event: Empowering Rural Voices, Strengthening Rural Futures

On Wednesday July 23rd, Alumni, supporters, staff and scholars came together at the offices of Equity Trustees in Melbourne to celebrate the impact of Youthrive Victoria.

The event was a heartfelt and inspiring evening, marked by the powerful voices of a number of our young people who shared their stories with honesty and courage.

The room was filled with emotion as we listened to personal journeys of resilience, growth, and hope. Each speaker spoke from the heart, offering a glimpse into their lives and the challenges they've overcome with the support of the Youthrive community. Supporters left deeply touched, many commenting on how the stories showed them why what we do at Youthrive matters so much.

The event was a genuine success, and we are grateful to all our supporters, partners, scholars and alumni for all that they do to support us. A special thanks also to Equity Trustees for the use of their event space to host this year's event.

Nicole Thomas - Scholar Liaison

