

On 16 May Jo attended the Annual Celebration of the Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley Local Learning and Employment Network. (Mmvllen). It was also the AGM and included reports from Chair and CEO, guest speakers and presentation of awards.

For those members not familiar with Mmvllen, it is a government-funded community organisation established 23 years ago to support young people on their journey from school to the next phase of their lives and careers. It offers them guidance, skills and opportunities.

Two of the programs offered by Mmvllen are:

- Youth Hub, a portal to everything students need to know about life after school. For those who are struggling to find paid work, not sure what to study, needing help finding an apprenticeship.
- Youth Mentoring Career pathways program. This offers mentoring, work placement and skill building workshops for 16 - 24-year-olds connected to the Maribyrnong and Moonee valley area.

Daniel Shields from Australian Spatial Analytics (ASA) gave a wonderful keynote address relating ASA's unique social enterprise model and focus on employing and upskilling neurodiverse young people.

Guest MC was Tommy Quick. Tommy shared his journey after suffering a stroke at age 12, describing the many ways in which he has challenged himself to grow and work towards a fulfilling career. He had to fit back into mainstream school, Footscray High School, TAFE, and then eventually into University (Bs Human Nutrition).

After he completed all these academic achievements, he also walked the Kokoda trail and started a business in personal training. He recently completed a 10,000 kms three-year-long, [4 points journey](#) across Australia by trike, for which he has been nominated for the 2024 Fundraiser of the Year for the Stroke Foundation.



Two very special awards were presented both in their third years.

2023 Sue Fowler Award

Winner: Roberta Zekic, Western English Language School (WELS)

Sue Fowler was the inaugural CEO of Mmvllen from 2001 to 2015. She established the organisation and its identity as a caring, supportive and empowering force for local young people, especially those with barriers to education, training and employment.

In her role at WELS, Roberta has supported hundreds of newly arrived students from diverse backgrounds, guiding them and their families in their transition to secondary schools and other pathways. Roberta goes above and beyond to assist these young people, working with a network of community partners in and around Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley to make sure they feel supported on their journey. A number of graduates contributed to the nomination, describing Roberta's compassion, capacity for listening, and ultimately the impact she has on their lives.

Roberta gave a lovely speech reflecting on her own pathway to this position, and former student Semer shared a few words about her own journey and the impact Roberta has had on her life as she established roots in Victoria.



Roberta Zekic

2023 Mitchell Celantano Trade Award

Winner: Jackson from Essendon Keilor College

This award recognises vocational students who have demonstrated great work ethic and commitment to their career pathways. The recipient receives an official acknowledgement, trophy, and \$500 prize towards their vocational career pathway.

Jackson's host employer, DH Engineering in Sunshine West spoke of an engaged student/trainee who showed great commitment to pursuing training opportunities and learning from experienced professionals. They also noted his role as a leader in the EKC community and an advocate for positive mental health. Jackson has recently gone on to start an apprenticeship with Qantas.



Jackson receiving his award.

Mmullen hosts a Try-A-Trade hands-on career day

For all young people who might want to try their hands at a range of vocations, everything from construction to animal care! The event will be held at Octagonal Lounge, Moonee Valley Racecourse on Tuesday 4 June 2.30 to 4.30pm. The session is FREE and open to young people aged 14-25 years old, as well as guardians or caregivers with a young person in their life.