

## Case Study 1 - Invigor8ing Education

### Background

Invigor8ing Education was facilitated in 2023 in both semesters 1 and 2 as two separate programs offering schools across Whittlesea a practical applied learning option through real world immersion experiences. This occurs across two streams, Trade, and Community Services/Sport & Recreation, in a supportive environment with industry specialists and educators facilitating applied learning whilst qualified youth workers support both the group and individual needs of each student.

Students choose to enrol for either Community Service/Sport & Recreation- which gives them access to a variety of workplace environments within Epping Leisure City such as Hospitality (café and reception desk), Sport and Recreation (swimming pool, gymnastics and sports centre) and Childcare; or Trades as they engage in short courses Carpentry and Painting & Decorating in a TAFE setting at Melbourne Polytechnic Epping Campus. In addition, Trade Tasters are provided at the Melbourne Polytechnic campuses as a means of exposing them to the many VDSS/VET opportunities they can consider in future years, including areas such as electrotechnology, bricklaying, childcare, hospitality, graphic design and locksmithing.

As students are coming together from different schools, induction activities are conducted, and youth workers attend every session to provide extra support and maintain contact with schools, students and parents. Specially created Invigor8ing Education hoodies are issued, and students are provided with the means to make breakfast before each session.

This program is made possible through the long-standing partnership with the Whittlesea Y, City of Whittlesea Youth Services, Melbourne Polytechnic and HWLLEN. Youth workers maintain contact throughout the semester program with parents of the participants and a graduation ceremony is conducted with students and their families invited to recognise individual student achievements and provide feedback about the program outcomes.

Schools have been encouraged to refer year 8 students for the purpose of gaining extended practical learning experiences in real life settings as a means of highlighting the value of vocational education pathways. The provision for this vocational education engagement in the earlier years has been widely acknowledged across our school communities as having real benefits for better preparing students for making decisions regarding their senior secondary pathways. The program also fulfills its original purpose of providing additional incentive for improved engagement in education through applied learning.

### Student Profile #1

A 14-year-old, who identifies as non-binary, faced numerous challenges including withdrawal from school, victimisation through bullying, school refusal, and difficulty engaging in class. These obstacles have significantly impacted on their academic and personal development. The program's tailored approach provided a supportive environment for self-expression and, for a young person once reserved and disengaged, they slowly built up their participation in activities (including painting, carpentry, trade taster sessions) showcasing a newfound sense of belonging. Through the program's offerings, the student has been able to embrace and further their passion in arts and design.



### 1. Confidence and Social Integration:

The program's approach with several stakeholders has boosted the individual's confidence, fostering meaningful connections with peers and mentors, including local government Youth Services and TAFE trainers.

### 2. Academic Reconnection:

The learning strategies implemented in the program have resulted in increased academic engagement with the individual showing a growing interest in various subjects, especially in arts & designs.

### 3. School Interaction:

Collaborating closely with the school, the Invigor8ing Education program has implemented strategies to create a supportive learning environment providing young people an understanding of career pathways. For this young person, there has been positive changes in the individual's participation, noting increased enthusiasm for learning and improved classroom interactions.

### 4. Trade Excursions:

Through close partnerships with Melbourne Polytechnic, the Invigor8ing Education program offers young participants trade tasters and insights to numerous vocational pathways and diverse career opportunities.

**Comment from youth support worker:** *For this young person, our excursion to Melbourne Polytechnic Preston offered opportunities to engage with their interests. This young person engaged in an art & design course, learning about courses offered and different career pathways through art & design such as Graphic Design, Architectural Studies and much more.*

### Student profile #2

Young person, 14 years of age, had been referred to this work immersion Community Services stream for Invigor8ing Education due to their lack of engagement when at school and increasing occurrences of school refusal.

Their demeanour at the initial stages of the program presented as being very quiet and somewhat withdrawn. As time progressed and with the added support provided through a small group program which enables greater assistance to encourage active participation, this student demonstrated their commitment by being punctual and highly engaged with the activities even if it was an area they didn't initially enjoy. This interaction evolved through the program as they took on leadership roles by helping and teaching other students on the program- skills previously not apparent within their regular schooling.



Feedback from the student's parent indicated that their child enjoyed the program and would come home happily telling their family all about what they had been doing that day. According to the mother, this was incredibly positive as, prior to the program, their child would come home and go to their room with very little communication. They also mentioned their child was starting to show more interest in school and attendance was getting a lot better.

For this student invigor8ing Education has helped them improve attendance, build confidence, work as a team, use initiative, gain better communication skills - all transferable skills for employment.

**Comment from youth support worker:** *Whilst this is particularly focused on one student in the program, I find the above to be very similar for all of the students in regard to their enthusiasm and commitment to Invigor8ing Education as well as a general improvement in their own selves.*



## Conclusion

This progress snapshot in the Invigor8ing Education program highlights the transformative impacts of personalised approaches. The individual's journey reflects not only a reconnection with academic pursuits, but also a broader development of self-confidence and a meaningful exploration of their interests and vocational pathways showcasing the program's effectiveness in fostering holistic growth and preparedness for pursuing meaningful career pathways.

