



BALLARAT
FOUNDATION

IMPACT IN ACTION



Youth Support: Joshua and Talia



28% of youth in Ballarat feel lonely



60% of youth don't feel heard



Youth offending has increased by 36.8%



Long term mental health conditions in youth is 55% higher in Ballarat compared to Victorian average

For many young people in regional Victoria, independence is not simply a matter of motivation but rather it is shaped by access. Employment, education and social participation are often dependent on having a driver's licence. Yet for young people without access to a car, a supervising driver, or stable support networks, achieving the required 120 hours of driving to get a probationary licence can be out of reach.

Program Response

The Traffic Accident Commission's L2P learner driver program, run by the Ballarat Foundation, is designed to address licence barriers in the Ballarat and Hepburn region by supporting young people aged 16–23 who do not have access to a supervising driver or vehicle.

Participants are matched with trained volunteer mentors and provided with access to a fully insured vehicle donated by local businesses, enabling them to complete the required 120 hours of supervised driving. Over time, this structured support builds not only driving competence, but also confidence and independence.

Joshua and Talia's Story

Joshua and Talia are two graduates of the L2P program, and their experiences illustrate how these structural barriers intersect with complex life circumstances.

Joshua joined the L2P program while living in supported youth accommodation in Ballarat. Having been in foster care since the age of eight, his early life was marked by instability, including

family separation, the poor mental health of his mother, and the subsequent loss of his father. Despite this, Joshua had a clear sense of direction. He was completing a Certificate II in plumbing and had secured an apprenticeship opportunity in Perth. However, without a driver's licence, this opportunity and the independence it represented was at risk. For Joshua, obtaining his licence was not just a milestone; it was a necessary step toward a stable future.

Talia's journey reflects a different, but equally challenging context. Living in a caravan with her mother and siblings, she had experienced long-term financial hardship and disruption. Her father was imprisoned when she was young and her Mum struggled on her own with substance abuse. After leaving school, Talia's social connections began to diminish as friends moved to Melbourne for work, contributing to a growing sense of isolation. While Talia aspired to pursue a bricklaying trade, the lack of a licence limited her ability to access employment and take the next step.

In both cases, the barrier was not capability or ambition but rather access to the practical and social supports needed to move forward.

Outcomes

Participation in the L2P program contributed to outcomes aligned with the Youth Support focus area outcome: young people increase their readiness for employment, education or training.

Foundation Outcome 3 - Improved Life Opportunities

The main impact for Joshua and Talia was improved access to employment and future opportunities aligned with FO3. Achieving their driver's licences removed a critical structural barrier. Talia was able to secure an apprenticeship in bricklaying shortly after gaining her licence, while Joshua was able to take up his plumbing apprenticeship in Perth.

These employment pathways would not have been possible without the ability to travel independently. In this way, licence attainment functioned as a gateway to workforce participation and longer-term economic stability.

Beyond employment, both participants experienced increased confidence and independence, also contributing to FO3. Through regular driving sessions and consistent support from their driving mentor, they developed not only practical skills but a stronger sense of agency. Joshua described his licence as a "ticket to freedom," reflecting the broader role that mobility plays in enabling young people to make decisions about where they live and work.

Foundation Outcome 2 - Increased community connection and cohesion

The program also contributed to increased social connection and reduced isolation (FO2). Prior to engaging with L2P, Talia's social world had begun to shrink, while Joshua had limited access to stable, supportive adult relationships. Through their mentors, both participants experienced a consistent and positive connection that extended beyond driving. This is reflected in broader program data, which shows that 97 percent of participants report feeling less socially isolated after completing the program.

Foundation Outcome 4 - Stronger community-led solutions

Importantly, the role of volunteer mentors demonstrates the strength of community-led support in achieving these outcomes. Joshua credited his mentor with helping him stay calm, focused and future-oriented, describing him as a steady influence during a critical period of transition. These relationships highlight how community members contribute directly to improving outcomes for young people.

Why this matters

Joshua and Talia's stories demonstrate that the L2P program is not just about young adults obtaining a licence. The program is a gateway for youth to participate in employment, strengthen social connection, and support long-term independence. In regional communities, where public transport options are limited, this impact is even more significant.

Conclusion

Through L2P, young people are supported to move from limited access and uncertainty toward opportunity, independence and connection. By combining practical support with strong, consistent relationships, the program contributes to improved life opportunities, stronger community connection, and community-led solutions that extend well beyond the individual.

Photo cover: Talia; back cover: Joshua



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