



## THE WESTERN SUBURBS LIFE EDUCATION CENTRE (WSLEC) BACKGROUND

The Life Education concept was founded in Sydney in the mid 70's by the late Reverend Ted Noffs. He believed that an educational tool was needed to deal with the drug problem that he could see in the inner suburbs of Sydney. His vision was to deliver high quality drug and health education system to primary school children via mobile units with highly trained educators leading the classes.

The first mobile unit in NSW was launched in 1979 and by the mid 80's mobile units were operational in Victoria. **Rotary** was a driving force to get many units operational across Victoria. In the **Western Suburbs** a number of Clubs including **Altona, Altona City, Footscray West, Sunshine and Williamstown** joined forces to form the Western Suburbs life Education Centre Inc. (WSLEC) and this occurred in 1990. By then fundraising was already under way and by the middle of the same year \$135,000 had been committed by these clubs and industry.

The mobile unit was built by a Ballarat firm in the later part of 1990 and an educator was hired and trained in the fourth quarter. Educators have teaching training as their basic qualification and the Life Education skills are gained during an intensive 10 week training program which includes hands on use of the skills in the mobile unit. The teaching material is updated regularly and therefore remains fresh and relevant to the times. The resource has now been extended to enable quality drug education to parents (sessions also include children) and a renewed effort to reach secondary schools students is underway.

In the early years we were achieving capacity numbers of 10,000 plus children through the van with tremendous acceptance from schools. As school budgets have tightened over the years school administrators have had to prioritise between activities and many schools now use the resource every second year. Some have unfortunately been forced to drop the program. State Government support has remained static at \$400,000 per year to cover the entire state including the Life Education Victoria administration. Currently we charge each primary school child \$6:00 to participate in the program.

Fundraising is an obvious challenge and the WSLEC in addition to income from schools looks to LEV sources including MacDonald's and The Pat Rafter foundation to supplement base income. Rotary clubs in the area have continued to provide support to encourage schools back into using the resource. A partner that has stuck with us over the years is Westgate Transport who have provided towing service year after year. Corke Industries also regularly help us with electrical/electronics support too.

We currently service between 7,000 to 8,000 children per year and estimate that we have reached 150,000 children over the 16 years that we have been in operation. Currently the unit covers schools in the **Westside, Hobsons Bay and Port Phillip clusters of Rotary District 9800.**

The WSLEC is going through a transition phase as older members of the committee depart and we seek new members to continue to support our Educator in minimizing the harmful affects that drug taking has on our youth. Additionally, the mobile unit renovation is a medium term need. However as the challenges arise they will be met just as they have been over the past 16 years

### Major Sponsors

Westgate Transport  
Rotary Club of  
Altona  
Rotary Club of  
Maribyrnong/Highpoint  
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Dr John Tickell

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