

# Developments in Education

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## Introduction

Over the last two decades significant and lasting reform has occurred at all levels of education and training provision within Victoria. This provision spans primary and secondary school education, vocational education and training (VET), higher education (the universities) and adult and community education (ACE). Victoria also has an established preschool education network, but as this falls within the aegis of the Department of Human Services, it is not covered in this article.

There is a strong emphasis in Victoria on “lifelong learning”, an approach that views a student’s education or training as extending throughout his or her life, rather than concluding with graduation from school or tertiary institute. This emphasis is given effect through a wider choice of education and training offerings, and a closer integration of the traditional levels of education and training. It is recognised that the different levels of education and training are not necessarily contiguous and that there are many alternative pathways that learners can follow to achieve their aims.

Within this policy of lifelong education, the foremost aim of education and training reform in Victoria has been to enhance student learning to maximise the benefit to the individual, to business and the community.

This article outlines the dimensions of education and training provision and provides a summary of the programs offered at each level. Specific attention is given to what are seen as some of the most significant reforms to education and training in Victoria: programs to extend and consolidate literacy and numeracy; the science, engineering and technology strategy; innovative use of information and communications technology; the commitment to devolution of responsibility and autonomy; the comprehensive accountability and performance framework; and the increasing importance of Victoria in the international education scene. A section on continuing developments concludes this article.

## Dimensions of the education and training system

### School education

There are nearly 800,000 school students in Victoria. About two-thirds attend government schools administered through DEET while the balance attend non-government schools registered with the Registered Schools Board. In February 1999, there were 1,635 government schools and 684 non-government schools.

## 2 Victorian Year Book 2000

NUMBER OF SCHOOL STUDENTS(a)				
	Government	Catholic	Independent	Total
	no.	no.	no.	no.
Primary	306 216	102 004	34 781	443 001
Secondary	216 370	77 671	55 695	349 736
Special	5 413	162	299	5 874
Language	1 073	—	—	1 073
<b>Total</b>	<b>529 072</b>	<b>179 837</b>	<b>90 775</b>	<b>799 684</b>
	%	%	%	%
<b>Proportion of total school students</b>	<b>66.2</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(a) Full-time equivalents

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: Summary Statistics, Victorian Schools, 1999.

Indigenous students form only a small percentage of the school population in Victoria, and are more likely to attend a government school than a non-government school. Similarly, government schools enrol a higher proportion of students from rural and regional Victoria than non-government schools. About one in four students attending government schools have a language background other than English.

SCHOOL STUDENTS, Selected Characteristics		
	Government	Non-government
	%	%
Female	48.8	50.2
Aboriginal	0.9	0.1
Non-metropolitan	34.0	24.4
Speaks language other than English	25.2	n.a.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: August 1998 School Census: National School, Statistics Collection; Schools, Australia (Cat. no. 4221.0).

School education in Victoria is comprised of primary schooling, which covers Preparatory Year to Year 6; and secondary schooling, which covers Years 7–12. The years of compulsory education—between six and fifteen years—equate generally with the Preparatory Year in primary school through to Year 10 at secondary school. Accordingly, Years 11 and 12 are viewed as the first years of post-compulsory education. More than three-quarters of all Victorian students go on to complete the full 13 years of schooling.

In the government sector, there were 1,243 primary schools and 267 secondary schools in February 1999, along with 42 combined primary-secondary schools that cover both primary and secondary school levels. There were also 80 special schools for students with disabilities and impairments; and 3 language schools for newly arrived students from language backgrounds other than English.

The non-government school sector in Victoria in February 1999 comprised an established system of Catholic Schools (490 in total) administered through the Catholic Education Office, and a number of independent schools (194 in total), most of which have religious affiliations. The Catholic Schools sector comprised 383 primary schools, 91 secondary schools, 10 primary-secondary schools and 6 special schools. With the independent schools, there is a marked emphasis on primary-secondary schools—115, or more than 59% of the total—together with 59 primary schools, 12 secondary schools and 8 special schools.

On average, there are about ten new non-government schools registered each year with Islamic and Fundamentalist Christian schools being prominent among these in recent years.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS				
	Government	Catholic	Independent	Total
Primary	1 243	383	59	1 685
Secondary	267	91	12	370
Primary-Secondary	42	10	115	167
Special	80	6	8	94
Language	3	—	—	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 635</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>2 319</b>

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: Summary Statistics, Victorian Schools, 1999.

### Training and further education (TAFE)

TAFE programs are provided through TAFE institutes, other training providers, and adult and community education (ACE) organisations. In 1998, there were 19 TAFE institutes (including 5 TAFE divisions within universities), 944 other registered training providers (including industry and commercial enterprises), and a total of 529 ACE organisations (of which over 200 were also registered training providers).

In 1998 registered training organisations provided over 90 million student contact hours of TAFE to over 532,000 students, almost 3% more students than in 1997. Almost 73 million student contact hours were funded by government with over 200 registered training organisations receiving government funds.

TAFE institutes delivered over 74 million student contact hours of TAFE to more than 340,000 students, with 64 million student contact hours funded by government, and the remainder delivered on a fee-for-service basis. In providing this service, TAFE institutes employed over 8,500 teaching staff and almost 5,000 non-teaching staff.

#### SERVICES DELIVERED THROUGH TAFE INSTITUTES AND REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATIONS—1998

	no.
Students	532 209
Course enrolments	714 617
Student contact hours ('000)	90 151

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: TAFE Annual Statistics Collection, unpublished data.

In 1998, 12.3% of Victorians aged 15–64 participated in TAFE programs compared to 10.7% nationally.

A managing diversity policy has been implemented since 1996 to enable clients to access and participate effectively in training and further education programs, irrespective of gender, age, location, disability or disadvantage. The policy is complemented by a range of targeted programs for particular groups, including women, Kooris, persons with disabilities and persons with a language background other than English. Over the period 1996 to 1998, the number of females participating in TAFE programs increased by 10.5%, with females comprising 46.6% of participants enrolled in TAFE programs in 1998. Over the same period, there was a 25% increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and a 7.5% increase in clients whose main language is other than English.

Training and further education is provided to students of all ages with the large majority of students being between 25 and 54 years of age. In 1998, Victoria had the highest participation rate in Australia for people in rural (12.3%, compared with 8.9% nationally) and remote areas (30.3%, compared with 9.4% nationally).

Apprenticeships and traineeships which comprise a mix of training provided on the job and training provided by registered training organisations are very important in meeting the skill requirements of industry and providing employment and training opportunities for Victorians. The number of new employees commencing apprenticeships and traineeships increased from 28,100 in 1997–98 to 37,757 in 1998–99, an increase of over 34%. Growth was experienced in both apprenticeship and traineeship areas. In June 1999, the total number of apprentices and trainees in training who were new employees was 57,755.

### Higher education

Higher education refers to the provision of studies in bachelor degrees, postgraduate degrees and other awards—by universities and authorised private providers. Under the *Tertiary Education Act 1993*, the State Government is responsible for the protection of the use of degree titles and the term university.

There are nine publicly funded universities operating in Victoria, including eight State universities and the Australian Catholic University. All of these universities are multi-campus, most with a combination of urban and regional campuses.

A distinguishing feature of higher education in Victoria is dual-sector provision. Four of the universities have large TAFE divisions and the University of Melbourne has a significant TAFE component in its Institute of Land and Food Resources.

Melbourne University Private, a new private university, was established in a strategic alliance with the University of Melbourne in August 1998.

Higher education is a joint responsibility of the Commonwealth and State Governments. The Commonwealth establishes broad policy directions and provides most of the government funds on a triennial basis. State funding for universities is limited to special initiatives and the acquisition of sites for the establishment of new campuses. Victorian universities generate approximately \$1.2 billion through other funding arrangements.

Undergraduate student enrolment in Victorian universities grew from 130,178 in 1994 to 145,169 in 1998 (including students shown in the following table against the course types 'Bachelor Degree' and 'Other Award'), an 11.5% increase overall. Postgraduate enrolments increased from 35,031 in 1994 to 39,038 in 1998, an 11.4% increase overall.

**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS—1998**

Course type	no.
Bachelor degree	141 767
Postgraduate	39 038
Other award	3 402
Non award	1 132
<b>Total(a)</b>	<b>185 339</b>

(a) Data include students attending Australian Catholic University in Victoria.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training.

DEET works with the universities in developing a strategic framework for higher education in Victoria, coordinates higher education development, manages the higher education private provider approval processes and monitors compliance of Victorian universities with statutory responsibilities.

### Adult and community education (ACE)

There are over 550 adult and community education organisations in Victoria, including over 200 registered to deliver accredited training and further education programs.

In 1998, ACE organisations, including the Council of Adult Education and Adult Multicultural Education Services provided over 12 million student contact hours of education and training for over 348,000 enrolments. The Adult, Community and Further Education Board funded 4.5 million of those student contact hours.

Adult, community and further education students are drawn from diverse educational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and range across all age groups. Almost 200 adult and community education organisations are outside the Melbourne metropolitan area with every local government area having a provider with capacity to deliver a broad range of programs.

In 1998, 4% of the Victorian population participated in adult and community education with participation rates being significantly higher in rural areas. Overall the ratio of women to men participating was about 2:1.

## Education and training programs

### The school curriculum

Schools in Victoria have responsibility for developing and implementing the curriculum for their students. In government schools this is done within the context of an agreed set of key learning areas and is supported by a centrally developed Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF) which is also adopted by some non-government schools.

The Key Learning Areas for school education Prep–12 are:

- The arts;
- English;
- Health and physical education;
- Languages other than English;
- Mathematics;
- Science;
- Studies of society and environment; and
- Technology.

#### YEAR 12 ENROLMENTS—1999

Key Learning Area	no.
The arts	24 559
English	54 838
Health and physical education	18 459
Languages other than English	8 642
Mathematics	41 967
Science	41 516
Society and environment	46 353
Technology	28 787

Source: Victorian Board of Studies.

## Curriculum development

The CSF sets out guidelines for teachers as to what students from Prep to Year 10 should learn and know in the Key Learning Areas, and the standards they should achieve. Accordingly, Victorian schools draw on the CSF as a resource for curriculum planning and reporting on student achievement.

The Victorian Board of Studies, which is responsible for establishing guidelines for the development of courses for Prep to Year 12 in Victoria, has undertaken a review of the CSF. The need for this review arose out of such developments as a renewed emphasis on mathematics and science, a greater commitment to literacy and a rising awareness of the new learning technologies. The revised CSF, known as CSF II, was implemented early in 2000. This review has also led to the need to realign existing curriculum materials with the new framework.

## Pathways in education

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools program allows secondary students to combine their VCE studies with TAFE studies. The program offers a balanced integration of general and vocational studies based on training packages where they exist. Students may complete a TAFE qualification in conjunction with the VCE or receive credit for their TAFE studies if they complete that qualification at a later stage.

Growth of VET in schools has been rapid in recent years, with more than 15,000 students participating in 1999. The most popular programs are information technology, business, hospitality and entertainment. The feasibility of VCE classes operating from TAFE institutes will be examined with a view to broadening opportunities for students looking for a vocationally-based education.

Cross-sectoral pathways between education and training sectors are being expanded to develop a highly skilled and flexible workforce and to increase the career mobility of individuals. The intention is to provide integrated sequences of training, further education and higher education in areas of high student demand and significant employment and industry growth. Students have the flexibility to articulate between courses in the education and training sectors, emerging with a full credit and/or a credential in an accredited course.

## Social objectives of schooling

Alongside foundation learning of literacy, numeracy and science, Victorian schools maintain a strong commitment to programs and activities that prepare students for future roles as active citizens and community leaders. For example, more than 3,500 teachers participated in local and regional professional development activities to support a Civics and Citizenship program.

A Student Leadership project has been established in Victoria to promote community service and youth leadership. Regional student leadership committees were established and new Student Leadership Excellence awards have been launched with the support of the Education Trust Victoria.

The Victorian Youth Development Program is a practical training initiative open to all Victorian government secondary colleges and applicable across all year levels. Introduced in 1997, it has enabled schools to establish partnerships with one of fifteen key community organisations, including: life saving organisations; Scout and Guide Associations; State Emergency Service; Country Fire Authority; St John Ambulance; Victoria Police; Australian Red Cross; the Coastguard; and the Army, Navy and Air Force. For 2000 there will be a record intake of more than 1,600 students (from over 71 secondary colleges).

### **Training and further education**

Registered Training Organisations provide a broad range of general education and skills training across all occupational levels. This includes:

- courses in basic literacy and numeracy;
- basic preparation for work;
- entry or certificate level training, including apprenticeships;
- advanced vocational training including training for para-professionals; and
- advanced technician and advanced post-initial training courses.

Flexibility in the development of TAFE institute program profiles allows institutes to identify and respond to industry and individual needs at the local level.

Arrangements for apprenticeships and traineeships have been reformed to broaden the range of occupations and industries involved; deliver training products and services that reflect both enterprise and industry wide requirements; ensure skills and qualifications acquired by individuals are portable and provide high quality training products and services. The reformed arrangements together with buoyant economic conditions, improved marketing and the provision of government financial incentives to employers contributed to an increase of over 34% in number of new employees commencing apprenticeships and traineeships in 1997–1998.

National Training Packages are being progressively introduced on an industry by industry basis for use in training delivery. They replace the existing competency standards and curriculum and include nationally consistent and endorsed competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications information.

Victoria has implemented the Australian Recognition Framework to provide a streamlined system of national recognition of training. The framework is underpinned by full mutual recognition of providers between all states and territories; a greater emphasis on quality assurance and audit processes and training that is quality assured and client focused.

A network of 26 industry training advisory bodies advise the State Training Board on training priorities and the skill requirements in industry through annual training plans. This advice, together with DEET's analysis of industry and employment forecasts, student demand together with consideration of broader government policies including economic and industry policies means that government funds are allocated in a manner which maximises benefits to individuals and industry.



## FIELD OF STUDY, TAFE—1998

	Enrolments	Contact hours
	no.	'000
Land and marine resources, animal husbandry	25 612	3 045
Architecture, building	30 193	6 003
Arts, humanities and social sciences	33 703	7 725
Business administration, economics	116 478	18 985
Education	6 995	547
Engineering, surveying	81 188	15 337
Health, community services	37 814	6 662
Law, legal studies	1 532	401
Science	22 994	1 865
Veterinary science, animal care	690	186
Services, hospitality, transportation	73 782	12 286
TAFE multi-field education	110 761	13 371
<b>Total</b>	<b>541 742</b>	<b>86 413</b>

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

## Higher education

The data below covers delivery by the eight Victorian Universities, including the Australian Catholic University.

## FIELD OF STUDY, Universities—1998

	no.
Agriculture, animal husbandry	2 138
Architecture, building	4 096
Arts, humanities and social sciences	42 537
Business administration, economics	49 130
Education	14 095
Engineering, surveying	16 314
Health	20 648
Law, legal studies	5 334
Science	29 655
Veterinary science	305
Non-award courses	1 087
<b>Total(a)</b>	<b>185 339</b>

(a) Data include students attending Australian Catholic University in Victoria.

Source: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

## Adult and community education

Melbourne University Private has been established with individual specialist schools. The first of these schools are the Melbourne School of Energy and the Environment and the Melbourne School of Telecommunications, Multimedia and IT, and the Melbourne Graduate School of Journalism.

ACE programs are broad ranging, and cover the vocational, skilling and personal enrichment needs of the community.

## SERVICES DELIVERED, ACE—1998

	Enrolments	Contact hours
	no.	'000
Adult literacy and basic education	65 389	4 247
English as a second language	67 775	6 267
Adult VCE	20 394	1 726
Vocational education	106 582	2 356
General preparatory	104 024	3 768
Personal enrichment	198 101	3 903
<b>Total</b>	<b>562 265</b>	<b>22 267</b>

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Training: Annual TAFE Statistics Collection, unpublished data.

## Literacy and numeracy

There is consistent evidence within Victoria, and across Australia, that significant numbers of students do not achieve beyond the basic levels of literacy in the early years of primary education. The consequences across the key learning areas at a later stage of education are serious. Indeed, many of the major problems encountered in later learning stem from shortcomings in the early years of schooling.

Consequently, a key part of the Government's education reform agenda has been improvement in the learning achievements of students in the early years of schooling by focusing on literacy and numeracy.

This strategy, which recognises that all students should succeed in literacy and numeracy, is based on best practice from Victoria and overseas. A research program conducted over three years in 29 Victorian primary schools identified the multi-faceted intervention required to deliver universal student success against literacy standards in the first three years of school.

The Early Years strategy incorporates a range of programs and initiatives to support schools in improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. The main programs are the Early Years Literacy Program and the Early Years Numeracy Program.

Building on the early years of schooling, progress has also been made in the teaching of literacy and numeracy through the middle years of schooling, which covers the late years of primary schooling and the early years of secondary schooling (Years 5–8).

The major elements of the Early Years Literacy Program are:

- the structured classroom program;
- provision of additional assistance for students who require it;
- parent participation; and
- professional development for teachers.

Almost all government primary schools have undertaken to complete an approved three-year early literacy plan that includes:

- committing to minimum statewide standards in reading for all students by the end of Years Prep and 1 and reporting these standards in school annual reports;
- setting literacy achievements targets for Years Prep to 2 students and reporting these targets in school annual reports;
- arranging individual case management for students who need extra help and providing access to intervention programs such as Reading Recovery for Year 1 students who need them;
- developing a parent participation plan; and
- establishing professional development teams among Early Years teachers and providing training for these teams.

A statewide training strategy is under way with accredited trainers working with school-based coordinators to run professional development programs for Early Years teachers. Coordinators have a crucial role to play because they are the leaders of the Early Years program in their schools and provide ongoing support to colleagues implementing the program in classrooms.

In addition, an interactive, activity-based program for schools helps parents to develop their children's literacy skills at home, using a variety of learning techniques. The program helps parents to experience and appreciate current trends in literacy development.

To help students who have been unable to develop effective reading and writing skills after one year of schooling, government schools are employing an early intervention program known as Reading Recovery. Students receive a daily 30 minute Reading Recovery lesson in addition to their regular class reading and writing activities. The program continues until students have developed strategies that allow them to participate in the usual reading and writing activities in the classroom. This usually takes between 12 to 20 weeks. Inservice training is essential to the Reading Recovery program, so experienced early literacy teachers participate in a year-long inservice program run by a trained Reading Recovery tutor. The tutors also undertake a year-long training course, which is run jointly by DEET and the University of Melbourne. Research in Victoria and overseas indicates that Reading Recovery is the most successful intervention program currently available to schools.

The Early Years Numeracy Program will benefit from a three-year research project involving students in Years Prep–2. This is a collaborative project between DEET and the Australian Catholic University in conjunction with Monash University. There are 35 trial schools participating in the project—28 government schools, (including 1 specialist school), 4 Catholic schools and 3 independent schools. There are also 35 matched reference schools.

Major research projects are being conducted into the issues involved in achieving literacy and numeracy in the middle years of schooling (Years 5–8), particularly among boys. The first of these studies is to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of intervention approaches being used by schools, while the second will determine the approaches that should be recommended for teaching literacy in mainstream classes.

## Science and technology

As literacy is needed for most employment as well as for general life fulfilment, there needs to be a provision for older people who have been unable to achieve literacy competency. Accordingly, literacy programs are run by TAFE institutes and ACE providers.

Victoria's performance in the key areas of science, engineering and technology will be a key factor in achieving future prosperity and quality of life. In recognition of this, the government has implemented a comprehensive science strategy in schools targeting teachers, students and the broad school community.

Eleven new projects were established in 1998–99 to enhance teaching and learning in science for the next three years. These projects extended other science initiatives developed by DEET and the Victorian Board of Studies. In addition, a baseline survey was completed and a benchmarking data collection established.

In addition, significant partnerships have been established with tertiary institutions, business and industry in an effort to raise the profile of science in the community, to reward excellence and to encourage talented young people to continue with science as a career option. Twenty students undertook student fellowship programs with business and industry.

Sixteen schools participated in the Scientists in Schools program. This program, which is run with tertiary institutions and professional associations, gives students the opportunity of working with practising scientists and engineers. Thirty-five schools were involved in a range of Family Science programs, the purpose of which is to help parents encourage an interest in science with their children at home. Professional development research projects in science education were initiated in ten schools.

Thirty-six teachers were trained as facilitators for an extended professional development program, while professional development research projects in science education were initiated in ten schools.

Within the training and higher education sectors, funds are being allocated for the delivery of additional science, engineering and technology programs, and to support targeted initiatives. An example of such an initiative is the joint-venture Chipskills project. This project involves six universities and four TAFE institutes participating with industry, Multimedia Victoria and the DEET to develop specialist curriculum for training people to work in the semi-conductor industry.

## Information and communications technology

Innovative information technology and multimedia now plays a major role in education, ranging from initiatives supporting effective teaching and learning to those supporting school administration. So significant has this development been that government school education in Victoria is now the largest information technology user in Australia, with more than 134,000 computers in schools.

## School education

Use of these technologies in schools seeks to:

- improve learning outcomes for students;
- improve business operations; and
- provide students with the skills to live and work in an Information Age.

To achieve these aims, all Victorian government schools have been connected to the whole-of-government wide area network, VicOne, enabling the complete re-engineering of the way in which education is delivered in Victoria, both at curriculum and administrative levels.

The majority of schools have moved across to accessing the Internet via VicOne using a range of Internet service providers. Most schools use EduNet, DEET's enhanced Internet service. A feature of the service is the Education Selected Cache, which currently contains over 16,000 web sites chosen by teachers as educationally worthwhile resources for staff and students. EduNet also filters out access to undesirable web sites. The service has the capability of providing individual Internet and email accounts and a personal homepage for every student. In Victorian government schools, up to 10 million Internet requests per day are being serviced.

Learning technology plans have been developed by schools to assist in the process of ensuring that all principals, staff and students are routine, competent and discriminating users of learning technologies in the daily programs of the school. Attention has been focused on providing professional development to staff in integrating learning technologies into the curriculum, particularly with the implementation of the revised Curriculum and Standards Framework.

To improve the use of learning technologies by teachers, all teachers and principals are to receive a notebook computer. By late 1999, notebook computers had been delivered to 15,168 teachers and principals, 42% of all staff.

One of only a few similar projects worldwide, the Victorian Education Channel will provide quality online education materials to the school and training and further education sectors. It will also enable parents and the community, via the Internet, to access key educational information and services. The Victorian Education Channel will establish a gateway to a range of government and approved non-government sites providing an extensive range of teaching and learning support materials, distance education initiatives, and online professional development.

To assist schools in supporting and maintaining their increasingly complex and expanding learning technology environments, funding is being provided for schools' day to day operational needs and higher level specialist support.

### **Training and further education**

In the training sector, the TAFE Online 2001 strategy aims at increasing client choice and participation, and to improve learning outcomes for students through the use of online technologies. TAFE Online 2001 includes the provision of infrastructure, the development of course content, staff development, research and support, and is aimed at making online program delivery a part of every provider's mainstream operations. The strategy will ensure a streamlined and cost effective systematic approach to the broad scale implementation of educational technologies across the Victorian TAFE system.

The TAFE Virtual Campus (TAFE VC) is a key enabling objective of TAFE Online 2001. TAFE VC is an electronic services platform for use by Victorian TAFE providers to support all aspects of their work from electronic enrolments, fee collection and library access through to program delivery and management.

Mainstream use of the TAFE VC will result in all students using computers on an every-day basis as part of their training program so that they fully develop their technological literacy. It will benefit all TAFE students, not just those who are studying via the Internet.

The TAFE VC is providing the operating platform for trialing the concept of Learning Networks in community locations. The networks address the needs of learning in a flexible way through their focus on client needs including case management and student counselling. The trials encompass both country and metropolitan regions and cater to a diverse range of client groups.

### **Devolution and autonomy**

#### **School education**

Since the inception of school councils in the late 1970s, Victoria has been at the forefront of devolving responsibility to schools. Moves through the 1980s to involve school councils in all areas of school operation, from the selection of principals to assuming responsibility for curriculum implementation and resource administration, were unprecedented in Australia.

The move in the 1990s towards consolidating the funding of schools into school global budgets based on enrolment was a further step in according schools with a relatively high level of autonomy. This, coupled with the Full Staffing Flexibility program, placed schools in a position where they could make many of the important decisions affecting their operation. Schools then had the flexibility and the autonomy they needed to be able to shape their own destiny. The move by some schools into auspicing pre-school, which occurred in 1998–99, exemplifies this.

The self governing schools program, which was taken up by fifty-one schools in 1999, has been replaced by a program that seeks to provide enhanced self management for all schools within a statewide framework.

## Training and further education

Victorian TAFE institutes are established as independent, publicly owned entities. They employ their own staff and are responsible for their own management within a framework of accountability to Government. This enables institutes to respond promptly and effectively to changing industry needs for relevant training and further education, as well as to individual demands. As a result, the institutes have developed distinct characteristics that reflect their industry base, their region and the nature of the courses they offer.

Traditionally, TAFE institutes have drawn most of their revenue from government. In recent years, however, in response to the growing and diverse training market, they have expanded their activities in the areas of fee-for-service and industry-funded training. On average, most TAFE institutes now generate about 25% of their total revenue through commercial activities.

TAFE institutes are not just an important part of public infrastructure, they play a vital role in the broader economic and social life of the State, particularly in rural and regional areas where they form a central component of community life.

To ensure a strong network of TAFE institutes is maintained, the Government has recently provided extra funding for TAFE institutes, with training in rural and regional areas receiving special attention. For example, an educational precinct is to be established at Churchill in the Latrobe Valley involving Monash University, Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE and the Gippsland Group Training Company; a new comprehensive Vocational Education and Training Centre will be established in Ballarat; and regional TAFE institutes will receive additional funding to take account of the additional costs they face.

## Accountability and performance

### School education

The accountability framework under which government schools operate is comprised of a school charter, an annual report and a triennial review. The school charter, which is developed by the school council, is essentially the performance agreement between the school and the government. Schools then report on their achievement against the charter annually, with these annual reports being submitted to DEET.

All government schools in Victoria then undergo a triennial school review. This review consists of two phases—a school self-assessment and an independent verification. The independent verification, the second phase, is undertaken by accredited reviewers—experienced former school leaders, education administrators, consultants and academics—sourced from a panel of companies that have been contracted to conduct school reviews in government schools. The school review enables agreement to be reached on a series of recommendations on a school's goals and plans for improvement that are subsequently embodied in the new charter. In 1998–99 a further 602 schools participated in a triennial review. More than 1300 schools have now completed each of the elements of the accountability cycle.

During the past three years, the experience of school reviews has resulted in:

- a shift in the emphasis from provision-oriented goals towards goals directed at improved outcomes;
- a willingness on the part of schools to set higher expectations and specific targets;
- a recognition of the importance of regular monitoring and assessment to provide a detailed profile of progress of all students;
- a shift in emphasis from multiple priorities to fewer more clearly defined outcomes-based priorities, particularly literacy, numeracy and information technology; and
- a recognition that improvement requires a whole school approach, with attention to developing common beliefs and understandings about student learning, classroom teaching programs, professional development for teachers, intervention strategies, home-school links and strong leadership and effective management.

Non-government schools have the option of accepting a review by the Registered Schools Board or of undertaking their own review in line with the self-evaluation model approved by the Board. About 60% of non-government schools have opted for the latter.

During 1998, benchmarking information was prepared and published in the areas of: student achievement for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE); student achievement for Years Prep–10; and aspects of school management. The information covers the range of VCE studies provided by a school, including the number of alternative studies and the diversity and availability of studies for students. Each school's data is benchmarked against schools of broadly similar characteristics.

Also during 1998, data was collected in 600 primary schools from students in Years Prep–2 on the accuracy of oral reading of a standard unseen text. This data will enable schools to set progressive school-based targets while helping the Department to commit to statewide minimum standards. All schools participated in the data collection at the end of 1999.

In recent years, participation and apparent retention rates have been used as indicators of performance for school systems. Using participation as an indicator, Victoria has consistently outperformed all other States, and is above the overall Australian rate at all age levels. For example, Victoria has 54% of the population between the ages of 15 and 19 attending school, compared with 49.7% nationally.

Similarly, the Year 10–12 apparent retention rates show that Victoria has led all States since 1995. In 1998, Victoria's Year 10–12 apparent retention rate was 79.1%, compared with the national average of 74.1%.



The school audit program focuses on and checks the quality of a school's internal controls. Management reports are issued to school councils following the completion of the audits. The program is revised annually in light of feedback from schools and contract audit firms, and changes in school financial resource management environments. In 1999, audit contractors were provided with detailed financial benchmarks on all schools to assist their assessment of financial statements.

### Training and further education

TAFE Institutes operate independently within a broad framework of accountability to Government. Institutes enter performance agreements with the State Training Board which focus on outputs and quality of program delivery as well as outcomes in terms of student destination and client satisfaction. Similar performance agreements apply to other Registered Training Organisations funded by Government to deliver training and further education programs.

Performance reviews are undertaken with TAFE Institutes and other Registered Training Organisations to ensure compliance with the terms of performance agreements. The reviews focus on quality of outputs with the aim of achieving continuous improvement.

The performance of States and Territories in the national system is reported on annually by the Productivity Commission in its Report on Government Service Provision and by the Australian National Training Authority in its Annual National Report on Vocational Education and Training. Individual TAFE Institutes report annually to the Victorian Parliament.

### International education

International education and marketing activities contribute to improvement in education outcomes through greater inter-cultural understanding, foreign language proficiency and appreciation of the new global context for future education and work.

Through its international education activities, DEET established an extensive network of international agreements. These provide opportunities both to promote Victoria as a high-quality provider of education and training services and market the Department's own products and services.

The number of overseas students enrolled in government schools, a program which was initiated in 1995, has risen to more than 1000. Similarly, the number of overseas students in Victorian universities and TAFE institutes has increased over the past five years. According to International Development Programs Australia in 1999, a total of 32,863 overseas students were enrolled in Victorian universities, a 24 per cent increase between Semester 1, 1998 and Semester 1, 1999. Victorian universities now account for over 35.3 per cent of overseas students in Australian universities. The export of education is one of Victoria's largest export industries, generating approximately \$1.1 billion per year in export earnings, with the universities providing about 70% of this activity.

In 1998–99, approximately two thousand new or amended university courses were endorsed for CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students) registration for the delivery of higher education courses to overseas students.

Several universities have established offshore campuses and all are involved in cooperative projects with institutions in other parts of the world for student and staff exchanges, reciprocal course recognition, research and quality benchmarking.

## Continuing developments

Education and training in Victoria will continue to undergo significant change.

### School education

Government schools will continue to be self managing within a common funding framework. They will continue to receive the physical facilities that support an effective learning environment, access to modern learning and information technologies and staffing with fully skilled teachers.

Emphasis will be placed on attracting quality university graduates to enter the teaching profession. To achieve this, a number of scholarships—250 each year over the next four years—will be offered for high achieving graduates to undertake teacher training through the Diploma of Education and take up positions in government schools.

In recognition of the importance of quality teaching, an Institute of Teaching is to be established as an independent and representative professional body to advise on standards, qualifications and professional development. Through this Institute, teachers will be supported in updating their professional skills and working in new ways with a wide range of professionals. There will be a widening of the system of awards, which will service the dual purpose of recognising teaching excellence, while raising the public standard of the teaching profession.

There will also be a change in emphasis within the role of the principal to one of an educational leader. This will be accompanied by moving to reinstate permanent employment as the standard mode of employment in schools.

### Post compulsory education and training

A series of post-compulsory education and training options will be developed. These options will focus on the needs of students and ensure that a greater range of education, training, and employment pathways and support services is available to the individual. Post-compulsory education and training will be enhanced through the use of a planned approach to link schools, TAFE institutes, employers and communities.

The need that key industries in Victoria have for well-trained apprentices points to the need for additional support if TAFE institutes are to make apprenticeship opportunities available across the State. In particular, additional funding will be directed to regional TAFE institutes to compensate them for the small class sizes, the extra travel and the higher communications costs that make them more expensive to operate than their metropolitan counterparts.

The Government will also encourage additional employment and skills training by employing additional apprentices and trainees in the public sector, with an allocation for long-term unemployed young people; by providing additional apprenticeship and traineeship subsidies to employers, also with a bias towards the disadvantaged or long-term unemployed; and by providing an annual wage subsidy for apprentices and trainees recruited into occupations experiencing skill shortages.

The continuation of these reforms will advance Victoria on its path towards a world class education and training system, providing all Victorians with access to quality education and training, and lifelong learning opportunities.

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