



## **Victorian Government Response**

to the Parliamentary Education and Training Committee's

# **Inquiry into geographical differences in the rate in which Victorian students participate in higher education**

## ***Introduction***

In July 2007, the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria referred to the Parliamentary Education and Training Committee an inquiry into geographical differences in the rate in which Victorian students participate in higher education.

The Committee examined the following key issues associated with the terms of reference:

- a) variations in the number and type of university applications, offers, acceptances and completions in different metropolitan, rural and regional areas;
- b) influences of school retention rates, including enrolments and completions for Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and vocational education and training (VET) in schools on participation in higher education;
- c) influences of participation in other post-school pathways, including TAFE enrolments and take-up of apprenticeships or other employment opportunities, on participation in higher education;
- d) potential geographic, economic, social, cultural and other influences on university applications, offers, acceptances and completions across Victorian communities;
- e) advantages and disadvantages of participation and non-participation in higher education for school leavers and their families and communities in different metropolitan, rural and regional areas;
- f) potential effects of geographical differences in participation in higher education on skills shortages and the Victorian economy; and,
- g) strategies to address any barriers contributing to geographic differences in participation in higher education.

The Committee reported to Parliament on 28 July 2009. The report describes a comprehensive process during which public hearings were held in nine locations across Victoria, close to two hundred written submissions were received and considered and investigations undertaken by Committee members in Australia and overseas.

The result of these considerable efforts by the Committee and its staff is a thorough, systematic and detailed report into the many and complex issues surrounding geographic participation of Victoria's diverse population in higher education, for which the Committee and its staff are to be commended.

### ***Reform of Australia's higher education sector***

The inquiry took place, and has reported, during a time of considerable activity in the higher education environment.

As a result of the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education and the Commonwealth Government's responses to that landmark review, major changes are underway to refocus Australia's higher education system and reforms on changes that will have a profound impact on innovation and teaching and learning in higher education in this state and in this country.

There are also major changes underway in the other key component of the tertiary system, the VET sector. These changes have been led by Victoria.

### ***Victorian Skills reform***

In 2008, the Brumby Government announced the \$316 million *Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria* initiative, a major package of programs directed to addressing the skills shortage and building the capacity across Victoria for economic growth.

A key feature of this initiative is the introduction of *Skills for Life – the Victorian Training Guarantee*, guaranteeing all Victorians access to a TAFE

level qualification and continued access to higher level qualifications within the VET sector.

Skills Reform creates for the first time in Australia a universal entitlement to VET, the *Victorian Training Guarantee*. This will extend to a universal entitlement for tertiary education in 2012, with the proposed introduction by the Commonwealth Government of a demand driven funding system in universities.

Therefore, Skills Reform supports the emergence of an integrated tertiary education and training sector in Victoria, with a variety of pathways and multiple entry and exit points.

### ***The importance of higher education to Victoria***

The Brumby Government values our universities and the key role they play in creating a prosperous, socially inclusive and forward-focused society.

The Government recognises that we now have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to outline a new vision for how universities can drive regional development.

Victoria sits in a unique position within the Australian economy, which by necessity, has required policy innovation and adaptability.

Victoria lacks the resources base of other states and we are witnessing changes to our traditional industry base.

Along side our traditional industries, in a highly competitive global market, the Government is also driving Victoria's economic future in high-technology and high value-added goods and services – in industries such as advanced manufacturing, biotech and nanotechnologies, emerging 'green' industries, ICT, professional and technical services, education, design and tourism.

It is about building an internationally focused, sustainable and competitive economy driven by innovation, knowledge, skills and creativity.

Victoria's universities are fundamental to achieving this vision.

### ***The contribution of universities to regional development***

In regional centres, in particular, universities can be among the largest employers and can play a significant role in retaining young people who would likely otherwise relocate to major cities.

Together education and skills are integral to the long-term economic prosperity of regional Victoria.

Boosting regional competitiveness – through building infrastructure and offering education and training opportunities – increases productivity and efficiency throughout the whole State.

And stimulating jobs and investment, providing better infrastructure and services, and encouraging community leadership and social cohesion makes regional communities stronger and more resilient.

A study undertaken by the University of Ballarat demonstrates the sort of impact that a university can have on its surrounding region.

This study found the University's contribution to the economy of Ballarat was just under \$500 million and generated 2,900 full-time equivalent jobs.

For Ballarat, a city of 90,000 people, the University accounts for more than *10.5 per cent of its whole economy*, generating 12 per cent of total household income and just under 9 per cent of its total employment.

Furthermore, 79 per cent of students who go to the University of Ballarat from a regional location take up employment in regional areas following graduation.

In addition, 24 per cent of students who come to the University of Ballarat from capital cities take up their initial employment in regional areas following graduation.

A similar study undertaken by La Trobe University showed that its regional campuses contributed about \$283 million a year and a total of 2,939 jobs to the regional cities in which they are located, as follows;

- the Bendigo campus contributed \$201.4 million and 2,099 jobs to Bendigo's economy;
- the Albury-Wodonga campus contributed \$50.3 million and 515 jobs to Albury-Wodonga;
- the Mildura campus contributes \$18 million and 195 jobs to Mildura; and,
- the Shepparton campus contributes \$12.5 million and 130 jobs to Shepparton.

### ***A Tertiary Education Plan for Victoria***

In April 2009, in order to consider the implications of reforms flowing from the Bradley Review in the context of Victoria's own economic and social needs, the Victorian Government commissioned an Expert Panel, chaired by Professor Kwong Lee Dow, to advise on the development of a Tertiary Education Plan for Victoria.

While it is well understood that the Commonwealth is the primary public funder of higher education, because of the unique role universities play in Victoria, the State Government is a very significant contributor in its own right.

A recent study showed the value of the State's overall contribution to be worth \$350 million per annum.

In 2007 this included research grants and contracts totalling nearly \$84 million out of total research grants and contracts of \$650 million. That is, the

Victorian Government contributed 13 per cent of the value of such grants and contracts.

Among state governments, Victoria provides the strongest level of support for its universities. In aggregate, the Victorian Government provides approximately one half of the total of State Government funding for universities in Australia.

The Victorian Government has invested considerably in Victoria's regional universities. This has included more than \$37 million in university infrastructure through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, as set out in Schedule 1 to this statement.

The Government has also committed over \$32 million to support health services to provide the infrastructure required to provide clinical placements for an additional 220 medical student places, including:

- \$18.1 million to support 120 new medical students at the new Deakin University medical school at Waurin Ponds;
- \$5.1 million to support 40 new medical students at Monash University's Churchill campus in Gippsland; and
- \$8.9 million to support 60 new medical students through the new Northern Victoria Regional Medical Education Network, a joint partnership between Monash University and The University of Melbourne.

The Victorian Government makes a considerable investment in the staffing required to deliver clinical placements in health training in rural Victoria, including a new investment of \$7.5 million from 2007–09 in medical clinical academic posts.

The Victorian Government has also funded the construction of a new Dental School at La Trobe University's Bendigo campus as part of a \$14.5 million regional Dental School project and has invested heavily in collaborative

research facilities in Victorian universities over 10 years through the \$620 million dollar Science and Technology Initiative (STI).

### ***Next steps***

The Government proposes to finalise its Tertiary Education Plan for release and implementation beginning in the middle of this year.

The Government acknowledges the recognition in the Chair's Foreword to the Committee's Report that the '...plan will support the Victorian Government's contribution to national higher education reforms, and provide for growth in tertiary education provision and participation throughout Victoria.' The Chair, Geoff Howard, MP, Member for Ballarat East, also expressed the view that the Committee's own Report would be '...a vital resource for those developing and implementing the plan...'.

The Committee's Report is a comprehensive survey and analysis of the many complex factors and behaviours that affect participation in higher education in Victoria.

The Government will consider the Committee's Report and its recommendations in framing its Tertiary Education Plan for Victoria and in its on-going dialogue with the Commonwealth Government on tertiary education and training matters.

Schedule 2 to this statement sets out the Government's formal response to each of the Committee's recommendations. The issues covered by the Committee's report will be further addressed in other work currently being undertaken by the Government, particularly the Tertiary Education Plan for Victoria, the Regional Strategic Planning Initiative and the Government's response to the Victorian Aboriginal Economic Development report.

In responding to each of the Inquiry's recommendations, the Victorian Government has expressed its broad position in the following terms:



- **Support:** indicates that the Victorian Government agrees with the Committee's recommendations. However, the implementation of any recommendation that the Victorian Government supports is necessarily dependent of the availability of resources to support such outcomes.
- **Support in principle:** indicates that the Victorian Government agrees with the intent of a recommendation, but not necessarily with the method proposed by the Committee for achieving that outcome. Alternatively, the Victorian Government may believe that further analysis is required, particularly where new funding is proposed.
- **Support in part:** indicates the Government agrees with the intent of part of a recommendation but believes other matters require further analysis and consideration.
- **Requires further Victorian Government consideration:** indicates that a further examination of the issues is required by Victorian Government.

***Regional Infrastructure Development Fund and TAFE capital expenditure***

- More than \$3 million for RMIT's learning, research and development centre in Hamilton;
- \$2.6 million for a new Global Innovation Centre and \$1.5 million for a new business centre at the University of Ballarat;
- Four projects at La Trobe's Bendigo campus, including an ITC centre, regional research centre and visual arts centre;
- \$2.5 million for a La Trobe University campus at Mildura;
- \$950,000 for a wood research centre at Creswick;
- \$1.5 million for a La Trobe University Environmental Science centre in Wodonga;
- \$1.96 million towards the establishment of the Geelong Technology Precinct at Deakin's Waurin Ponds campus;
- \$6 million to increase the capacity of Deakin University's Waterfront campus in Geelong;
- \$2 million for development of a La Trobe University campus at Shepparton; and;
- \$6 million to expand the capacity of the Geelong Technology Precinct at Deakin University's Waurin Ponds campus.
- TAFE State Capital Expenditure in regional areas including annual equipment and maintenance funding from 1999 to the end of 2009 totals \$241,023,616.

**Responses to the Parliamentary Committee on Education and Training's  
Report on Geographical Differences in the Rate of Participation in  
Higher Education - Recommendations**

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2.1 That the Victorian Government work with universities and the Australian Government to support the national participation targets of:

- 40 per cent attainment of a qualification at bachelor level or above among Australians aged 25–34 by 2025; and
- 20 per cent of commencing undergraduate enrolments from low socioeconomic status backgrounds by 2020.

**Supported**

*Through Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) all Australian Governments, including the Victorian Government, have endorsed the national attainment and participation targets.*

2.2 That, as part of its new Higher Education Plan, the Victorian Government set targets for participation in higher education among under represented groups, particularly those in rural and regional, interface and low socioeconomic status metropolitan areas.

**Supported in Principle**

*This recommendation will be considered during the development of the Tertiary Education Plan (TEP).*

2.3 That the Victorian Government maintain and continually improve the annual On Track survey of Victorian school leavers and the On Track Longitudinal Study in order to inform education policy and programs at the local, regional and state levels.

**Supported**

*The annual On Track surveys and the On Track Longitudinal Study will continue to collect data to inform education policy and evaluate programs at the local, regional and state levels.*

3.1 That the Victorian Government continue to focus on lifting year 12 or equivalent completion rates by:

- implementing system-wide school improvement strategies, with particular attention to schools in low socio-economic and non-metropolitan areas; and
- providing schools with integrated support that enables them to tackle the full range of factors that contribute to early school leaving.

**Supported**

*The Victorian Government has initiated and funded comprehensive system-wide school improvement strategies aimed at lifting Year 12 or equivalent completion.*

*Schools are supported to provide a wide range of curriculum options to retain students in education, including Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). More than 43,000 Victorian school students participated in VETiS programs in 2008, an increase of over 17,000 students since 2002. To meet this demand, funding for VETiS was boosted to \$17.3 million in 2009. In recognition of the unique challenges faced by schools delivering or purchasing VETiS in rural areas, a loading for rural schools, based on the school's Location Index, is included in school funding arrangements. This funding may be used for a variety of arrangements which support access to VETiS by rural students, for example the hiring of buses to transport VETiS students to Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). This provides schools with the capacity to retain students who have a strong interest in applied learning and vocational employment.*

*The VCAL is a senior secondary qualification designed to broaden pathways for Years 11 and 12 students. It is based on applied learning and aims to provide pathways for young people from school into apprenticeships/traineeships, employment, further education and training. The VCAL is primarily provided by government schools, Catholic schools, TAFE institutes and some Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers. The government supports VCAL coordinators in these providers with funding of approximately \$12 million a year for VCAL coordinators.*

*In 2008, 87.7 per cent of VCAL students responding to the On Track survey either agreed or strongly agreed that VCAL was an important reason for staying on at school. In 2009, over 16,000 Victorians participated in VCAL.*

*Many government secondary schools have introduced re-engagement programs for post compulsory students, both to re-engage students who have already left school and to retain students at risk of disengaging from education and training. Re-engagement programs are typically delivered away from the main school campus and usually involve partnerships with ACE providers and/or other community organisations to deliver a senior secondary qualification.*

*From 2010, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) has implemented new policy for the delivery of re-engagement programs that will seek to increase the capacity of schools to re-engage disengaged young people. This includes comprehensive regional support to schools in developing options for these young people.*

*The Managed Individual Pathways program (MIPs), funded by more than \$16 million annually, provides all 15 to 19 year-olds in government schools with individual Career Action Plans (or pathways plans) and associated support to*

*enable a successful transition through the post-compulsory years to further education, training or employment. Extra support is provided to students at risk of disengaging or not making a successful transition to further education, training or employment. Over 80 per cent of all MIP's funding in 2010 is targeted to schools in low socio-economic communities.*

*From 2009, through Wannik, the Government's Koorie Education Strategy, the MIPs program is also provided to all Koorie students in government schools in Years 8 and 9 in recognition of the additional transition support needs of this cohort.*

*The Student Mapping Tool is a pre-programmed Excel spreadsheet which assists schools to identify students experiencing those risk factors known to contribute to disengagement or early leaving, and to monitor, track and evaluate the additional intervention strategies being used to assist them.*

*To assist schools identify successful intervention strategies, schools were provided with the Effective Strategies to Increase School Completion Report and the Guide to Increase School Completion, developed by Associate Professor Stephen Lamb and Dr Suzanne Rice from The University of Melbourne. The Report identifies empirically proven effective intervention strategies to improve student engagement and increase rates of school completion, including for students from low socio-economic areas. The Guide outlines how schools can plan and implement these strategies.*

*An online learning and teaching careers and transition resource has been developed that provides integrated educational, occupational and labour market information as well as a range of programs and tools to support careers and transition coordinators in working with all students. It also provides information for students and parents.*

*Guidelines have been developed for using the online resource with targeted groups. These include:*

- Koorie young people*
- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and English as a Second Language (ESL) young people*
- young people with disabilities*
- rural and remote young people, and*
- young people not in education, employment or training.*

*Victoria also has a strong set of networks between providers. Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) cover the State, working with relevant local partners to improve outcomes for local young people.*

*These strategies will underpin further improvement beyond the current 90 per cent Year 12 or equivalent completion target under Growing Victoria Together. Under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions Victoria has committed to a COAG target of 92.6 per cent completion of Year 12 or equivalent by 2015. There are a range of additional*

*initiatives that are expected to contribute to the achievement of this enhanced target.*

*The Rural Education Strategy will be developed during 2010 to provide an overarching framework for rural education that will address inequalities between rural and metropolitan education outcomes arising from reduced access and opportunities. The Strategy will focus on attracting and supporting high quality principals and teachers in rural schools, including professional development opportunities for rural principals and teachers. The Strategy will also increase the range of curriculum offerings in rural schools through increased use of online teaching and online collaboration between teachers, students and schools*

*The Commonwealth Government's support for the establishment of Trade Training Centres in Schools has been strongly taken up in Victoria, with over \$150 million of funding awarded to Victorian government and non-government schools in Rounds 1 and 2. Almost one third, or \$50 million, was awarded to projects in non-metropolitan areas. The initiative will contribute to improved Year 12 or equivalent completion rates through providing students with access to greater opportunities and broader pathways in state of the art facilities delivering vocational education and training (VET) in skill shortage areas in the traditional trades and other eligible occupation areas.*

*From 2010, the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions provides further opportunities for young Victorians. The Partnership Brokers program in Victoria will be delivered through enhanced LLENs jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions. LLENs have received additional funding to deliver this program, which further develops their role in brokering partnerships between schools, community, business and parents to support young people to achieve a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.*

*The National Partnership includes a Youth Connections service which commenced in January 2010. Youth Connections provides an improved safety net for young people who have disengaged from education, or at risk of disengaging, through the provision of tailored case management and support to help young people to re-connect with education or training and build resilience, skills and attributes that promote positive life choices and wellbeing. The focus of the service in Victoria is on reconnecting the most disengaged young people to education, training or employment.*

*In partnership with the Commonwealth, the Victorian Government has also introduced further initiatives to strengthen the participation of young Victorians in education, training or employment. From 1 January 2010, Victorians are required to be in school up to the age of 17 unless they are participating in education, training or employment. The Victorian Government has also provided guaranteed places for 15-24 year olds wishing to participate in education and training. The new state-wide Youth Connections program, which also commenced on 1 January 2010, provides young people at risk of*

*disengaging from education and training, and those who have already disengaged, with access to support – no matter where they live.*

*Further enhancements to youth, careers and transition services as part of this National Partnership are under development.*

3.2 That the Victorian Government expand the collection and publication of annual data on year 12 completion rates to include analyses of data for different qualifications (VCE, VCAL and VET certificate) between different geographical areas and socioeconomic groups.

**Supported in part**

*DEECD calculates a Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate for 19 year olds on an annual basis using:*

- *administrative data sourced from the Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority and Skills Victoria (Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development); and*
- *the Estimated Resident Population (ERP) series, sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.*

*The Victorian level 19 year old rate is currently published in DEECD's Annual Report.*

*The underlying administrative data contain both geographic and certificate type identifiers which allow the 19 year old attainment rate to be broken down by Certificate Type, and calculated for each Departmental Region.*

*The analyses of qualifications by socio-economic groups will require further consideration.*

3.3 That the Victorian Government analyse and report on recent trends in VCE completion rates, including:

- *VCE completion rates for Victoria as a whole and for different geographical areas and socioeconomic groups;*
- *causes and implications of any changes in VCE completion rates; and*
- *strategies to increase VCE completion rates, particularly in low socio-economic and non-metropolitan areas.*

**Supported**

*The Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) completion rates for Victoria as a whole and by different population groups (e.g. gender, age group) are reported on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) website each year.*

*The VCE completion rates for all Victorian schools are also published on the VCAA website and the major newspapers each year. The report includes individual school localities which enable the analysis of VCE completion rates for different geographical areas and socioeconomic characteristics of the areas.*

*In general terms, the percentage of all students satisfactorily completing VCE has remained stable between 2002 at 96.6 per cent to 2008 at 96.9 per cent*

*To increase VCE completion rates the VCAA has continued to:*

- *further develop and support a comprehensive range of VET programs that contribute to the VCE*
- *supported and encouraged the flexibility of the two senior certificates (VCE/VCAL)*
- *encouraged the delivery of VCE/VCAL in a variety of settings e.g. ACE / TEC*
- *deliver a wide range of professional development activities to support teachers of the VCE/VCAL.*

*Satisfactory completion of the VCE is not the only criterion for successful transitions for students. Analysis of On Track data demonstrates that some students leave before completing their VCE to continue training in TAFE, start an apprenticeship/traineeship or enter the workforce. Strategies to increase VCE completion generally, as well as in low socio-economic and non-metropolitan areas, are included as part of the broader range of strategies that have been implemented to improve Year 12 or equivalent completion as set out in the response to recommendation 3.1.*

**3.4 That the Victorian Government support increased completion and higher achievement in the VCE, particularly among under-represented groups, by:**

- **assisting smaller schools to expand VCE subject choices;**
- **developing a scholarship program for VCE students to participate in revision and extension activities;**
- **expanding accelerated learning programs;**
- **supporting schools to offer access to university-run tertiary extension studies that can contribute to ENTERs; and**
- **providing online written and interactive extension and revision materials.**

***Requires further Victorian Government consideration***

*The Victorian Government's system-wide school improvement strategies aimed at lifting year 12 or equivalent completion are outlined in response to recommendation 3.1.*

*The Rural Education Strategy, also outlined in the response to recommendation 3.1, will increase the range of curriculum offerings in rural schools through the use of online teaching and collaboration. While completion of the VCE is important for a majority of senior secondary students, the Victorian Government is committed to providing a range of options through which a young person can complete a Year 12 or equivalent qualification and successfully transition to further education, training or employment.*



4.1 That the Victorian Government implements a statewide program aimed at raising aspirations towards higher education for students from under-represented groups. The program should:

- engage students from the early and middle years of secondary school;
- raise awareness among students and their families of higher education as a worthwhile and viable post-school pathway;
- integrate and resource targeted programs to assist students to improve academic achievement to meet their aspirations;
- integrate aspiration-raising activities with other strategies to address the barriers to higher education participation for under-represented groups; and
- include a rigorous program of evaluation and research.

***Requires Further Government Consideration***

*The Victorian Government's system-wide school improvement strategies are aimed at lifting year 12 or equivalent completion outlined in response to recommendation 3.1.*

*The Victorian Government's initiatives in relation to careers education, which is related to raising aspirations, is set out in the response to recommendation 4.2.*

4.2 That the Victorian Government continue to fund the Managed Individual Pathways program, and improve the quality of career education in Victorian schools by:

- phasing in a requirement for all career educators to have a relevant graduate diploma or equivalent qualification;
- providing additional scholarships for career educators to attain a relevant graduate diploma;
- providing ongoing professional learning for all Victorian career educators; and
- consulting with the Career Education Association of Victoria to determine appropriate staff time allocations for career education roles, with the aim of improving levels of individualised student support.

***Supported in Principle***

*The Victorian Government proposes to maintain MIPs, as set out in the response to recommendation 3.1.*

*Effective career development services support young people to make informed choices about their future education, training and employment options. Given Victoria's move towards student demand driven VET and higher education, it is critical that young people have the capacity, knowledge and understanding to navigate their pathways through post school options and make informed decisions to lead productive and successful adult lives.*

*DEECD has implemented a number of professional development initiatives for MIPs & careers coordinators and teachers in government schools to enhance their capacity to provide quality, up to date and accurate careers information*

*and transition support to students. In 2007-2008, 80 careers coordinators in government schools were provided with funding to undertake either the Graduate Certificate in Career Education or an Industry Placement Program. In 2009, funding was provided to 70 government school MIPs or careers coordinators to undertake the Certificate IV in Career Development by recognition of prior learning or coursework.*

*Victoria continues to improve career education programs which are part of the pathway planning process and schools have access to a wide range of resources on the DEECD website. These include detailed lesson plans for Years 6 to 10 and guidelines for using these resources with particular target groups such as Indigenous youth, ESL and CALD youth, and young people with disabilities. DEECD provides ongoing professional development to careers and MIPs coordinators to improve practice. In addition, DEECD funds the Career Education Association of Victoria to support schools in implementing career education programs.*

4.3 That the Victorian Government, in partnership with local governments, universities and other stakeholders, consider further opportunities for co location of school and university facilities in areas where participation in higher education is low.

**Supported**

*The Victorian Government encourages collaboration between universities, schools and other providers and local communities as outlined in response to recommendation 6.6.*

4.4 That the Victorian Government develop systemic programs at a school and regional level aimed at engaging parents in career education and aspiration raising activities, and regularly monitor and review the outcomes of these programs.

**Supported in Principle**

*DEECD has developed online careers and transition resources that provide integrated educational, occupational and labour market information as well as a range of programs and tools to support careers and transition coordinators, students and parents. These include guidelines for using the online resource with targeted groups.*

*Culturally-inclusive resources to support indigenous students, their parents and teachers in the career development and planning process are being developed and will be available in 2010.*

*DEECD continues to implement professional learning programs for teachers to effectively use these resources which can be used to inform the work schools undertake with parents to actively engage them in the career development of their children.*

5.1 That the Victorian Government work with the Australian Government to provide incentives for universities to increase access to enabling programs for students from under represented groups.

**Supported in Principle**

*Issues around enabling programs are currently the subject of intensive consideration by the Commonwealth and state governments. This recommendation will be considered in forming the Victorian Government's position in these discussions.*

5.2 That the Victorian Government undertake research on the limitations of the ENTER as a selection tool for students from non-metropolitan and low socioeconomic status areas. The research should:

- clarify the relationships between location, population density and ENTER, identifying any systemic measurement bias;
- investigate the effects, if any, of VCE subject availability and choice on ENTER attainment; and
- identify any modifications in the calculation or use of the ENTER required to make it more equitable.

**Supported**

*The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that all Victorians who have the aspiration and ability to undertake tertiary education and training can do so. As part of ongoing work on youth transition issues, the Victorian Government has already commissioned independent research on the relative strengths and limitations of the ENTER as a selection instrument. A research report by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at The University of Melbourne is entitled *Improving Selection for Tertiary Selection Places in Victoria* and is publicly available at:*

*[http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/people/staff\\_pages/James/Improving\\_Tertiary\\_Selection\\_in\\_Victoria.pdf](http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/people/staff_pages/James/Improving_Tertiary_Selection_in_Victoria.pdf)*

*Consultation is already underway with key stakeholders and experts on tertiary selection processes.*

*The Victorian Government is aware that all Victorian universities themselves have begun to adopt selection processes to supplement ENTER and reduce reliance on it.*

*This matter will be further addressed by the Government in developing its TEP.*

5.3 That the Victorian Government require increased articulation and credit transfer from VET to higher education by:

- prioritising development of the Credit Matrix through the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority as a matter of urgency;
- setting deadlines and targets to address differences in accreditation, governance and funding between the VET and higher education sectors, through the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment;
- advocating to the Australian Government that it monitor and reward universities' performance in relation to credit transfer; and
- funding TAFE institutes to employ pathways coordinators responsible for negotiating and promoting articulation and credit Transfer arrangements.

**Supported in Principle**

*The Credit Matrix is in the process of roll out by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) through implementation of the Qualifications Navigator (QN). The QN is an on-line tool which will be released by the VRQA in February 2010 as part of the enhanced State Register. The QN will make it easier to compare qualifications across sectors in terms of the amount and complexity of learning involved. It will enable students to plan pathways and compare how much credit existing learning might contribute to another qualification. Users log in to an account and explore qualifications across sectors.*

*The further application of the Credit Matrix to higher education will be contingent upon the final shape of national arrangements, including the proposed establishment of Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the outcomes of a current review of the Australian Qualifications Framework.*

*Guidelines relating to performance funding are currently under consideration by the Commonwealth Government and during the consultation process the Victorian Government will address the issue of credit transfer as a possible component of performance funding.*

*This recommendation will be further addressed by the Government in developing its TEP.*

5.4 That the Victorian Government develop and implement measures aimed at increasing participation in upper level VET qualifications specifically among students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds.

**Supported**

*The Government's \$316 million skills reform package, Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria, seeks to provide more opportunities for those without a formal qualification to acquire one, while also encouraging people to train and study at higher levels.*

*Under the reforms, the Government is maintaining its strong commitment to people who are disadvantaged in the labour market by their social and*

*economic circumstances. The changes to the training system are designed to create a system that is fairer for all. Help will go to those most in need – the jobless, retrenched, unskilled and disadvantaged. The most vulnerable people in the community and in the labour market, those who require basic skills, language and literacy skills, will pay the same or less than in the past.*

*A key element of the package is Skills for Life – the Victorian Training Guarantee, which gives eligible Victorians an entitlement to government subsidised training at all levels of skills development. It can be accessed at any time for training at the foundation level and for training in qualifications higher than those already held.*

*Students eligible for a government subsidised place at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma level will have access to the VET FEE-HELP scheme to ensure that tuition fees do not affect participation in training. This will enable students to defer paying any fees until they begin to benefit from training through higher wages.*

5.5 That the Victorian Government work with the Australian Government to improve and align data collection about articulation from VET to higher education in order to improve knowledge about transitions, including:

- numbers of articulating students;
- basis of admission for articulating students;
- geographic, economic, social and cultural characteristics of articulating students;
- particular pathways taken;
- credit granted; and
- academic outcomes of articulating students.

**Supported**

*The Commonwealth Government proposes to strengthen the role of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to improve data collection.*

*The Victorian Government will raise this recommendation with the Commonwealth Government in context of its regular bilateral discussions on tertiary education matters.*

6.1 That the Victorian Government advocate for Australian Government funding for regional higher education provision that:

- is based on the actual cost of provision in different rural and regional locations;
- is directed in large part at maintaining and strengthening existing regional campuses;
- supports expansion of collaborative regional delivery arrangements between universities for high quality higher education courses and increased research capacity;
- utilises existing facilities and resources (including TAFE institutes) in rural and regional areas, where appropriate;
- provides incentives for universities to offer high value courses that balance student demand and workforce need; and
- is sufficient to ensure a high quality face-to-face component in undergraduate courses delivered through blended learning.

**Supported**

*The Commonwealth is currently undertaking a review of funding regional provision to which the Victorian Government will make a submission reiterating its longstanding position in support of increased funding to regional providers in line with their actual costs, as set out in the Victorian Government's submission to the Review of Australian Higher Education.*

*The Victorian Government recognises that higher education providers in regional areas play a critically important role in the economic and social life of their communities which goes far beyond traditional educational activities and that they make a unique contribution to their local communities and to students from regional and rural areas.*

*The Victorian Government acknowledges that regional universities face higher costs as a result of location, size, history, less potential to diversify revenue sources, smaller capacity to compete for fee-paying students, and fewer opportunities for commercial partnerships.*

*The Victorian Government recognises that regional university campuses are critical to the long-term future of regional communities and it has invested considerably in Victoria's regional universities. This has included:*

- *more than \$37 million in university infrastructure through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund;*
- *funding for specific projects over \$32 million to support health services to provide the infrastructure required to provide clinical placements for an additional 220 medical student places at Deakin's new medical school at Waurin Ponds, Monash University's Churchill campus medical school; and*
- *through the new Northern Victoria Regional Medical Education Network, a joint partnership between Monash University and The University of Melbourne.*

*In addition, the Victorian Government makes a considerable investment in the staffing required to deliver clinical placements in health training in rural Victoria, including an investment of \$7.5 million over 2007–09 in medical clinical academic posts.*

*The Victorian Government also funded the construction of a new Dental School at La Trobe University's Bendigo campus as part of a \$14.5 million regional Dental School project.*

*A further \$20 million over two years was allocated through the 2008-09 Victorian State Budget to provide for more projects to develop teaching infrastructure for Victorian health profession students. A significant proportion of these capital improvements are in regional health services to support the education of medical, nursing and allied health students and, in turn, contribute to improved productivity, health and safety, retention and promotion of interdisciplinary learning.*

6.2 That the Victorian Government advocate to the Australian Government that it ensure that accreditation and quality assurance of higher education courses address each mode and site of delivery.

***Supported in Principle***

*Issues around quality assurance are currently the subject of intensive consideration by the Commonwealth and state governments. This recommendation will be considered in the Victorian Government's approach to the proposed establishment of the TEQSA.*

6.3 That the Victorian Government advocate through the new Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment for a major review by the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency of the provision of blended learning by the higher education sector to benchmark best practice and set mandatory quality guidelines for future delivery in this mode.

***Requires further Victorian Government consideration***

*The role and scope of TEQSA is yet to be finalised. This recommendation will be considered in the Victorian Government approach to the proposed establishment of TEQSA.*

6.4 That Skills Victoria work with regional universities and campuses to provide annual detailed advice on local skill shortages in regional Victoria.

***Supported in Principle***

*Skills Victoria provides advice on statewide skills shortages and employment prospects at the industry and occupational level, available through the Skills Victoria website. The information is for general use by students, parents and providers*

*Consideration is being given to supplementing such statewide analysis with regional analyses.*

*This recommendation will be further addressed by the Government in its development of the TEP.*

6.5 That as part of the Victorian Government's ongoing commitment to improving public transport, it review public transport services to education and training institutions in non Metropolitan areas. This review should include consideration of public transport linkages within and between non Metropolitan localities.

**Supported**

*The Department of Transport regularly conducts bus reviews across the State to identify opportunities for improving services. An important consideration is the provision of public transport to support social inclusion and give communities access to education, employment and health services. Public transport connections to key activity centres, including educational and training institutions, is therefore a fundamental and standard part of public transport planning. Reviews are underway or have been recently completed in Bairnsdale/Paynesville, Bacchus Marsh, the Greater Geelong area, the Latrobe Valley, Mildura/Swan Hill, South Gippsland, Shepparton and Warrnambool.*

6.6 That the Victorian Government support TAFE institutes to collaborate and partner with universities in the delivery of higher education courses in regional Victoria.

**Supported**

*The Victorian Government strongly supports and encourages the development of closer working relationships between universities, VET providers and schools to improve education and training participation and outcomes, particularly in rural Victoria.*

*An increasingly integrated tertiary sector is emerging in Victoria, creating opportunities for greater collaboration between universities, VET providers and schools. Such collaborations can be extremely important in expanding opportunity and provision in regional settings. In order to facilitate better integration, further consideration will need to be given to better aligning the standards, performance reporting and funding arrangements of the different sectors.*

*Across Victoria, universities are increasingly developing relationships with their local schools, including in non-metropolitan regions.*

*A strong and effective partnership between a university and a regional school provides the school with access to additional facilities it may lack, as well as allowing students to develop an understanding of university life.*

*The Victorian Government notes that the Commonwealth Government has provided funding of \$108 million over four years to 2013 for a partnerships program to link universities with low SES schools and VET providers.*



*This recommendation will be further addressed by the Government in its development of the TEP.*

7.1 That the Victorian Government advocate to the Australian Government for an increase to student income support payments taking into account costs of living.

***Supported in Principle***

*Funding responsibility for student income support rests with the Commonwealth Government. The Victorian Government supports timely and regular reviews of the adequacy of income support arrangements, including quantum. In its submission to the Review of Australian Higher Education, the Victorian Government argued for improved income support arrangements.*

7.2 That the Victorian Government advocate to the Australian Government that young people who are required to relocate to undertake tertiary studies be eligible to receive Youth Allowance.

***Supported in Principle***

*Funding responsibility for student income support rests with the Commonwealth Government. The Victorian Government supports timely and regular reviews of the adequacy of income support arrangements, including eligibility criteria. In its submission to the Review of Australian Higher Education, the Victorian Government argued for improved income support arrangements.*

*The Victorian Government notes that under proposed reforms to the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme, rejected by the Australian Senate in 2009, students who need to move to study could be eligible for a Relocation Scholarship worth \$4000 in the first year and \$1,000 in subsequent years on top of any other benefits.*

7.3 That the Victorian Government, in collaboration with universities, pilot an early intervention scholarship program for students from under represented groups and areas.

***Requires further Victorian Government consideration***

*This recommendation will be addressed by the Government in its development of the TEP.*

7.4 That the Victorian Government coordinate an industry placement program to assist higher education students from regional areas and low socio-economic status backgrounds.

***Requires further Victorian Government consideration***

*A number of universities have introduced industry placement programs as part of their undergraduate courses.*

*This recommendation will be further addressed by the Government in its development of the TEP.*

8.1 That the Victorian Government work with higher education providers other levels of government and developers to evaluate the current availability and potential further development of affordable supported student accommodation in Melbourne for rural and regional students.

***Supported in Principle***

*The Government is currently considering a number of issues around student accommodation.*

*The Victorian Government acknowledges that, working with landlords, developers, homestay groups and education providers, it can play a role in improving access to appropriate, affordable accommodation for students.*

*The Victorian Government has already taken action to:*

- *better inform students of their accommodation options and what to expect in the private rental market through the production of renting guides and a DVD;*
- *address the possible exploitation of student housing arrangements by cracking down on substandard rooming houses and appointing a taskforce to advise on the introduction and enforcement of minimum standards; and*
- *deliver affordable rental dwellings in collaboration with the Commonwealth Government under the National Rental Affordability Scheme.*

*The Victorian Government will continue to pursue reforms in this area, including:*

- *better integrating information on housing choices – including homestay and share housing – via the new Study Melbourne Victoria website; and*
- *advocating to the Commonwealth Government that future rounds of the Education Investment Fund support the provision of student housing.*

*Key actions being undertaken by other parties include initiatives to increase the supply of student accommodation. For example, Universities Australia is considering establishing a finance mechanism to assist in the construction of more student housing.*

8.2 That the Victorian Government work with universities and other stakeholders to strengthen support to students making the transition to university, by:

- assisting small rural and remote schools to provide students with opportunities to visit metropolitan environments and meet peers from other areas as part of a country-city twinning program;
- examining the causes of lower course completion rates among higher education students from remote areas, and developing options for additional support; and
- facilitating the development of further targeted support programs reflecting best practice, including mentoring programs, pre-university transition initiatives and activities that involve parents in transition support.

**Supported**

*The Victorian Government is undertaking a number of initiatives related to this recommendation as set out in response to recommendations 3.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.6 and 7.1.*

*This recommendation will be further addressed by the Government in its development of the TEP.*

9.1 That as part of a statewide initiative to raise aspirations towards higher education (recommendation 4.1), the Victorian Government:

- create a culture of high expectations for Indigenous students at all levels of education;
- maintain the scholarship program for high achieving Indigenous School students;
- through the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs, develop and resource a program for Indigenous role model speakers to visit Victorian Indigenous school children, particularly those in the middle years, with the aim of lifting year 12 or equivalent completion;
- ensure that Indigenous students receive individualised and culturally appropriate career education; and
- engage parents and families in these initiatives.

**Supported in Principle**

*Improving the transition of young Koorie people from school to work and further education, training and employment (youth transitions) is a key priority for the Victorian Government. The Government is investing in a range of complementary initiatives that will improve transitions for young Koorie people.*

*The Victorian Aboriginal Economic Development (VAED) Group (comprising leaders from the Aboriginal community, business, philanthropy and State Government), established to advise government on improving economic outcomes for Koorie Victorians, support the need for a culture of high expectation with particular focus on the need for career support from Year 7 onwards.*

*Through the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, the Government is investigating scope for a Careers Mentoring Network Initiative that will provide Koorie students with career mentors who will also act as role models. The Government is also working with the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience to roll out its highly successful program in universities and secondary schools across the state.*

*During 2007, DEECD conducted an extensive review of education provision for Indigenous students which resulted in a new major education strategy known as Wannik. The strategy aims to improve outcomes for Koorie students across the whole of the government school system by creating a culture of high expectations and individualised learning; introducing explicit accountability mechanisms for improved outcomes across all levels of the school system; and creating an environment that respects, recognises and celebrates cultural identity through practice and curriculum.*

*The Government recognises that improving educational outcomes through Wannik must also be accompanied by clearer pathways from school to further education, training and employment. Under Wannik, there are three action items that support transitions of Indigenous young people:*

- The Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) program provides all 15-19 year olds attending government schools with individual pathway plans and associated support to enable a successful transition through the post compulsory years to further education, training or full-time employment. Additional funding from 2009 will enhance MIPs provision to Indigenous students in Years 8 and 9, thus providing for early intervention where necessary.*
- The MIPs Mapping Tool allows schools to easily identify students who have characteristics that are known to increase the risk of early school leaving. From 2009, all government schools with Indigenous students are required to use the Mapping Tool.*
- The Youth Transition Support Initiative (YTSI) provides transition support workers in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Victoria. These workers provide personalised assistance to young people aged 15–19 who are not in education or training, not working full-time and do not have Year 12 or an equivalent qualification. The objective is to help disengaged young people achieve a sustainable education, training or employment outcome. Additional YTSI provision is being established to support indigenous young people in three of these areas.*

*The Government is also investing in a range of complementary initiatives that will improve transitions for Indigenous young people. The Government will continue to improve services and support for Koorie young people to strengthen transitions from school to further education, training and employment including:*

- enhanced Local Learning and Employment Networks;*
- Youth Connections; and*
- Career Development Initiatives.*

*Victoria continues to improve career education programs which are part of the pathway planning process and schools have access to a wide range of resources on the DEECD website. These include detailed lesson plans for Years 6 to 10 and guidelines for using these resources with particular target groups such as Indigenous youth, ESL and CALD youth, and young people with disabilities. DEECD provides ongoing professional development to careers and MIPs coordinators to improve practice.*

*Under Wannik, the Government is running a trial in the first half of 2010 of a Koorie Pathways Transition Officer in the Hume Region whose role will be to work with schools, the LLEN, businesses and tertiary providers to provide appropriate careers advice and pathways for Koorie students. From the middle of 2010, \$3.6 million will be allocated over four years to enable similar positions to be established in each region across the state.*

*To support both the creation of a culture of high expectations for, and high achievement by, Indigenous students, arrangements have been made with the School for Student Leadership that any Koorie student attending does so at no cost. In 2009, 17 Indigenous students went through the program. Further, all Indigenous students in Years 9-12 are eligible to receive tutorial support and the number of those doing so increased by 300 percent in 2009. Nine new Koorie Education Co-ordinators and 18 new Koorie Engagement Support Officers have been employed across the state, increasing the size of the Koorie Support Workforce by per cent. Undertaking action in the early years of schooling is also important. \$13.2 million has been allocated over the next four years so that the 40 per cent of students in Years 2-6 not achieving at the expected level receive extra tuition.*

*To further recognise high achievement by Indigenous students the Victorian Government awarded 24 scholarships in 2009 and a further 20 will be awarded in 2010. The scholarships provide \$2,500 per annum for high achieving Indigenous students in each of their final two years of school. In addition, Wannik supports the involvement of up to 10 students per annum at the Trinity College, The University of Melbourne, summer school.*

*In 2010, five Clontarf Football Academies (Mildura, Robinvale, Swan Hill, Bairnsdale and Warrnambool) and three Wannik Koorie Dance academies (Ballarat, Eaglehawk and Mooroopna) will begin operation aimed at more successfully engaging Koorie students with education.*

*As part of the service level agreement with DEECD, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI) has responsibility for engaging the Koorie community in actively participating in education decision making. VAEAI appointed five Parent and Community Engagement workers in 2009 through Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funding. The reformed Koorie Support Workforce is clearly focused on the engagement of families and communities with schools.*

9.2 That the Victorian Government work with universities and Indigenous communities to improve participation in higher education by Indigenous Victorians by:

- supporting targeted, high quality blended learning and community-based models of delivery;
- developing culturally inclusive curriculum and study environments;
- providing targeted scholarship schemes;
- advocating to the Australian Government for increased income support; and,
- maintaining mentoring, academic and other support programs for Indigenous higher education students.

***Supported in Principle***

*While recognising the merits of scholarships, the Government considers there are additional and equally effective approaches. There is a strong case for Universities to establish good relationships with students and their families while they are still in secondary education. This would begin at Years 9 and 10. These relationships would increase awareness of opportunities and contribute to increased aspirations as well as retention and achievement at school and subsequent transitions to higher education.*

*Opportunities also exist under the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program to develop initiatives that will support an increase in participation in higher education of undergraduates from a low socio-economic background, including Indigenous students. This includes opportunities for school/university partnerships which will increase the aspirations of people from low socio-economic backgrounds, including Indigenous students to access higher education.*

*The Government recognises that mentoring and role models are key issues across education as well as in the attainment of life skills for young Indigenous Victorians and will continue developments in these areas in partnership with Indigenous Victorians, schools and tertiary educators.*

*Culturally-inclusive resources to support Indigenous students, their parents and teachers in career development and pathway planning processes are being developed and will be available in 2010. Professional development to support schools to effectively use these resources will also commence in 2010.*

9.3 That the Victorian Government, in consultation with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association and the Victorian Vice Chancellors' Committee, support the development of a career guidance pathway program for Indigenous TAFE students. The program should involve individualised pathway plans outlining agreed articulation and credit transfer arrangements for Indigenous students seeking to progress from TAFE to higher education.

**Supported**

*The TAFE sector continues to provide a valuable point of access to further education for Indigenous Victorians. The Government recognises that many current Indigenous TAFE students have the potential to transfer to University once their confidence increases and their foundation skills are enhanced.*

*Pathway planning and individual learning plans are developed for many Indigenous students by TAFEs, particularly for the 15-19 year old cohort and those students most at risk of non-completion. A more formalised process has been established to ensure pathway planning becomes part of the support mechanism for those students at all 18 TAFE institutes. This process builds appropriate measures to develop pathway plans into their annual Wurreker Implementation Plans.*

*As part of the Government's commitment to ensuring that Indigenous students are supported in participation in training and completion of training qualifications, an Indigenous Completions Initiative was incorporated in the Wurreker Strategy in 2004, in partnership with the VAEAI.*

*Under this initiative, Indigenous students were required to pay only the minimum tuition fee for enrolments in government funded training.*

*The Government has now extended the Indigenous Completions Initiative to cover tuition fees for government funded training in 2010, 2011 and 2012. For enrolments in these years, Indigenous students will pay only the minimum fee applicable to the course category in which they are enrolling. This applies to all course categories including the Skills Deepening category.*

9.4 That the Victorian Government implement a program to ensure that all Indigenous school children have access to computers both during and after school hours and that the program be regularly monitored and reviewed.

**Supported in Principle**

*The Victorian Government is investing over \$140 million in 2009-10 to support access to the latest information communications technology in government schools. This includes annual funding to schools to purchase computers. The Victorian Government is also investing an additional \$28 million during this term of government to increase student access to computers.*

*In addition, the DEECD is currently conducting a three year trial of netbook computers involving 10,000 students across the Northern, Grampians, Barwon-South Western and Loddon Mallee regions where students can use*

*their netbooks at school and at home. The outcomes of this trial will help inform future policy in this area.*

*DEECD will consider ways to provide greater access to computers for every Koorie student.*