



## **State-wide approach needed to tackle problems in gifted education**

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Victoria's education system is failing the state's best and brightest students, a report by the Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee has found.

"There is a widespread misconception that gifted students will succeed without any extra assistance," said the Committee's Chair, Mr David Southwick MP. "However, gifted students need to be continually challenged and stimulated at school if they are to reach their full potential."

There are an estimated 85 000 gifted students in Victoria – 10% of the student population. These students may be gifted in areas as diverse as language to leadership, and science to sport.

The report calls for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to formulate a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of Victoria's gifted students. Mr Southwick said, "Identifying and supporting the gifted students of today is vital to ensuring Victoria has the leaders of tomorrow. In the past this area of policy has often been filled with stop gap, ad hoc measures when a consistent, state-wide approach is needed to ensure every student in every school receives an education suited to their individual needs and abilities."

"These neglected students represent our state's future visionaries and innovators. We owe it to our society as well as to ourselves to give these students the most challenging and stimulating education possible."

The Committee's report demonstrates that failure to provide appropriately for gifted students in the school environment can have severe and devastating consequences. Under-stimulated gifted students may be bored and frustrated at school. They may exhibit behavioural problems or even disengage from education entirely.

A concerning number of gifted students dumb themselves down to fit in at school, while those who don't may experience social isolation or even bullying.

"In this report the Committee recommends that the Victorian Government develop a policy which allows these students to reach their potential and get the most out of their education," said Mr Southwick.

The report also recognises the powerful influence that teachers' abilities have on students' learning. The report recommends increased access for teachers to professional development in the field of gifted education and ensuring they have the materials needed to support these students.

“A committed, well supported teaching profession will ultimately be one of the biggest factors in determining the success of a gifted and talented policy. The Committee wants to ensure teachers have the tools required to support gifted students.”

Other key recommendations in the report include:

- a positive obligation for all schools to identify and cater for gifted students
- a ‘virtual school’ to provide extended learning opportunities to gifted students throughout the state
- enhanced support for gifted students, including more opportunities for these students to link both academically and socially with ‘like minds’
- more support for the parents and carers of gifted students.

The Committee received over 100 submissions, conducted ten public hearings and visited six schools as part of the Inquiry process. “The Committee is extremely grateful to all who participated in the Inquiry, including students, parents, teachers, voluntary organisations and academics,” said Mr Southwick.

“If we don’t act to harness the potential of gifted young people now we are robbing the Victoria of tomorrow of future leaders.”

The report is available on the Committee’s website at [www.parliament.vic.gov.au/etc](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/etc).

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