

Home Schooling Roundtable - Thursday, 19 November 2009

Summary Report

INTRODUCTION

Some 45 home schooling families from across metropolitan and rural Victoria participated in a Home Schooling Roundtable at *Hilton on the Park*, East Melbourne on Thursday, 19 November 2009. The Roundtable was held to enable consultation with a wide cross section of the home schooling community.

The Minister for Education, Bronwyn Pike, participated in the Roundtable and launched *Home Schooling in Victoria - A guide to services and support* which provides comprehensive information on the range of government support available to home schooling families.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The Minister for Education and an expert panel responded to a number of questions and issues raised by participants:

1. Enrolment at the Distance Education Centre Victoria (DECV) to complete the VCE

- It was noted that home schooled students are already able to access a range of services provided by the DECV:
 - home schooled students who meet DECV enrolment criteria, such as physical or chronic health conditions, social or emotional issues, distance from the nearest school, or extended family travel, are eligible to enrol in the DECV.
 - families may purchase a range of Prep to Year 10 printed curriculum materials from the DECV.
- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is reviewing distance education. The review will consider the enrolment of home schooled students at DECV to complete VCE.

2. Why are Victorian home schooled students not eligible for Youth Allowance?

- Youth Allowance is a Commonwealth Government allowance administered by Centrelink. Under Centrelink's eligibility criteria, Victorian home schooled students are not eligible for Youth Allowance. Questions regarding eligibility should be discussed with Centrelink.
- In response to a query regarding students with disabilities, participants were advised that *The Home-Based Educational Support Program* assists students with severe disabilities who are unable to attend school due to the nature of their disability. The 2010 guidelines and application form are available for download www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/homebased.htm

3. Negotiating partial enrolment at the neighbourhood government school

- It was noted by some participants that government school principals need reminding that under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* home schooling is a legitimate form of education; that partial enrolment is an option for home schooling families; and that Guidelines have been developed to assist schools and home schooling families negotiate this arrangement.
- It was further noted that families may approach a DEECD regional office for assistance in negotiating partial enrolment, and that regional offices have a complaints process for difficulties regarding partial enrolment.

4. Curriculum issues - a range of curriculum issues was discussed:

4.1 Changes to the eight key learning areas

The *Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006* will be revised in 2010 to incorporate the eight key learning areas as expressed in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational*

Goals for Young Australians. Further information will be forwarded to registered home schooling families by the VRQA.

4.2 National curriculum – the Australian Curriculum and Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is developing a national curriculum for Kindergarten to Year 12 starting with English, Mathematics, Science and history for implementation from 2011 followed by Languages, geography and the Arts. Home schooling families can contribute to the development of the national curriculum via www.acara.edu.au/get_involved/get_involved.htm

4.3 Victorian Curriculum – home schooling families may keep abreast of curriculum matters by subscribing to the memos and bulletins published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. They can also contribute to the review of VCE studies via www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/publications/index.html

4.4 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) – the relevance of NAPLAN for home schooled students was discussed. NAPLAN can only be administered in a school-based setting in order to ensure the integrity of the program.

- A home-schooled student, who is partially enrolled at a neighbourhood government school for specific activities, is eligible to sit the NAPLAN. The family would need to discuss this with the principal at the time of enrolment.
- Families wishing to use previous NAPLAN tests as part of their educational program may access the tests and sample answers via www.naplan.edu.au/

4.5 Regional hubs – some participants called for the establishment of regional hubs with a designated school providing services to home schooling families.

5. Improving community perceptions of home schooling

- Principals will be reminded that home schooling is a legitimate educational option under the *Education Training and Reform Act 2006*.
- Families may use the VRQA letter of registration and *Home Schooling in Victoria - a guide to services and support* publication to confirm the status of their children as home schooled.
- Some participants suggested that a home schooling student card be introduced.

6. Financial assistance – in response to requests for additional financial support participants were reminded that:

- the Government recognises a parent's right to choose an appropriate education for their child. However, in making the choice to home school, a parent assumes complete responsibility for the education of their child;
- the Victorian Government supports parents who choose to home school their children by providing access to the School Start Bonus which is a one-off payment available to families with a child commencing Prep or Year 7, and public transport travel concessions.

7. What will the changes to the compulsory school age mean for home schoolers?

The *Education and Training Reform (School Age) Bill 2009* has been passed by the Victorian Parliament and the compulsory school age will now refer to not less than 6 nor more than 17 years of age. Information will be forwarded to registered home schooling families by the VRQA.

8. Does the government intend to intervene in home schooling by either strengthening the VRQA registration process or the curriculum requirements?

Victoria has the least intrusive home schooling registration process in Australia. There are no plans to change the current arrangements for home schooling in Victoria.

9. Alternative pathways to tertiary education

- *Home Schooling in Victoria - a guide to services and support* provides information to assist with post compulsory pathways planning and transition to tertiary education.
- Home Schooled students are advised to discuss entry requirements and application processes with individual providers.