



## **STRONGER FUTURES FOR ALL YOUNG VICTORIANS**

### **Discussion Paper Response from Bendigo Senior Secondary College**

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For further information regarding this response contact College Principal, Dale Pearce.

#### **Questions:**

##### **1. What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards take?**

- Early intervention (late primary age)
- “Literacy and Numeracy for all” across all sectors. The acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills needs to be the focus of all classroom practitioners whether they be in a secondary, TAFE or University setting.
- Make Literacy and Numeracy meaningful and contextual.
- Discipline literacy, including Vocational Literacy, needs to be clearly articulated as a developmental continuum.
- Retain the flexibility for access to literacy and numeracy standards at senior levels through the credit transfer possible between the VCAL and the VCE.

##### **2. In what other ways can the acquisition of Literacy and Numeracy skills be strengthened in post-compulsory years?**

- Bridging programs available at secondary colleges for students who struggle with their Literacy and Numeracy skills. These should be available for students who would like to undertake University study and could take the form of a Year 13 program for students. The idea of incorporating a University subject into such a program would be appropriate, along with more intensive Literacy and Numeracy programs. This could follow similar lines to Ballarat University’s “Diploma of Tertiary Studies” in the 1990s.
- Literacy and Numeracy specific material should be incorporated as core into all VET certificates. This could/should take the form of consistent modules delivered across all VETs, VET and Apprenticeship level certificates to align with concerns highlighted by VECCI relating to the concerning number of apprentices who do not have sufficient literacy skills.
- Diagnostic testing would allow for schools, TAFE and Uni to be able to recognise where skills are positioned and where students need further improvement.
- For “at risk” students there needs to be support structures embedded into each school, TAFE or Uni to support students who will potentially “fall through the gaps”.

- Ensure that properly trained Maths teachers are available to teach students, especially those who are struggling with their numeracy skills.
- Flexible alternatives need to be available within curriculum pathways. This is needed to provide differentiated support while allowing for progressions that can result from developmental change in capabilities.
- Provision of supportive opportunities where families can learn together about strategies for developing literacy and numeracy skills.
- Literacy and numeracy tutors in classes assisting students who lack Literacy and Numeracy skills
- Targeted funding for Literacy and Numeracy across the state to allow lower student to staff ratios for intensive support.

**3. Will a career plan strengthen young people's engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices both during schooling and in subsequent education, training and employment settings?**

- The current level of careers resources and support is inconsistent across and within sectors.
- Govt and careers associations need to provide a series of exemplar career plans for the state so that schools and other providers have something to work with at each year level. These plans should target industry needs and pathway options for students as young as Year 7.
- The capacity to deliver career based material in junior secondary settings (7-10) that is consistent and valuable is critical to be able to assist students to make meaningful decisions regarding future pathway choices. The implementation of VELs has seen a lot of these programs disappear from the secondary curriculum.
- Quality career development is critical in assisting students to make the link between secondary education, initial higher education qualification and their preferred employment destination-this should be embedded in the curriculum. To support such decision making there should be a priority to focus career advice and career support at Year 7 and 8.
- Career investigation needs to be integrated into curriculum and teaching from Primary School. Access to quality information and trained Careers Advisors will allow students time to develop a career plan and to investigate subjects of interest. Planning Yr 10 and a post compulsory program should start early.

**4. What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?**

- Resourcing is critical to support such development. Schools across Victoria are quite often inadequately resourced, expanding the role of a career advisor to more junior levels will stretch these resources even further.
- Careers programs across the curriculum, embed Careers investigation in subjects in lower secondary and primary where the flexibility of curriculum delivery allows some room to change programs/do extra programs. This is limited within current VCE curriculum.
- Ensure that students have opportunities to experience the world of work. This could take the form of work experience, work placement, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships etc.
- Allow adequate time in curriculum at all levels for Career Development – get away from any idea that it is separate to curriculum, optional, extra service. Reaffirm how integral it is to engaging students in their chosen academic program.

**5. How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?**

- Mentors (managed at an industry body level)
- Cadetships that are supported by the industry body
- "Come and Try" days
- Scholarships
- Partnerships in schools, including industry bodies involved in groups such as LLENs etc.
- Greater acceptance of ASBA across all industry bases
- Involve business and vocational bodies in designing literacy and numeracy standards, give them opportunity to participate in designing curriculum including a focus on careers.
- Funding Careers programs at regional and state and federal level.
- Industry visits and training opportunities for teachers and Careers professionals akin to requirement of VET trainers to have industry experience.
- Industry bodies need to become more proactive in offering workplace training for work experience students, or engaging tours, speakers etc as an alternative to work experience students, and for students looking to enter the world of work. This type of education during work experience aligns with the Scandinavian model.

**6. What would further strengthen the delivery partnerships between government and non-government schools and between schools and VET providers?**

- Delivery partnerships aligned with Trade Training Centres that are fair and equitable.
- Shared facilities and centres between sectors, such as Trade Training Centres.
- **Local provision plans that clearly define roles of schools and VET providers. Such plans should include protocols for provision, articulation, enrolment and student transfer.**
- VET providers external to schools need to be accountable for attendance and reporting and provide appropriate pastoral care support structures for school students undertaking training on their sites.
- The need for explicitly clear articulation of provider focus/delivery and cohort base. Such delivery partnerships will allow for the collaboration and cooperation that will bring about more seamless transitions and clearer pathways and purposeful, sustainable agreements for provision overlap.
- **VET auspicing arrangements that are based on affordable costs for secondary colleges and cost structures that are based on actual face to face hours of delivery rather than nominal hours.**
- Revision of current TAFE cost structures for students (as implemented in 2009).

**7. What additional actions should government take to support young people to complete initial qualifications in the VET sector?**

- Improve the wages of apprentices. There are many apprentices who leave the trade they are in to pursue a job that will allow them to have more disposable income.
- Employment guarantees for Pre Apprenticeship completers when course standards are met.
- Apprenticeship bank. Government to cushion the vagaries of the market or economy especially in skills shortage areas.
- **When students undertake training outside the school – such as through a traineeship associated with part time employment – there MUST be a requirement for the training provider to notify the school of this training so that credit can be given to the student. This requirement was scrapped two or three years ago and students are now not getting the credit they deserve.**
- Pastoral care models for Apprentices need to be more proactive to support apprentices who may be at risk of leaving their position.

**8. Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision and support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?**

- Yes, providing we ensure that opportunities for flexible transfers between curriculum courses can occur if student aspirations change.
- **Under normal circumstances, secondary school students need to be able to finish Year 12 or its equivalent within secondary school settings supported by the TAFE sector and other VET providers as appropriate. The TAFE sector and other providers should provide specialised support at Certificate III and beyond.**
- There are concerns related to organisations monopolising markets and hence driving up the costs of their courses/certificates.

**9. How should schools, VET providers and system authorities use the new transparency and accountability arrangements in Victorian schools and the Victorian Student Number to improve the completion rate of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications?**

- Being able to track students from Secondary school to Tertiary (TAFE and University) would be desirable. It will allow for better tracking of students currently performed by On Track. Using the VSN across sectors (government, private, independent, TAFE *and University*) for such purposes would also allow organisations to ensure that students do not “slip through the gaps” when transitioning into the world of work and provide better longitudinal data.

**10. What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools and VET sectors?**

- Local delivery plans and provision protocols to be in place to reduce competition and improve student outcomes.
- Ensure programs offered do not remove employment options e.g. completing a Certificate at school that is entry level Certificate for apprenticeship/traineeship may actually be harming employment or further training options.
- Allow students to choose specific vocational programs early (yr 9 and 10).
- Recruit industry trainers to work with schools to ensure qualifications are delivered to industry standards.
- Funding to allow purchase of industry standard equipment and facilities in schools.

**11. How can business and industry be involved in increasing completion rates – especially for apprenticeships?**

- Review of salary structure.
- Job Banks.
- Employment guarantees (with provisos) for Pre-Apprenticeship completers.
- Funding programs and equipment for vocational programs.
- Being involved in design and review of curriculum to ensure completers of VCE and VCAL are work ready.

**12. How can student transition to the VET sector, higher education and full-time employment be improved?**

- **Bridging programs for VCE students which include university studies within the VCE that are recognised as “extension studies” which are recognised through VTAC and VCAA as stand alone subjects in the VCE when it comes to calculation of the ATAR.** How can it be that up to two VET subjects can be recognised as “Primary Four” subjects, but a first year University subject cannot be used in the Primary four for ATAR calculations? Students who

study a first year University subject need to have it recognised as more than a minor subject increment. This could be trialed in a number of suitable locations and particularly targeted at low SES communities.

- Promotion of clearly articulated progressions from qualification level to subsequent qualification level, with associated cross crediting arrangements. This would require the explicit clear articulation of provider focus/delivery and cohort base to remove competition.
- Work place coordinators being positioned in schools, supported by industry and businesses to create multiple opportunities for students to gain authentic workplace experiences. These workplace coordinators should be working with students.

**13. What other steps are required to assist school's connection to the world of work?**

- Change legislation to allow Year 9 students to undertake work placements (especially disengaged students).
- To enrich student learning and engagement through applied learning experiences that are connected to and supported by the community, industry and businesses.

**14. What other initiatives would improve school to tertiary education articulation and support young people to take advantage of the expansion of these sectors?**

- Early offers (provisional) in Year 11 for University based courses.
- **Inclusion of first year university subjects as part of a secondary school program. This could be incorporated as a Year 12 or Year 13 option for students. These subjects should be included within the primary four subjects when calculating the ATAR.**
- Industry support for release to industry placements throughout the years of tertiary education and promotion of industry alignment to tertiary education level courses.
- Simplify the "Special Entry Schemes" for University entry. Although there are a range of options for students including SALT, PREP, REEP, SNAP, Access Melbourne etc. none of these programs "talk" to one another. Students who are most eligible to apply for these programs are least likely to have family support to help them apply-further stretching resources in schools.

**15. Should efforts to improve VET to higher education articulation and credit arrangements focus on particular occupational pathways and skill priority areas, for example in engineering and nursing?**

- Yes, there are currently some models that reflect this with La Trobe University and Nursing (Div2-Div 1 translations), but there needs to be wider acceptance of this across Victoria. Dual sector institutions (RMIT, Swinburne, University of Ballarat and VU) do this quite well.

**16. How can governments ensure that reforms to the VET and higher education sector address both skill needs and student demand for particular qualifications?**

- Bridge the two through providing targeted training and support to teachers/trainers so that students can be informed through counselling processes. Eg. Broker industry/education forums to build potential for cohesive networking, to bring about awareness and understanding between peak bodies involved.
- Continue to support targeted pilot programs, to focus development and provide researched data.
- Financial incentives for students, accommodation subsidies to help meet the general cost of training.

**17. How can governments improve provision and articulation arrangements to better support young people, especially in regional and rural areas, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?**

- Online Learning in secondary schools needs to be accessible by all students. This will lead to some of the targets identified in the Bradley Report with regard to increasing low SES students into tertiary study, especially if they are remote or isolated.
- **Build provision for the commencement of Tertiary studies into schools, via Online Learning, allowing the known support mechanisms of the school environment to build capacity for the student to succeed with Tertiary studies before making the transition to the tertiary provider. This could happen through making strategic use of a Year 13, with an altered focus for Tertiary entrance selection.**
- Provide financial support for Universities to deliver a wider range of courses at their regional campuses. This will also make regional University campuses more attractive to students.
- Encourage institutions to establish satellite centres for students to complete online courses with some visits/outreach centres.
- Centralise a method to address student entry into University courses. This currently is partially supported by the SEAS application through VTAC, but this program does not necessarily recognise students who have applied through SALT, PREP, REEP, SNAP, Access Melbourne etc.
- Start formal articulation arrangements at Yr 9 and 10 e.g. former MAP program between Eaglehawk S.C. and University of Melbourne.

**18. What other actions should be contemplated by institutions and government?**

- Strong MOU arrangements between TAFE, UNI and Schools with respect to enrolment, articulation protocols and accepted credit translation from course to course.
- Reconsider VET fee structures which are a concern for students who have started Certificate III courses in a VETis environment.
- Support alternative settings for students unable to connect to mainstream education. The benefits of NET School in Bendigo as well as other settings across the state are evident, but funding models do not allow for such programs to be ongoing and sustained.
- Institutions should form stronger links with schools, especially with regard to curriculum delivery at an earlier stage than senior secondary level. An example of this is Vic Uni and its primary school science program.
- **Delivery of some university subjects at secondary colleges. The secondary college is regularly the hub of a community in more regional areas. Providing this option for students may improve the uptake of students into the tertiary system. This could be delivered through regional secondary hubs using a blended model of online delivery.**
- Consider Swinburne University model. University students not completing Bachelor Degrees given TAFE equivalent credit (a qualification) ie complete one year University equals cert IV, two years equals Diploma etc. If all TAFE institutes were merged or aligned with a University this would work. There should be financial incentives for this to occur.
- Reconsider VET fee structures which are a concern for many regional students.

**19. How can Youth Connections be implemented in Victoria to most effectively re-engage young people with education and training.**

- Be placed in schools and working with the MIPs team at each school to have the greatest impact
- If they can't be placed in schools they need to be supported by a LLEN, as is the case with the Connect Central Consortium in Bendigo.

**20. What services should Youth Connections service providers use to establish effective referral and working arrangements?**

- LLENS ideally centrally broker communication and referrals and arrangements between all Youth services and education providers to ensure no parties overlooked and all possible support agencies and institutions connected and no duplication of programs or services and that all education providers can access information and resources.

**21. Should LLENS be provided with some flexibility to facilitate and broker service provision to young people 20 and over, in line with the flexibility in Youth Connections service Provision?**

- No, not without additional resourcing.

**22. Is the range of qualifications on offer to re-engage young people adequate? (Existing qualifications include VCAL, adult VCE, the General Certificate of Adult Education and the Diploma of Further Education.)**

- Yes. Students need to be challenged as well as supported in their development. In developing a sense of self and capability, options need to remain open to accommodate changing aspirations. Therefore, the flexible curriculum choices of our current senior certificates are important. Moving forward from this, established, supported articulation agreements for a range of entry points into further education is needed. The pathways from these need to be promoted and students/parents/teachers made aware of them, with the requirements for them.