



SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENTS OF INNOVATION,
INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND
EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Stronger Futures for All Young Victorians: Discussion paper on
the youth transitions system

Deakin University

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Contact details:

Professor Sue Kilpatrick
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional)
Deakin University
Warrnambool Campus
PO Box 423
Warrnambool 3280 Vic

Phone: 03 5563 3138

Fax: 03 5563 3081

Email: sue.kilpatrick@deakin.edu.au

Website: <http://www.deakin.edu.au>

1. INTRODUCTION

Deakin University welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development regarding the **Discussion Paper on the youth transitions system: *Stronger Futures for all Young Victorians***.

There is much that could be broadly written on the youth transitions system. Instead, this submission will mainly focus on a number of innovative Deakin University programs that directly support the Victorian Government's investment in reforms to help young Victorians make the transition to working life.

2. ISSUES RAISED BY THE DISCUSSION PAPER

2.1 Support for making informed education and training choices

[Question: How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?]

Deakin University is encouraged by the Victorian Government's interest in finding ways to more closely involve business and industry in informing students' career choices and transition to working life.

The University notes that Work Integrated Learning (WIL) provides students with a range of benefits in terms of career choice and competitiveness in the graduate labour market. These include:

1. Career decision making

The opportunity to gather vital information in terms of career choice, including testing students' attributes against those required for preferred roles, understanding of the cultural aspects of workplaces and the career paths associated with given job roles.

2. Competitiveness

Graduate recruiters typically use seven selection techniques with 94 per cent using behavioural based interviewing¹. For students, the ability to provide evidence of their attributes and skills from a work-based example that is relevant to the prospective employer gives them a real advantage at the application stage. Similarly, many employers in the accounting, law and finance sectors offer large-scale vacation work programs providing participating students with an edge with graduate roles. For first- and second-tier accountancy firms over 50 per cent of their graduate roles are filled by students who have previously participated in their vacation work programs.

¹ The Australian Association of Graduate Employers Employer Survey 2010.

Excellent examples of Work Integrated Learning at Deakin University include the wide range of structured practicums in the health and education related disciplines and the Business Internship Program for students studying in that area. Similarly, excellent work is undertaken with students in the environment and ecology area of study to prepare them for the professional workplace. Employers in regional areas in particular are generally willing to provide placements for students and are positive about the benefits that Work Integrated Learning students bring to their businesses.

Deakin University has responded to the debate on a National Internship Scheme initiated by Universities Australia by appointing Associate Professor Dineli Mather as its first university-level Director of Work Integrated Learning (WIL). Deakin has been exploring innovative ways of providing students with greater access to Work Integrated Learning to assist them in the transition to the graduate labour market both within and outside course structures. The Fair Work Act means that the University now has to adopt a more cautious approach to some of these initiatives due to the limitations on unpaid placements.

2.2 Systems that assist students to move effectively between courses, institutions and sectors

2.2.1 Articulation from school to VET and higher education

[All questions]

Deakin University supports the proposed Council of Australian Governments and Commonwealth Government targets to increase VET and higher education enrolments and qualifications and clearly recognises the implications of new articulation arrangements for the design or redesign of qualifications.

Recognised pathways and joint programs between universities and the VET sector assist transition to higher education. Deakin University has a four-way strategic alliance with its three neighbouring TAFE partners. Pathways and joint programs such as the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education with South West Institute of TAFE and the Bachelor of Management - Tourism with Box Hill Institute of TAFE are a feature of this arrangement. Deakin also has established pathways to bachelor degrees from courses at many other TAFE institutes.

There is a range of transition support programs for commencing students at Deakin University which cover not only academic skills but also balancing university study with part-time work and other aspects of life. Students from TAFE institutes commencing at Deakin are encouraged to participate in these programs. Several initiatives that raise aspirations to higher education and which target school students who may otherwise not make a transition to higher education include Deakin University's *Metropolitan Access Program* and *Regional Engagement Access Program* (MAP and REAP), and *Deakin Year 13*. These programs are designed to increase students' aspirations to participate in higher education.

Deakin's MAP and REAP were designed in 2007 - 2008 to widen access to higher education for students from designated equity groups. In 2010, there are approximately 30 schools participating in the programs, which address Years 9-12.

The program architecture is based on an integrative partnerships model which facilitates a shift from philanthropic and project-based engagement to long-term collaborative partnerships. The key aims of the MAP and REAP are to raise the aspirations of regional, low socio-economic and under-represented students for higher education; to smooth their transition between school and university; to increase awareness about the multiple pathways that these students can access to maximise higher education opportunities; to support improvement in their academic performance; and to build on the University's work as a leader in the provision of accessible and equitable education in Victoria.

To complement the MAP and REAP, Deakin will introduce *Deakin Year 13* in 2010. This program will integrate with the MAP and REAP to address the serious higher education participation and articulation challenges faced by school leavers from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds and those who would not otherwise consider articulating into university or are otherwise ineligible to gain entry to one.

The *Deakin Year 13* program will be delivered to students at the school in which they completed Year 12. The program will be the first year of the two-year Deakin Associate Degree of Arts, Business and Sciences. The Associate Degree offers flexibility to allow students to tailor a pathway to suit their career aspirations and interests. It can be studied concurrently with a range of diplomas and provides a supported transition to a number of bachelor degrees, or it can be used as an exit qualification, and is designed to maximise the chance of success for people unfamiliar with tertiary education. The program will be delivered using blended e-learning and interactive, highly supported face-to-face tuition at Deakin Learning Centres located at the participating schools. Students will have a safe and familiar environment to commence and undertake university studies for at least one year before articulating to complete their course at a TAFE institute, a university campus or in off-campus mode.

Deakin Year 13 will be an extension to and expansion of the Australian Government funded *Deakin at Your Doorstep*, which delivers this Associate Degree in rural and regional TAFE institutes across Victoria. *Deakin at Your Doorstep* is outlined below.

2.2.2 Articulation within the VET sector and from VET to higher education

[Question: How can governments improve provisions and articulation arrangements to better support young people, especially in regional and rural areas, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?]

Deakin at Your Doorstep is an innovative Deakin University program that was awarded an \$8.2 million grant through the Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund in December 2008. Through this program, Deakin recently began delivering its two-year Associate Degree of Arts, Business and Sciences at its Warrnambool Campus and on the campuses of three TAFE partners in regional Victoria: Sunraysia at Swan Hill, East Gippsland at Bairnsdale and Chisholm at Dandenong.

As with *Deakin Year 13*, the *Deakin at Your Doorstep* Associate Degree is designed to attract students who may doubt their ability succeed in tertiary study, who may not have developed a clear idea of their longer term degree pathway options, or who are

disadvantaged because of their inability to access a tertiary education provider in their geographic area.

Deakin at Your Doorstep addresses key aspects of the Australian Government's higher education reform agenda to improve participation and articulation of students from low SES backgrounds in higher education; to support regional education provision through new models of delivery; and to build stronger connectivity between the higher education and VET sectors.

With sufficient funding for broadband and other infrastructure to establish additional Deakin Learning Centres, *Deakin at Your Doorstep* could be expanded to other locations at TAFE institutes or community facilities such as libraries. The Partnership Facilitation Fund recommended by the *Report advising on the development of the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan* (December 2009) (Recommendation 39) could be used for this purpose.

[Question: What other actions should be contemplated by institutions and government?]

Industry, employers and regional bodies have a legitimate demand for skills that may not be met by student demand preferences. In Victoria's Great South Coast Region the draft regional plan highlights skill gaps in the transition of the region to a low carbon economy, specifically in new energy industries, natural resource management and agriculture, for example. Structures to facilitate industry, government, community and education and training sectors to come together to share plans and enable matching of needs and education and training provision at the regional level are part of the solution. As the *Report advising on the development of the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan* notes, government can assist in setting up and maintaining these structures (Recommendation 22).

As well, students need to be aware of potential jobs and the qualifications they require. Industry can signal its needs through cadetships and scholarships. Government has a role in a coordinated approach to raising awareness of and aspirations toward the jobs of the future. Deakin welcomes the recommendations in the Report for an enhanced and coordinated approach to raising aspirations and attainment (Recommendation 27), and for a pilot project to build regional aspiration toward higher education (Recommendation 33).

2.3 Opportunities for young people to re-engage with education and training

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

Deakin University is of the view that currently the range of qualifications on offer for young people to re-engage with education and training could be expanded to include an associate degree-level qualification.

The Associate Degree that will be delivered through the *Deakin Year 13* program and that is already being delivered through *Deakin at Your Doorstep* is designed to help young people re-engage with education and improve articulation outcomes. Crucially, these programs provide 'reach forward' opportunities from secondary education to higher level VET and higher education and foster explicit partnerships between schools, regional Victorian TAFE institutes and Deakin.

3 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Deakin University strongly agrees with the Minister that all young people should be given the opportunity to reach their potential. Deakin is therefore encouraged by and supports Victorian Government reforms aimed at ensuring that all young people acquire the knowledge and skills to make a successful transition from compulsory schooling to independent adult working life.

Deakin University particularly wishes to increase the participation and success rates of low SES, rural, regional, remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The University notes that these cohorts are significantly under-represented in higher education. Deakin is firmly of the view that targeted cross-sector and multi-institution linkages, collaborations and education pathways are required to solve this problem.

Deakin University encourages the Minister and the Departments to engage further with and across the education sectors regarding the Australian Government's higher education reform and social inclusion agendas. Our aim should be to ensure that capable individuals who wish to engage in higher education are able to do so. By undertaking and completing tertiary study, these students will be equipped to contribute to the nation's intellectual and human capital and to serve the workforce needs of their communities.

Professor Sally Walker
Vice-Chancellor

XX June, 2010