

POLICY, STRATEGY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

These outputs involve the provision of:

- policy, strategy and executive services
- international education
- public information and promotion.

POLICY, STRATEGY AND EXECUTIVE SERVICES

The Department coordinates and provides advice to the Ministers and statutory authorities in the areas of Department-wide planning, policy development and resource allocation for school education, post-compulsory education and training, training and further education, adult and community education, and higher education.

The Department also provides executive, legal and administrative services to the Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, the Secretary and Deputy Secretaries.

Yearly management cycle

In 2003–04, major activities in the coordination of the Department's yearly management cycle included:

- developing an integrated 2003–06 Corporate Plan for the Department, Office Strategic Plans as well as Divisional and Regional Business plans
- developing a strategic framework to improve business planning across the Department
- developing long-term strategies to achieve the Government's targets and objectives for education and training

- developing the Department's budget submissions, culminating in the 2004–05 State Budget
- evaluating major activities and programs within the Department
- preparing presentations and briefings to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee of the Victorian Parliament
- managing the preparation of quarterly performance reports for the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) for the purpose of revenue certification
- managing the preparation of the portfolio annual reports for 2003–04
- supporting the operation of the statutory authorities.

Performance measurement and reporting

The Department undertook work in 2003–04 to revise its output structure to better support achievement of the Government's policy objectives and accountability requirements for education and training. The new structure consists of four 'families' of outputs that focus on students in compulsory years, those in post-compulsory years, services to support students and services to manage the portfolio. Further details are provided in this report.

The Department also revised its suite of output performance measures and deleted a number of obsolete measures while adding a small number of new measures, particularly in relation to services to Ministers and policy. The revisions will take effect in the 2004–05 financial year.

Post-compulsory education and training policy

Four of the Government's goals and two of the targets focus on post-compulsory education and training and improved outcomes for young people.

The Department supports programs and initiatives such as VET in Schools, the VCE and the VCAL, the Youth Pathways program, MIPs plans, On Track and LLENs. Each contributes to ensuring that multiple education and training pathways and support are available to young people from school through to employment. Several areas of the Department and a range of providers are responsible for these programs. This can involve schools, TAFE institutes and the ACE sector in a variety of collaborative arrangements.

Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission

The VLESC has a broad advisory role to Government on post-compulsory education, training and employment. It is also the State training agency for Victoria under the ANTA Agreement. The VLESC has responsibility for matters relating to post-compulsory education and training and the State Training System. Full details of the VLESC and its achievements are provided in the VLESC's annual report for 2003–04.

In 2003–04, the VLESC:

- undertook development of a post-compulsory framework for education and training for young people aged 15–24
- supported the 31 LLENs in developing local partnerships to achieve sustained improvements in education, training and employment outcomes for young people
- initiated a review of the LLEN initiative
- reviewed the VLESC Audit Committee to ensure compliance with the Standing Directions of the *Financial Management Act 1994*, and initiated work on risk plans and an internal audit plan

- continued implementation under the framework outlined in the Ministerial Statement on *Knowledge & Skills for the Innovation Economy*. This included:
 - establishing 15 Specialist Centres and undertaking two feasibility studies arising from the industrial application of biotechnology and the synchrotron
 - forming the TAFE Development Centre to foster professional development of TAFE staff
 - managing the approval process for the delivery of degree programs offered by TAFE institutes
- developed options to improve the long-term financial sustainability of the VET system, in the context of increased demand for VET programs. These included:
 - a study into how TAFE institutes leverage government funding to obtain a contribution from industry
 - a costing project to ascertain the relative cost of providing VET courses
- continued to develop the industry advisory system on training
- initiated the extension of the priorities work program at a regional level
- implemented recommendations arising out of the review of TAFE governance.

Local Learning and Employment Networks

Thirty-one LLENs across the State continue to link education and training providers, employers, unions, community and government agencies and individuals. These links facilitate improved education, training and employment outcomes of young people, particularly those who might leave education without a qualification.

LLENs develop partnerships and assist in localised problem-solving and implementing statewide programs to improve outcomes for young people.

Through their strategic partnerships with industry and local communities, LLENs have contributed significantly to the increased number of students participating in the VCAL, VET in Schools and school-based new apprenticeships.

LLEN membership increased by 23 per cent during 2003 and now over 5100 organisations and individuals are LLEN members. Industry continues to engage with LLENs and accounts for approximately 13 per cent of all LLEN members.

Over 97 per cent of government schools, 97 per cent of Catholic schools and nearly 41 per cent of Independent schools are members of a LLEN. All TAFE institutes and a high proportion of ACE providers are engaged in the LLEN initiative.

For more information on LLENs, see the VLESC's annual report for 2003–04.

Managed Individual Pathways

The MIPs program was successfully expanded in 2004 to include special schools. This program supports post-compulsory students to develop appropriate pathway plans towards further education and training or full-time employment. Pathway plans are reviewed and adapted, taking account of changed circumstances including career aspirations, entry requirements, performance and available curriculum and training options.

MIPs providers access information about broader pathway options from LLENs including cross-sectoral education and training options and support services offered by local agencies.

On Track

The On Track initiative, which commenced in 2003, builds on the MIPs program. On Track follows up school leavers (both government and non-government) through a telephone survey, and offers them further advice if they are not in education, training or full-time employment. Information collected about destinations of post-Year 12 students is published, in line with a commitment by the Minister for Education and Training to improve the quality of reporting to parents and the Victorian public on educational outcomes. Regional consultations were held with stakeholders in late 2003 to discuss the key messages of the 2003 data, encourage engagement with the data and seek feedback through regional offices and LLENs on how to improve transition profiles.

In 2004, over 34,000 Victorian students who were enrolled in Year 12 in 2003 participated in the second On Track survey. Destination data highlighted the diversity of pathways young people pursue after leaving school, including university, training and further education or other vocational education and training, apprenticeships or traineeships, and employment. Young people not in education, training or full-time employment at the time of the survey who requested further assistance were linked with local programs and services by LLENs through On Track Connect. Research into destinations of 2003 Years 10 and 11 school leavers will be completed in late 2004.

The On Track longitudinal survey commenced in 2004. A sample of the 2003 Year 12 completers and Years 10 and 11 early leavers will be tracked over the next four years to gain qualitative and quantitative information about their pathways and transitions from school. The data will contribute to a comprehensive picture of the destinations of these young people during their first four years after leaving school.

National Competition policy

In 1995, the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments agreed to implement the National Competition policy to promote greater competition and encourage economic growth. Two requirements of the policy are:

- legislative reviews to eliminate restrictions on competition
- competitive neutrality to ensure consistency in pricing of services and/or facilities.

The Department has complied with the requirements of the National Competition policy and is continuing to report to the Department of Treasury and Finance as required regarding implementation.

Legislative reviews

The Department did not undertake any reviews of legislation under the National Competition policy in 2003–04.

Competitive neutrality

The Department was not involved in any complaints for the year 2003–04.

External and inter-governmental relations

The Department supports Ministers and the Department's Executive in fulfilling their responsibilities across the portfolio, through Ministerial and Executive support functions, inter-agency relations, legal services and privacy administration.

Services provided include the coordination of briefings, correspondence, Community Cabinet, Parliamentary services, Cabinet and legislation, archives and records management, freedom of information and the Ombudsman. These areas provide the interface between the Department and the Ministers on day-to-day matters and ensure the Department's administrative support functions operate effectively.

The Department provides advice on portfolio policy and funding relationships with other Victorian Government departments, State jurisdictions and Commonwealth agencies. The Department supports the Minister for Education and Training, the Minister for Education Services and the Secretary as members of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs and the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee. It also provides advice to Commonwealth and State parliamentary inquiries and reviews on education and training policy.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The provision of education and training to overseas students is a central element of Victoria's export profile. Demand for education and training is expected to remain strong and increase in the short to medium term.

The Department's international services include:

- marketing, recruitment, assessment and placement services for full fee-paying overseas students in Victorian government schools
- generic marketing support for vocational education and training providers and the higher education sector
- marketing of the Department's capabilities and programs to international communities
- organisation of overseas delegations and study tours to Victorian education and training institutions and agencies
- organisation and implementation of teacher and principal exchange programs, student exchange and student study tours
- delivery of associated consultancy and training services to international clients.

A new strategic direction

In March 2004, the Minister for Education and Training launched the Ministerial Statement *Global Pathways: International Education for Victoria*. The statement highlights the social, cultural and economic benefits of international education to Victoria. It outlines three global strategies, including Global Learning, Positioning Victoria, and Quality Assurance, to ensure that Victoria can make the most of opportunities presented by the growth in international education.

The Department has established the Positioning Victoria Working Party with representatives from relevant stakeholder organisations to maximise collaboration and achieve the objectives of the statement.

In 2003–04, the Department also initiated a project to develop a quality assurance framework to improve the delivery of the International Student program for full fee-paying overseas students in government schools.

Industry development

To strengthen Victoria's position in the education global market, the Victorian International Education Consultative Group, which includes representatives from universities, TAFE providers and schools, initiates projects to enhance relationships with industry groups. A key activity in 2003–04 was the inaugural International Education Week. Held in March 2004, International Education Week celebrated the contribution that international education makes to Victoria's cultural diversity and social and economic development.

Strengthening linkages across government

A key aim of the *Global Pathways* statement is to strengthen linkages with other Victorian government agencies and develop whole-of-government strategies to effectively utilise Victorian Government infrastructure overseas.

In 2003–04, a consortium, chaired by the General Manager of the International Division and comprising providers and representatives from the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, was established to develop educational business opportunities in the Middle East. Funding for an education officer in the Dubai Victorian Government Business Office is provided by the consortium.

In addition, the Department supported the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development in the development of whole-of-government strategies for promoting Victorian education in Italy and China.

In cooperation with the Department for Victorian Communities, the Department also commenced planning for the promotion of Victorian education and training before, and during, the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

Full fee-paying overseas students

Full fee-paying overseas students make an important contribution to the Victorian economy. In 2003–04, international student enrolments across all education sectors totalled 83,714, compared to 74,208 in 2002, an increase of almost 13 per cent.

Victoria recruits a high number of international students to government schools, making it a market leader. In 2003–04, 2626 international students were enrolled in government schools compared with 2515 the previous year – an increase of 4.4 per cent.

Student study tours

Student study tours are conducted by the Department for prospective overseas students. In 2003–04, 1490 students visited 66 metropolitan, rural and regional schools for a total of 14,121 student days. This figure is slightly less than the previous year. The reduction was due to the impact of SARS and the value of the Australian dollar. Most of the groups were from Japan and China.

International cooperation

In 2003–04, the Department successfully concluded new Memoranda of Cooperation aimed at strengthening education and training relationships with other countries. Memoranda were concluded with:

- United Arab Emirates – Ministry of Education and Youth, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Abu Dhabi Education Zone
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Kingdom of Cambodia
- Ministry of Education, Punjab, Pakistan
- Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education, People's Republic of China (recognising the 25th anniversary of the sister-state relationship between Victoria and Jiangsu Province).

In addition, the Department coordinated the delivery of Victorian Government support for the reconstruction of the education and training system in East Timor. Specific assistance for the planning function at Dili Institute of Technology and the Alola Foundation Friendship Schools project was provided by the Government.

Victoria also coordinated the UNESCO Associated Schools project on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Exchanges and language support

The Department organises a range of overseas exchange programs for Victorian teachers and principals. In 2003–04, 41 teachers and principals participated in the International Teaching Fellowship Exchange program. This program facilitated long-term exchanges with countries such as Canada, Denmark, France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Short-term exchange programs also provided opportunities for teachers and principals to visit Cambodia, Denmark and Italy.

In order to strengthen the provision of language education in government schools, 132 native-speaker assistants provided classroom-based support for teachers and students.

International delegations

Delegations of teachers, principals and education officials from overseas visit Victoria on a regular basis, with 43 delegations, involving 485 participants organised in 2003–04.

Programs focused on schools and vocational education and training were organised for delegations from Bangladesh, People's Republic of China, Colombia, Germany, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

International projects

In partnership with the Overseas Projects Corporation of Victoria in the Asia-Pacific Region, the Department plays an important role in the delivery of offshore education and training projects. In 2003–04, these included:

- the Institutional Strengthening project in Samoa funded by AusAID
- the Basic Education of Girls project in Laos, funded by AusAID and the Asian Development Bank
- the Secondary Education Development and Improvement project in the Philippines, funded by the Asian Development Bank
- the Asian Development Bank Education Sector project in Samoa.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PROMOTION

The Department promotes education and training opportunities throughout Victoria in a variety of ways.

The *Education Times* is the main communication link within the school education sector. The newspaper is published fortnightly during school terms and is available online at <www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/edtimes/index.htm>.

Success is a magazine that highlights excellence and innovation in all areas of the VET sector across the State. It is distributed to TAFE institutes, registered training organisations, the ACE sector, Victorian businesses and industry bodies, and other training providers.

Major publications in 2003–04 included *Bringing Learning to Life*, an information handbook for parents, and the *TAFE Courses Directory 2005*. These publications are available at <www.det.vic.gov.au/parents/handbook> and <www.tafe.vic.gov.au> respectively.

The Education Line provides a telephone and email information service for school staff, parents, students and other community members. During 2003–04, the Education Line assisted with 13,665 telephone and 3279 email enquiries. Respectively, these figures were 3.5 per cent and 10.42 per cent higher than the previous year.

The increase in the number of calls to the Education Line for July 2003 – June 2004, compared to July 2002 – June 2003, is attributed to media promotion of the *Bringing Learning to Life* information handbook. The increased number of email enquiries received can be attributed to a greater number of households having access to the Internet (work or home) both in Victoria and overseas.

The Education Line contact details are (03) 9637 2222 or 1800 809 834 (freecall). The email address is <edline@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Information requested by callers, 2003–04

Category	Number of calls	Per cent
Publications	1,706	12.4
Department policy	2,832	20.5
Term dates and public holidays	544	3.9
Zones for primary and secondary schools	246	1.8
School charges and parent contributions	392	2.8
Transfers – intrastate, interstate and overseas	457	3.3
Employment and recruitment	630	4.6
EMA	507	3.7
Complaints	797	5.8
General information	5,695	41.3
Total	13,806	100.0

The TAFE Course Line provides a statewide information and referral service for TAFE-accredited and short courses conducted in Victoria and interstate by TAFE institutes and private providers. During 2003–04, the TAFE Course Line assisted with more than 37,983 telephone calls and 1768 email enquiries.

The study areas that received the most enquiries in 2003–04 were building, nursing, aged care, real estate, business management, computer-software packages, industrial skills (forklift, crane and bobcat), languages, children's services and beauty. The TAFE Course Line telephone number is 131 823.

In 2003–04, a number of awards were held to promote and celebrate education and training in Victoria. Key awards included:

- Victorian Education Excellence Awards, recognising and rewarding outstanding leaders and teachers in government schools
- Premier's VCE Awards, recognising outstanding achievement in the VCE
- Victorian Training Awards, celebrating and rewarding excellence in the Victorian training sector
- Adult Learners' Week Awards, recognising excellence in Victoria's ACE sector
- Literacy and Numeracy Week Awards, recognising school communities for the work they have undertaken to improve students' literacy and/or numeracy outcomes.