

# Compulsory years of education

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Education in Victoria is compulsory for children aged from six to 15 years. This section discusses the provision of education and associated services for these students.

The first five years of schooling (P–4) are referred to as the early years and are chiefly concerned with developing in each child the essential skills and knowledge necessary for ongoing progress in education. Literacy and numeracy are widely recognised as foremost among these foundation skills.

During the middle years of schooling (Years 5–9) students grow from childhood to adolescence and consolidate competency in literacy and numeracy while developing physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. They attain a greater breadth of knowledge and learning, including extending their capacity for creative and critical thinking.

## *Blueprint for Government Schools*

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The *Blueprint for Government Schools* provides the framework for an effective Victorian government school system. Its objective is that all government school students, irrespective of the school they attend, where they live or their social or economic status, are entitled to a high-quality school education and a genuine opportunity to succeed. The Blueprint is set within the context of a transparent and rigorous accountability framework that focuses on three priority areas for reform: recognising and responding to diverse student needs, building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching–learning relationship, and continuously improving schools. The Blueprint identifies seven Flagship strategies, which provide a basis for continuous improvement in schools with learning as the central focus:

### **Recognising and responding to diverse student needs**

- 1 Student learning
- 2 Developing a new resource allocation model

### **Building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching–learning relationship**

- 3 Building leadership capacity
- 4 Creating and supporting a performance and development culture
- 5 Teacher professional development

### **Continuously improving schools**

- 6 School improvement
- 7 Leading Schools Fund.

These Flagship strategies provide a shared vision, a focus on teaching and learning and professional leadership, set high expectations and accountabilities, and provide for robust, stimulating and secure learning environments. Effective teachers, leaders, schools and regions and the central office value and contribute to a culture of learning and improvement at all levels of the system.

Progress made during 2004–05 in implementing the initiatives of each strategy is detailed below. Further information on the Blueprint is available at <[www.det.vic.gov.au](http://www.det.vic.gov.au)>.

## **Recognising and responding to diverse student needs**

### **1 Student learning**

An integrated package of curriculum materials, guidelines, advice and resources is being developed to assist schools in making decisions about curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting.

#### **Highlights**

- The Victorian Essential Learning Standards were developed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority during 2004 and

progressively released to schools. They are undergoing a validation phase during 2005 with the final Standards planned for release in Term 4, 2006. From 2006, the Standards provide the basis for whole-school curriculum planning, and replace the current Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF).

- Curriculum Planning Guidelines were launched in late 2004 and are being progressively updated with input from schools.
- Principles of Learning and Teaching P–12 and an associated development package were developed in 2004. Five hundred and twenty-three schools have been participating in the five-day professional learning program during 2005.
- Draft assessment and reporting advice was made available to schools. An assessment framework based on current research and best practice was developed, and a professional learning package is under development.
- A student learning website was established, which acts as a portal to information on student learning initiatives.
- In November 2004, the Knowledge Bank website was launched to house examples of promising and exemplary practice in schools.

## **2 Developing a new resource allocation model**

The Student Resource Package was launched in January 2005 and replaced the School Global Budget. Funding allocation is now student-focused rather than expenditure-input focused.

### **Highlights**

Key features and achievements of the Package are:

- redirecting funding to students identified as most in need
- allocating student funding on the basis of learning need
- incorporating base funding components to ensure that all schools, and particularly small schools, can meet their costs regardless of their size
- reallocating funding for students with special learning needs according to student family occupation, Indigenous status and mobility

- refocusing funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) students from periods of seven years to five, reducing the funding differential between primary and secondary schools, and introducing needs recognition on the basis of language proficiency
- providing greater funding equity in the Languages other than English program
- providing implementation funding support to schools to enable a smooth transition to the new funding model.

## **Building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching–learning relationship**

### **3 Building leadership capacity**

In 2004–05, several development opportunities were offered to enhance the leadership capacity of aspiring leaders, leadership teams and members of the principal class.

### **Highlights**

- Over 150 high-potential leaders participated in the Accelerated Development for High Potential Leaders program, which aims to increase the pool of teachers with the skills to take up leadership positions.
- Approximately 140 first-time principals received mentoring support from highly skilled principals and participated in a leadership development program.
- Ninety-seven experienced principals were provided with 10–15 hours of individualised coaching to enable them to enhance their leadership skills.
- Forty-seven principals joined the Development Program for High Performing Principals. Participants share best practice across the school system and undertake individual professional learning to enhance their own leadership capacity.
- Two hundred and five principals participated in the pilot of revised Principal Performance and Development arrangements.

#### **4 Creating and supporting a performance and development culture**

This initiative involves an accreditation scheme for performance and development systems in schools. The accreditation process is based on a self-assessment framework which is verified by an external accrediting body. The objective is to have all schools accredited by 2008.

##### **Highlights**

- In 2004, 64 reference schools contributed to the development of performance and development culture in schools.
- A multi-level self-assessment framework for schools was developed.
- A process to externally verify the school's self-assessment was developed and implemented.
- In May 2005, 19 schools were in the first group of schools recommended for accreditation.
- Over 200 schools have registered their intention to be accredited during 2005.

#### **5 Teacher professional development**

Programs were funded to provide teachers and school services officers (SSO) with opportunities to build their capacity and consolidate their practice. Major teacher professional development programs include the Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers, and Teacher Professional Leave initiatives. Two pilot programs of Refresher Courses for Teachers Returning to Government Schools were run in January 2005 as part of the Teacher Supply and Demand initiative.

##### **Highlights**

- Approximately 500 teachers have undertaken two days' teacher mentor training since the initiative began in February 2004. Their training has supported them in effectively mentoring beginning teachers and supporting their induction into government schools.
- Over 850 teachers undertook between four and ten weeks' Teacher Professional Leave during 2004–05 to further develop their skills and expertise. Nearly 80 per cent of these teachers undertook their leave as members of a team rather than individually.

- Seventy-nine teachers participated in refresher courses. The courses consist of an introductory phase which provides an overview of major Department changes and directions. Participants undertake selected modules and school visits.

### **Continuously improving schools**

#### **6 School improvement**

Accountability arrangements between schools, their communities and the Department can be a significant driver of school improvement. Effective accountability arrangements have been designed to:

- focus on the issues that will impact most on the performance of a school
- recognise that all schools are not the same – they face different challenges and operate in different environments
- streamline the work of school leadership teams
- align internal accountability within the school (principal and teacher performance and development) with the external accountability requirements (to their community and the Department)
- separate accountability for performance (student outcomes) from conformance (compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements).

##### **Highlights**

An improved School Accountability and Improvement Framework was implemented. The framework assists schools and the system to focus on the major opportunities for school improvement through their planning processes.

The launch of the new framework was accompanied by:

- further improvements to the school review process
- a new school self-evaluation process that was successfully used by more than 150 schools in the first half of 2005
- a group of 30 schools road-testing a new approach to school strategic planning
- a limited trial in three schools using a different style of annual reporting better suited to the needs of their communities

- an extended pilot of over 200 school principal performance and development arrangements designed to build their leadership capacity in alignment with their school's strategic priorities
- further improvements to opinion survey tools and processes for students, parents and school staff
- increased support to under-performing schools through the Targeted School Improvement program.

## 7 Leading Schools Fund

The Leading Schools Fund has supported whole-school transformation for government secondary schools. The fund provides \$162 million over the three years of the implementation phase to employ 450 additional teachers and to redevelop or build new facilities. The fund also provides resources for facilities and ICT infrastructure to support school transformation and improve student outcomes in government secondary schools across Victoria.

### Highlights

- The first two phases of funding allocation to schools and school clusters have been implemented.
- Sixty-one schools with a secondary component received funding in Phase 2 during February 2005. Across the two phases, 91 schools have been funded, 253 extra teachers have been employed and approximately \$40 million has been dedicated to capital works under the program.
- Phase 3 of the Leading Schools Fund commenced in Term 2, 2005, with workshops across the state. Expressions of interest were submitted by schools to their regional director with approval for the development of full proposals given to 107 schools, representing 76 proposals.

## Student programs

In addition to new initiatives under the *Blueprint for Government Schools*, the Department has continued with the implementation of programs targeting learning for students in early and middle years, Koorie education, ESL, languages other than English and strategic partnerships.

## Early years

Early years initiatives support continuous improvement in student achievement in literacy and numeracy in Years P–4.

### Highlights

- The Government target of an average of 21 students in P–2 classes, which was met in February 2003, has been exceeded each year since then. In February 2005, the average class size was 20.8 students in P–2 classes.
- Ninety-five per cent of government schools now have a trained early years numeracy coordinator.
- Reading Recovery programs were delivered in approximately 80 per cent of schools with Year 1 enrolments.
- Literacy and Numeracy Week was celebrated in September 2004 with many school-based and regional activities. Web-based literacy and numeracy materials were provided to Victorian schools.
- The Victorian Premier's Reading Challenge, which challenges students in Years 3–9 to read 12 books over a six-month period, was introduced in February 2005.

## Middle years

Middle years programs aim to improve student learning in literacy and numeracy, and the attendance and retention rates of students in Years 5–9.

### Highlights

- In addition to the 160 clusters already in operation across the state, an additional 87 clusters of primary and secondary schools were funded under a third phase of the Schools for Innovation and Excellence initiative. Every school with middle years students is now participating in this program, which encourages and supports innovation in curriculum development, and learning and teaching.
- The Middle Years Reform program provides ongoing funding for 220 additional teachers to support Years 7–9 students in literacy, numeracy and attendance. A key finding of the

program evaluation conducted in 2004 was that 73 per cent of participating schools reported an improvement in literacy for students at risk in Years 7–9.

- An additional 118 teachers were employed in 300 secondary schools under the Access to Excellence program. The initiative aims to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills and reduce absenteeism by keeping students engaged and stimulated while at school.
- Approximately 70 per cent of participating Year 7 students improved their literacy ability through participation in this initiative.
- In 2005, \$6.9 million was allocated for the employment of additional teachers in 197 secondary schools through the Secondary Literacy Equity initiative. This initiative aims to improve the literacy skills of Years 7–9 students.
- An additional 100 teachers were employed in 101 secondary schools under the Restart initiative.

## Key initiatives

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### Koorie education

Koorie education initiatives are designed to support improved educational outcomes for Koorie students and increase all students' knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures and issues.

#### **Highlights**

- Six Koorie home–school liaison officers continued to support targeted schools and communities with a particular focus on improving attendance.
- The Koorie Literacy Link and the Koorie Middle Years Link video-conferencing projects, operating in 33 schools, have had an impact on pedagogy, methodology and culturally relevant materials development, and has resulted in positive outcomes for Koorie students. The findings from these projects will inform the development of a Koorie literacy strategy.
- The Koorie Middle Years Numeracy Link project continued to operate in eight school communities. The project also uses

videoconferencing as a tool to improve the numeracy skills of Koorie students in Years 5–6.

- A Koorie Open Door Education (KODE) Bureau was established to support four KODE campuses in Glenroy, Swan Hill, Mildura and Morwell. The campuses provide a holistic mainstream education with a focus on Koorie history, lifestyle, values, culture and languages.
- Work commenced on the establishment of a targeted Indigenous Attendance, Engagement and Re-engagement in Learning strategy across Victoria.

### English as a Second Language

ESL initiatives focus on improving support for new-arrival ESL students, including those in isolated settings, and provide ongoing support for up to seven years.

#### **Highlights**

- Intensive ESL programs were provided for 1772 newly arrived students in English language schools and centres and outposting programs. An additional 192 students were supported by the visiting outposting program.
- A further 121 students were supported through new arrival programs in Geelong and Shepparton, and the isolated ESL Students program in regional Victoria.
- Guidelines for establishing a bridging program were developed to support students with little or no prior schooling, and four bridging programs in the metropolitan area were established to provide these students with additional intensive English language tuition prior to moving into mainstream classrooms.
- Funding was allocated to 344 primary schools, 116 secondary schools and nine primary–secondary schools to support ESL learners. In addition, funding continued to be provided to schools for 238 FTE multicultural education aides.
- A total of 7787 on-site and telephone interpreting assignments were provided in 69 languages, and 217 documents were translated into 39 languages for government schools.

## Languages other than English

Government schools are encouraged to offer Languages other than English programs for all students in Years P–10.

### Highlights

- Twenty-one languages were taught in government primary and secondary schools, and 35 languages were provided by the Victorian School of Languages.
- Centres for Excellence in Languages commenced at Berwick Secondary College, the Western Region Cluster and the Warrnambool Network of Secondary Colleges to raise the profile of languages and promote leadership in best teaching practice.
- Regional Project Officers for Languages were appointed in each region.
- Funding was provided for over 33,000 students learning a total of 50 languages in after-hours community languages' schools.
- Grants were provided to 12 language teacher associations to support teachers in the implementation of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and the Principles of Learning and Teaching P–12.

## Strategic partnerships

Strategic partnership initiatives facilitate the establishment of dynamic partnerships between community organisations and schools. These partnerships contribute to teacher professional learning and assist in providing learning experiences that foster the development of lifelong learning in students and diverse learning and teaching strategies.

### Highlights

- Grants were provided to 86 cultural and scientific organisations with a specific focus on providing authentic, beyond-the-classroom learning experiences for students.
- Funded organisations commenced the redevelopment of programs to reflect current government initiatives as identified in the Blueprint, particularly those that relate to student learning and teacher professional development.

- A Strategic Partnerships program website was established to support schools to identify suitable programs.
- The following Strategic Partnerships Program Networks continued a collaborative approach to program delivery and the promotion of effective practices:
  - Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria
  - Environmental Education
  - Performing Arts
  - Rural and Regional
  - Science and Society
  - Visual Arts, Design and Media.

## ICT in schools

ICT initiatives facilitate the integration of ICT in teaching, learning and school management practices across all stages of schooling.

### Highlights

- An \$89.3m agreement was signed with Telstra to provide all schools with a four megabit broadband connection over the next four years, which, for some rural schools, will mean a 60 fold increase in their capacity to access online learning materials.
- A partnership has been negotiated with Oracle Corporation to develop a pilot of an intranet for Victorian schools. The intranet has the potential to integrate key processes involved in the day to day running of a school and classroom, including attendance and roll marking, notifications and messaging, course and lesson planning, assessment and feedback, and to provide a platform for professional development. Oracle has committed a significant investment to the pilot stage of this project, while the Department has provided the intellectual property for the pilot to be built by Oracle Corporation and technical support to the twelve schools involved in the trial. Should the pilot be successful, these specifications will be revised at the completion of the evaluation process, and a tender issued to build a production system.
- An ICT Professional Learning strategy was developed to assist schools to identify and design approaches to ICT professional

learning, and to outline professional learning opportunities to meet the needs of individual teachers and schools.

- Twenty-eight schools were funded through the Creating e-Learning Leaders program to showcase the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning. Participating schools provide mentoring programs for their own teachers and teachers from other schools.
- Over 200 Intel Master Trainers were trained to incorporate the use of ICT into a full curriculum unit based either on material they are currently teaching or material to be taught in the future. Master trainers train 10 teachers at their school or cluster in the Intel Teach to the Future program.
- The number of teachers participating in the Intel program reached 2260 during 2004–05.
- The ICT Achievers program continued to encourage teachers to integrate multimedia into classroom practice and to develop model units of work.
- All government schools have access to the Digital, Creation and Content Resources package, including learning objects from the Le@rning Federation and Kahootz, a three-dimensional authoring software program.
- Twenty-four secondary schools and four clusters participating in the Leading Schools Fund program have an ICT-specific component within their proposals, to support school transformation.

## Multicultural education

Multicultural education initiatives support schools to provide culturally inclusive programs, promote an appreciation of Victoria's diverse cultural heritage, and foster mutual respect and inter-cultural understanding.

### **Highlights**

- Nearly 4000 students participated in Courage to Care exhibitions and workshops.
- Eighty-nine primary and secondary schools received grants to conduct Cultural Diversity Week community activities.
- Five hundred students participated in Cultural Diversity Week Quest.

## School Innovation in Teaching: science, mathematics and technology

School Innovation in Teaching builds upon the Science in Schools initiative to establish a whole-school approach to creating a culture of innovation and creativity in the teaching of science, mathematics and technology with a particular focus on building community partnerships.

Approximately 220 primary and secondary schools are participating in the program, which integrates school-based professional development and community partnerships.

## Health, sport and physical education

Health, sport and physical education initiatives promote and support the teaching and learning of health, physical, sport and traffic safety education. A key focus was the continued promotion of the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating habits for students and the wider community.

### ***Pacific School Games***

The Pacific School Games will be held from 26 November – 4 December 2005. As host of the games, the Department has been engaged in extensive program infrastructure planning to support 4000 participating Australian and international student athletes from 35 Pacific Rim countries. The games will feature track and field, swimming, diving and basketball events.

## Gifted and high-potential students

Gifted student education initiatives support school communities to identify and work effectively with gifted and high-potential students. Evidence-based advice on gifted learning was developed and a statewide professional learning program commenced.

## School councils

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School councils play a key role in influencing the effectiveness of government schools in Victoria. Informed and empowered school councils have significant potential to build community capacity. Blueprint reforms are dependent on all members of school communities working together to support students to achieve their best and school governance arrangements are a critical factor.

The need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of school councils in self-managing government schools was highlighted as a result of the technical analysis of existing legislation conducted as part of the *Review of Victoria's Education and Training Legislation*. Minister Allan commissioned a public review of governance arrangements for government schools. The *Review of School Governance in Victorian Government Schools* was initiated in March 2005. The consultation phase of this review provides an opportunity to enhance partnerships between school councils, parents, schools and communities.

## Support for families

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Low-income families continued to receive support through the Education Maintenance Allowance. The allowance is paid in two instalments each year. To be eligible for the allowance, a parent or guardian must be eligible to receive a Centrelink pension, allowance or benefit under the *State Concessions Act 1986*, or be a Veterans Affairs pensioner or a foster parent on the first day of Term 1 and Term 3 respectively.

For the start of the 2005 school year there has been an approximately 60% increase in the Education Maintenance Allowance. Eligible parents of primary students received an increase from \$127 per year to \$200 per year – an overall increase of \$73. Eligible parents of secondary students had their Education Maintenance Allowance increased from the current rate of \$254 per year to \$400 per year – an overall increase of \$146. In addition to this increase, the Education Maintenance Allowance will be indexed to the local consumer price index.

During 2004–05, the parents and guardians of approximately 200,000 students received the allowance.

## Services to students

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Students are supported through a strengthened and systematic approach to student wellbeing that encompasses school and classroom-based approaches, student welfare support structures and links to community agencies.

### Student wellbeing

The Framework for Student Support Services in Victorian Government Schools continues to support the research and development of student wellbeing policies and resources. Alternative programs are offered to students who experience significant difficulties with mainstream schooling or who have specialised needs.

#### Highlights

- Phases One and Two of the Primary Welfare initiative were implemented with 330 high-needs primary schools employing 192 FTE officers.
- A Head Lice Management Toolkit and a website for schools were developed to assist in the management of head lice.
- The Student Critical Incident Unit was established to offer support and assistance to regions and schools in managing incidents involving sexual assault.
- Deakin University, in partnership with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, was engaged to review and redevelop policies, operational guidelines and practices that will reduce the incidence of bullying and encourage preventative approaches, and which can be implemented and embedded into the school culture.

### Drug education

Drug education initiatives support schools to provide effective, ongoing prevention programs for all students. The Department conducts research and develops evidence-based resources for schools to ensure the quality of statewide drug education.

## Highlights

- The development of Individual School Drug Education strategies continues as the central element of the drug education model in Victoria. In 2004, 691 schools completed their three-year cycle review and prepared new action plans to enhance and improve their drug education programs.
- In 2004, 73 per cent of government schools reported at least one member of staff participating in drug education professional development.
- In 2004, 81 per cent of Victorian schools reported involvement of parents in their drug education programs, and 86 per cent reported involving community agencies.
- Survey tools developed as part of the Drug Education Evaluation and Monitoring project were trialed in 100 schools. The tools are designed to assist in the development of processes and documentation to evaluate the effectiveness of drug education in schools. The trial was accompanied by a comprehensive training program for regional staff in the use of the survey tools.
- Talking Tactics Together, an interactive family drug education program for parents and their primary school-aged children, has been distributed to all government and non-government primary schools.
- The Parent Engagement in Schools Strategic Plan for 2004–2008 was developed to assist schools to better engage parents in drug education curriculum and welfare issues.

## Students with disabilities

The Program for Students with Disabilities provides schools with additional resources. Students with disabilities may attend a special school or a regular school. A systematic approach is being used to design and develop programs and strategies to support students with special needs through targeted programs that strengthen the capacity of schools, families and regions to improve educational outcomes for all students.

### *Number of students with disabilities in government schools, February 2005*

Regular schools	12,452.65 FTE students
Special schools	6,478.0 FTE students

The total number of students with disabilities is 18,930.65 FTE students.

The Language Disorder program, designed to increase learning opportunities for students who have language difficulties, was reviewed in 2004 and redesigned to ensure that students with language difficulties are provided with improved classroom-based support.

## Facilities and infrastructure

### Emergency and security management

The Department coordinated the installation of 50 new and replacement alarm systems in schools during 2004–05. Upgrades to alarm systems were carried out in more than 100 schools during this period.

Workshops in emergency management and emergency planning were conducted for over 1000 senior school staff and reinforced the importance of such planning in school emergency situations. In advising schools on emergency management, emphasis was placed on the need to link response and recovery activities to the school's emergency plan.

The Department continues to monitor in excess of 5000 alarm systems via its Communications Centre, including some 400 police stations and court houses for the Department of Justice.

There were six significant school fires during 2004–05. Corio Primary School and Port Fairy Consolidated School suffered the most extensive damage. The Department has recently appointed a fire engineer as part of its ongoing review of fire preparedness in schools.

## Student transport

The free school bus service, administered by the Department of Infrastructure on behalf of the Department of Education & Training, conveys approximately 71,500 students daily throughout Victoria.

The revised rates of payment for the Conveyance Allowance introduced in 2003 meant that more than 44,000 government and non-government school students received conveyance allowances. Allowances are paid to eligible students to assist with travel costs where access to a free school bus service is not available, or for travel to the nearest free school bus or public transport service.

The Department also provides transport for students attending specialist schools. In 2004–05 approximately 6000 students were transported by bus and taxi to these schools at a cost of approximately \$31 million.

## Asset projects

The 2004–05 State Budget committed \$281.76 million in new capital funding for school education.

This funding directed:

- \$30 million to Leading Schools Fund projects, which included funds for investing in excellence and for rural learning campuses
- \$36.7 million to seven new schools or stages thereof
- \$98.6 million to replacing schools and school relocatables (includes Community Facilities Fund and Schoolyard Blitz projects)
- \$116.46 million to modernising and improving existing school sites including the provision of funds for replacing facilities damaged or destroyed by fire.

## School regions

The nine regional directors are responsible for supporting and building the capacity of regions and schools to deliver high-quality educational services and improved student outcomes through continuous school improvement. Effective regions value and contribute to a culture of learning and improvement at all levels of the system.

Regional offices, in partnership with central office, play an important part in the implementation of the Government's reform agenda by:

- providing leadership to translate the system's aspirations into reality for students in schools
- managing and supporting schools to provide a high-quality education for all students
- developing the capacity of leaders to plan strategically for school improvement
- developing the capacity of regional office staff and schools as effective learning communities and creating strategies that sustain them
- developing strategies to support the continuous learning of regional and school-based staff
- monitoring the achievement of clearly articulated high-quality outcomes and using data to inform and refine improvement strategies
- providing finance, facilities, personnel and workforce planning support services to facilitate the achievement of effective learning environments
- supporting schools to implement innovative approaches to increase levels of student achievement, retention, engagement and wellbeing
- promoting learning communities and collaboration, and fostering supportive networks within and across local government areas to improve local education and employment outcomes
- engaging with the wider community to develop strategic relationships and partnerships to build capacity and bring the resources of the community to the work of schools.

## Metropolitan regions

### ***Western Metropolitan Region***

Mr Rob Blachford  
Regional Director  
407 Royal Parade  
Parkville Victoria 3052  
PO Box 57  
Carlton South Victoria 3053  
Telephone: (03) 9291 6500  
Facsimile: (03) 9291 6555

### ***Northern Metropolitan Region***

Mr Wayne Craig  
Regional Director  
582 Heidelberg Road  
Locked Bag 88  
Fairfield Victoria 3078  
Telephone: (03) 9488 9488  
Facsimile: (03) 9488 9400

### ***Eastern Metropolitan Region***

Dr Jim Watterston  
Regional Director  
29 Lakeside Drive  
Burwood East Victoria 3151  
Telephone: (03) 9881 0200  
Facsimile: (03) 9881 0243

### ***Southern Metropolitan Region***

Ms Jan Lake  
Regional Director  
33 Princes Highway  
PO Box 5  
Dandenong Victoria 3175  
Telephone: (03) 9794 3555  
Facsimile: (03) 9794 3500

## Non-metropolitan regions

### ***Barwon South Western Region***

Ms Glenda Strong  
Regional Director  
Vines Road  
PO Box 420  
North Geelong Victoria 3125  
Telephone: (03) 5272 8300  
Facsimile: (03) 5277 9926

### ***Central Highlands Wimmera Region***

Mr Malcolm Millar  
Regional Director  
1220 Sturt Street  
Ballarat Victoria 3350  
Telephone: (03) 5337 8444  
Facsimile: (03) 5333 2135

### ***Loddon Campaspe Mallee Region***

Mr Ron Lake  
Regional Director  
37–43 Havlin Street East  
Bendigo Victoria 3550

PO Box 442  
Bendigo Victoria 3550  
Telephone: (03) 5440 3111  
Facsimile: (03) 5442 5321

### ***Goulburn North Eastern Region***

Ms Adele Pottenger  
Regional Director  
Arundel Street  
PO Box 403  
Benalla Victoria 3672  
Telephone: (03) 5761 2100  
Facsimile: (03) 5762 5039

### ***Gippsland Region***

Mr Peter Greenwell  
Regional Director  
Cnr Kirk and Haigh Streets  
PO Box 381  
Moe Victoria 3825  
Telephone: (03) 5127 0400  
Facsimile: (03) 5126 1933

## Non-government schools

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The Minister for Education and Training has legislative responsibility for the education of all primary and secondary school students in Victoria.

The Department contributes to the achievement of the Government's goals and targets for education by providing funding and other support to non-government schools in Victoria.

The Department provided over \$300 million in financial assistance to non-government schools in 2004–05, through untied recurrent funding and specific purpose grants.

Non-government schools educate over 290,036 students statewide or 34.9 per cent of all Victorian school students. Of these students, 62.5 per cent attend Catholic schools and 37.5 per cent attend Independent schools. As of February 2005, there were 483 registered Catholic schools and 216 registered Independent schools.

The Department continues to work actively and collaboratively with the non-government schools sectors to improve student outcomes.

## Highlights

- Schools representing the Catholic education sector participated in the developmental stages of the performance and development culture accreditation scheme. The Catholic Education Office is represented on both the steering group and regional team which provide governance for the initiative.
- Non-government schools worked with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Department in the development of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and in providing support materials for all Victorian schools to assist in the implementation of the Standards.
- Consultation with the non-government sector continued in the area of student reporting, as well as strong joint partnerships in cross sectorial projects in drug education and values education.
- The Department completed development work on a new funding model for non-government schools in conjunction with representatives from the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria. The new funding model will change the way the State Grant is calculated for Victoria's non-government schools and will be implemented in 2006. The model comprises a mix of 50 per cent core per capita funding, weighted by stages of schooling, and 50 per cent needs-based funding. Needs will be determined through a school's student characteristics profile.
- The government and the non-government schools sectors agreed to enter into a quadrennial agreement for the purposes of State funding from 2006–09.
- In 2004–05, \$285 million was allocated to Victorian non-government schools on a per capita basis through the State Grant to assist schools in meeting recurrent operating costs.
- Funding to non-government schools in 2004–05 also included:
  - the next instalment of \$16.5 million as part of the 2003–04 State Budget initiative to provide \$62 million over four years to assist needy schools in meeting their operational costs

- \$20 million in ongoing supplementary funding for needy schools
- \$5.3 million in support services to assist students with special learning needs, including students with disabilities
- \$1.2 million for suicide prevention initiatives
- \$6.4 million for the Education Maintenance Allowance
- \$1 million in interest subsidies
- \$2 million for Internet access
- \$17.7 million for student transport mainly from outlying areas
- \$4.8 million in rail ticket subsidies through the Department of Infrastructure.

## Full fee-paying overseas students

In 2004–05, in accordance with Section 65 of the *Education Act 1958*, the Minister for Education and Training authorised the Department officer holding the position of Chair of the Registered Schools Board to endorse non-government schools to accept full fee-paying overseas students. As a result of this delegation, the administration of the program moved from the Registered Schools Board to the Office of School Education in the Department.

As of June 2005, there were 131 registered schools endorsed to accept full fee-paying overseas students.

## Registered Schools Board

The Registered Schools Board is the statutory authority responsible for the registration of Victorian non-government schools. The *Education Act 1958* (the Act) requires the Registered Schools Board to:

- register and, where appropriate, revise the registration of schools
- conduct a registration review every six years to assess compliance with the Act.

## Registration of non-government schools

During 2004–05, the Registered Schools Board approved the registration, or revision of registration, of schools in the following categories.

New primary schools	2
New secondary schools	2
New primary and secondary schools	1
Additional secondary year levels	29
Additional campuses	2
School amalgamations (two schools to form one school)	1
Relocations	8
School closures	2
Campus closures	2

All schools complete an 'approval to open' application at least six months prior to opening. Before being granted approval to open, schools must be able to demonstrate that the curriculum, policies, facilities and organisation are of a satisfactory standard and that teachers are registered. New schools must also meet probity requirements and demonstrate that they are financially viable. A school must apply to the Registered Schools Board for registration within 14 days of opening.

## Monitoring of schools

### **Annual returns**

As a requirement of the Act, the Registered Schools Board maintains a database of school details that are collected on census day in February. Schools submit their returns electronically.

### **Registration reviews**

In order for non-government schools to maintain registration under the Act, the Registered Schools Board must be satisfied that the school continues to meet the requirements for registration. Registration review material is updated annually in accordance with changes in legislation and regulations relevant to non-government schools. During 2004–05, 98 schools undertook registration reviews.

## **Membership**

The Board, which meets monthly, consists of eight members: four from the public sector, including the nominee of the Secretary of the Department as Chair, and four from the non-government sector, appointed by the Governor-in-Council.

Membership of the Registered Schools Board as at 30 June 2005 was as follows:

### **Department of Education & Training**

Ms Lesley Foster (Chair)  
 Ms Maria Kelly  
 Mr Don King  
 Mr John McCarthy

### **Catholic Education Commission of Victoria**

Mr Tony O'Meara  
 Ms Pauline Audley

### **Association of Independent Schools of Victoria**

Ms Michelle Green  
 Vacant position (Geoff Ryan resigned effective 11 March 2005)