

# Portfolio management services

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## International education

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The provision of education and training to overseas students is a central element of Victoria's export profile. After a period of dramatic and sustained growth in international education enrolments in Victoria, there is evidence of a slowing down both in Australia and Victoria. The international education market is highly competitive and prone to fluctuation. Contributing factors include competition from other jurisdictions, the appreciation of the Australian dollar and, particularly, better supply of education in source countries.

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: global learning, positioning Victoria and quality assurance. The strategies are designed to ensure

that Victoria can make the most of the opportunities presented by the growth in international education.

The implementation of the Global Learning strategy includes support for the Peace Scholarship Trust and two scholarships to the Veneto region of Italy for TAFE teachers awarded by the International Specialised Skills Institute. In addition, the Department has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with Australian Volunteers International to facilitate involvement of Department staff in international development projects.

In 2004, the cross-sectoral Positioning Victoria Working Party, chaired by Paul Ramler, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Monash University, advised the Minister on the ways in which Victoria can position itself as a world-class education destination. Strategies encompassing branding, positioning and promotion, market research and strategic planning, support and loyalty programs, industry and product development, and policy and operational reforms will be progressively implemented from mid-2005.

In 2004–05, the Department undertook a quality assurance review aimed at enhancing and improving the delivery of the International Student program for overseas full fee-paying students in Victorian government schools. The review proposed a Quality Assurance Framework based on best practice including quality assurance standards for the International Student program in government schools. Further development of the Quality Assurance Framework will take place during 2005–06.

## Industry involvement

In March 2005, International Education Week celebrated the contribution that international education makes to Victoria's cultural diversity and social and economic development. The week

included a formal reception at Government House for international students hosted by the Governor in the presence of the Minister for Education and Training, four welcome receptions sponsored by the Department and hosted by local city councils in Ballarat, Bendigo, the Latrobe Valley and Warrnambool, and an Overseas Study Fair aimed at encouraging young Victorians to undertake a short- or long-term international education experience.

The Department worked with the Victorian TAFE Association and the Victorian Government Business Office in Dubai to facilitate a delegation of five students from Victorian TAFE institutes to attend the international student conference, E-ducation without Borders, in the United Arab Emirates in February 2005. The students were selected on the basis of papers they submitted on e-learning. The Minister for Education and Training presented a paper at the conference.

In support of the whole-of-government approach to the World Expo in Japan in 2005, the Division organised for education and training representatives to be members of five industry trade missions to Japan, with a view to further integrating education and training with key industry sectors.

## 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 that effectively utilise Victorian Government infrastructure overseas.

The General Manager of the International Division continues to chair a consortium comprising education providers as well as representatives from the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, to develop educational business opportunities in the Middle East. The consortium provides funding for an education officer in the Victorian Government Business Office in Dubai. The consortium is reviewing future strategic directions in the context of the Department's discussions with the Department of Innovation, Industry and

Regional Development on provision of education services off-shore through Victorian Government business offices.

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 Japan, India and China.

The Department, in cooperation with the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, was involved in an international education and training marketing strategy to support the whole-of-government initiative at the World Expo, held in the Aichi Prefecture, Japan. The International Education and Training marketing strategy included showcasing Victoria's education and training capabilities during Victoria Week and Education Week and launching the Dear Aichi Pen-Pal program for primary and secondary schools.

The Department is also working with the Department of Victorian Communities to develop and implement a skilled migration project whereby international students obtain work experience in regional areas.

## Full fee-paying overseas students

Full fee-paying overseas students make an important contribution to the Victorian economy. In 2004, nearly 89,000 international students were enrolled with education and training on-shore providers in Victoria, compared to approximately 84,000 in 2003. Over half of these students were enrolled in higher education institutions, 15 per cent with VET providers, 10 per cent in schools, and 15 per cent in the English Language sector.

Victoria is a market leader in the recruitment of international students to government schools, with 30 per cent of international school students in Australia studying in Victoria. At June 2005, there were approximately 2400 international students from more than 50 different countries enrolled in Victorian government schools, bringing an international presence to more than 200 primary and secondary schools across Victoria.

## Student study tours

The Department conducts student study tours for prospective overseas students. In 2004–05, 1174 students visited 74 metropolitan, rural and regional schools for a total of 11,399 student days. This figure is slightly less than the previous year. The reduction was largely due to increased global competition. Most of the groups were from Japan and China.

## International cooperation

In 2004–05, the Department successfully concluded new Memoranda of Cooperation aimed at strengthening education and training relationships with other countries. Memoranda were concluded with the:

- Ministry of Education, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- Technical and Vocational Training Organisation, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran
- Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Denmark
- Ulsan Metropolitan Office of Education, Republic of Korea.

In addition, the Department continued to coordinate the delivery of Victorian Government support for the reconstruction of the education and training system in East Timor. Specific assistance for the Australia East Timor Friendship Schools project, in conjunction with the Aloia Foundation, was provided by the Government.

Victoria also coordinated the UNESCO Associated Schools project in Victorian government schools on behalf of the Commonwealth.

## Exchanges and language support

The Department organises a range of overseas exchange programs for Victorian teachers and principals. In 2004–05, 50 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 Italy.

In order to strengthen the provision of language education in government schools, 157 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. In 2004–05, 68 delegations involving 979 participants were organised.

Programs focusing on school and vocational education and training were organised for delegations from the People's Republic of China, Denmark, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

## International projects

In partnership with Sinclair Knight Merz, who purchased the Overseas Projects Corporation of Victoria from the Victorian Government, the Department has played an important role in the delivery of offshore education and training projects in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2004–05 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.

## Teacher training and development

In conjunction with Victorian universities the Department provides specialised on-shore training programs for groups of overseas English and science teachers. During 2004–05, seven programs delivered training to 245 teachers from the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China and Thailand.

## Public information and promotion

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

The *Education Times* newspaper is the main communication link within the government school education sector and is published fortnightly during school terms. A readership survey conducted in April 2005 showed that it is the most frequently mentioned source of information about news and developments in education. Findings were very positive, with more than nine in ten respondents satisfied or very satisfied with the newspaper.

Major publications in 2004–05 included *Bringing Learning to Life*, an information handbook for parents, and the *TAFE Courses Directory 2006*. These publications are available at <[www.det.vic.gov.au/parents/handbook](http://www.det.vic.gov.au/parents/handbook)> and <[www.tafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.tafe.vic.gov.au)> respectively.

The *Bringing Learning to Life* handbook is distributed to all parents of Prep and Year 7 students at the beginning of the school year, and is also distributed through child-care centres, public libraries and Information Victoria. The *TAFE Courses Directory* is distributed to careers teachers in schools, and to prospective post-compulsory education students on request through Information Victoria and at employment exhibitions.

In May 2005, the Department launched *Parent Update*, an electronic newsletter for parents. This publication provides information to parents and the broader community about initiatives in Victorian government school education. *Parent Update* is published eight times a year during school term. Parents and members of the broader Victorian community receive this free newsletter by subscription. At 30 June 2005, the Department had published two editions for 1250 subscribers.

The Department's Communications and Events Coordination Branch managed strategic events and a promotions program, including the School Sports Awards, VCE Awards, Education Week, Victorian Education Excellence Awards, TAFE Week, Victorian Training Awards, Literacy and Numeracy Week, and Adult Learners' Week.

At the commencement of 2005, the installation of new telephone software enabled the Department to provide a streamlined Information and Referral Service that integrates the previously existing services, Education Line and the TAFE Course Line. This enhanced service provides 24-hour access to recorded information about frequently sought information, for example school term dates for Victoria (2005–07) and for all other states, contact details for Department regional offices, and information about special education and training dates and events.

In addition, the service responds to telephone and email enquiries regarding a broad range of school and training issues, including school and Department policies and post-compulsory accredited and short courses conducted by TAFE institutes and private providers. The service is used by parents, students, school staff and other community members. During 2004–05, the Information and Referral Service assisted with 54,120 telephone and 5670 email enquiries. The service can be contacted on 188 089 834 or 03 9637 2222.

## Services to Ministers and policy

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### 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 enquiries and reviews on education and training policy.

## Yearly management cycle

In 2004–05, major activities in the coordination of the Department's yearly management cycle included:

- replacing the initial priorities within the Corporate Plan 2003–06
- developing Office Strategic plans as well as Divisional and Regional Business plans
- implementing a strategic framework to improve business planning across the Department
- developing the Department's budget submissions, culminating in the 2005–06 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 for the purpose of revenue certification
- managing the preparation of the portfolio annual reports for 2004–05
- supporting the operation of the statutory authorities.

## Legislative Review

During 2004–05, a program commenced to review and update the legislative framework that underpins education and training delivery in Victoria. A discussion paper seeking community and stakeholder views on how new legislation might best meet contemporary needs and expectations of education and training was released in February 2005. The purpose of the discussion paper was to canvass views of the whole community – parents, teachers, education providers, principals, students and other education stakeholders.

The issues raised in the discussion paper included whether the legislation should acknowledge the right of students and parents to make choices about education and training; whether the public should have access to information about education and training institutions; whether the legislation should require education and training providers to deliver their teaching in a manner consistent with Australian democratic principles; whether the principles of free, compulsory and secular instruction in government schools be reaffirmed in the new legislation; whether a common regulatory regime for all schools be established to ensure high-quality student outcomes; and the roles and responsibilities of the education and training statutory authorities.

A large number of formal submissions were received in response to the discussion paper. Respondents included education stakeholders (school, training, higher education and statutory authority stakeholders), community organisations and private individuals. The outcomes of the Review, due to be released in September 2005, will be detailed in the 2005–06 annual report.