

Portfolio management services

International education

The role of the International Division is to enable Victoria to benefit from and contribute to the exchange of knowledge, experience, expertise and trade between peoples of different countries by delivering educational, economic, and social and cultural benefits through:

- establishing and maintaining ongoing relationships with overseas governments and global partners to facilitate the delivery of high-quality international education and strategic international export development activity
- promoting and managing cross-government and education and training providers' participation in the international education marketplace.

The Minister released a statement in 2004 entitled *Global Pathways: International Education for Victoria*. Implementation of the three global strategies and directions in the statement is well advanced. These strategies, Global Learning, Positioning Victoria and Quality Assurance, are designed to ensure that Victoria can make the most of the opportunities presented by the growth in international education.

Engaging industry and international stakeholders

A key initiative aimed at working with international education stakeholders and industry is International Education Week. The third International Education Week was held in March 2006 to celebrate the contribution that international education makes to Victoria's cultural diversity and social and economic development.

Working across Victorian government agencies

The International Division continues to strengthen linkages with other Victorian Government

agencies and develop whole-of-government strategies that effectively utilise Victorian Government infrastructure overseas.

The Division contributed to the Inter-Departmental Committee for Business Benefits arising from the hosting of the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

In addition, the Department provided input on Victoria's international education industry for DIIRD's whole-of-government strategies for Japan, India and China.

The Department is also working with the Department for Victorian Communities to conduct a skilled migration pilot project to assist international students to obtain work in a key regional area.

Strengthening education linkages between Victoria and overseas governments

International cooperation

The Department successfully concluded new Memoranda of Cooperation in 2005–06 with:

- Handan Education Bureau, People's Republic of China
- Goethe-Institut, Germany
- The Government of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

Under the latter Memorandum of Cooperation and at the request of the Sharjah Government, the Department is undertaking flagship initiatives in the United Arab Emirate of Sharjah including:

- an analysis of the government schools sector in Sharjah and the development of a five-year strategic plan for its reform
- provision of educational services to the Victoria International School of Sharjah.

The Government of Sharjah will own and build this new private school to a design by a Victorian architect. The model for the operation of the school, including curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting, will be based on Victorian government schools. Staff will be recruited from within Victoria to ensure familiarity with the model. The school will cater for 3000 students from kindergarten to Year 12 and is due to open in September 2007.

International delegations

The International Division hosted a number of delegations from overseas to further relations with education stakeholders. Delegations of teachers, principals and education officials from overseas visit Victoria on a regular basis. In 2005–06, 48 delegations involving 582 participants were organised.

International students

International students make a significant educational, cultural, social and economic contribution to Victoria. During 2005, approximately 94,000 international students from 154 nationalities were enrolled with education and training providers in Victoria, compared to 89,000 in 2004. Over half (54 per cent) enrolled in higher education courses, 18 per cent in VET providers, 8 per cent in schools, and 14 per cent in English Language colleges.

In addition, Victorian education and training providers are delivering programs offshore to an estimated 29,000 students in their home countries.

Victoria is a market leader in the recruitment of international students, with 27 per cent of international students in Australia studying in Victoria.

Public information and promotion

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

Education Times is the main communication link within the school education sector. The newspaper is published fortnightly during school terms. It provides information on training opportunities, government education policies, news and innovations in education. A readership survey conducted in April 2006 showed that nine in ten respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the newspaper.

Major publications in 2005–06 included *Bringing Learning to Life*, an information handbook for parents, and the *TAFE Courses Directory 2006*. These publications are available at <www.education.vic.gov.au/about/publications/newsinfo/learningtolife.htm> and <www.education.vic.gov.au/tafecourses/> 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 to the community 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.

The Department's electronic newsletter, entitled *Parent Update*, provides information to parents and the broader education community about initiatives in Victorian government school education. *Parent Update* is published eight times a year during the school terms. Parents and members of the broader Victorian community receive this free newsletter through subscription. The newsletter had 3146 subscribers at 30 June 2006.

The Department's Communications and Events Coordination Branch managed a strategic events and 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.

The Department's Information and Referral 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 Regional Offices as well as information about special education and training dates and events.

In addition, the service responds to telephone and email enquiries about 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 and other community members, and by school staff. The Department's Information and Referral Service telephone number is 1800 809 834 or (03) 9637 2222.

Services to Ministers and policy

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 and Freedom of Information. 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 and the Minister for Education Services as members of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training, and Youth Affairs, and the

Secretary as a member of the Australian Education Systems Officials Committee. It also coordinates the provision of advice to Commonwealth and State parliamentary enquiries and reviews on education and training policy.

Yearly management cycle

In 2005–06, major activities in the coordination of the Department's yearly management cycle included:

- 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 2006–07 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 2005–06
- 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. Following an extensive public consultation process on the Discussion Paper (released in the previous financial year), this program continued into 2005–06 with the release of a White Paper in September 2005. The White Paper was informed by submissions to the Discussion Paper and outlined the Government's proposed reforms to education and training legislation. In response to the White Paper a moderate number of submissions were received.

An exposure draft of the Education and Training Reform Bill was released on 15 December 2005, providing further opportunity for community and stakeholder input into the Bill prior to its introduction into Parliament.

The Bill was introduced into Parliament on 7 February 2006. The Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament and received Royal Assent on 16 May 2006, thereby becoming the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

The Act strengthens the provisions for effective service delivery in Victoria and replaces 12 Acts with one consolidated Act. In addition, the Act:

- includes, for the first time in education and training legislation, two sets of overarching principles that reflect the democratic values that are the essence of Australian society and system of government
- raises the minimum compulsory school leaving age to 16 years
- provides a guarantee of free instruction at a government school or a guarantee of a place at a TAFE institute or other public training provider for students under 20 years of age who are completing their Year 12 or equivalent qualification
- enables government school councils to seek voluntary contributions, while having regard to a set of principles that protect students and parents

- reaffirms the secularity of the government school system, continues provisions for voluntary religious instruction and makes clear that government school teachers can discuss religious issues and teach subjects involving comparative religion
- establishes a single new statutory authority, the VRQA, with responsibility for the regulation of all schools, training and non-university higher education providers, as well as for home schooling
- gives the VRQA the responsibility for the accreditation of Victorian education and training qualifications and for approving providers to offer courses to overseas students
- abolishes the Registered Schools Board and the VQA, whose functions will be covered by the new VRQA
- clarifies the role of the VCAA
- updates the functions of the VLESC and changes its name to the Victorian Skills Commission.

Implementation of the legislation, including the development of the subordinate legislation (regulations), associated Ministerial Orders, guidelines, policies, and structures is currently underway and will be detailed in the 2006–07 annual report.