Working with the community

The VCAA ensures that the diverse nature of Australian society is reflected in all aspects of its operations. It has a strong commitment to the principles set out in Victoria’s recently published multicultural policy, All of Us. This policy sets out a framework for continuing to strengthen multiculturalism across the State and stresses the need for partnerships, harmonious community relations, advocacy and supportive programs. The VCAA is committed to valuing, respecting and meeting the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities and the needs of women, youth and Aboriginal people.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

Culturally responsive programs developed by the VCAA ensure that respect and appreciation for cultural and linguistic diversity are a normal part of all curriculum and assessment policies, programs and procedures. The VCAA aims to reflect DEECD’s Cultural Diversity Plan and the Victorian Government’s recently launched strategy for schools, Education for Global and Multicultural Citizenship 2009–2013, both in its interaction with schools and within its own administrative structures and procedures.

In 2009–10, the VCAA:

• participated in the Australia-wide Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages (CCAFL) project, preparing national examinations for 16 smaller candidature community languages
• participated in the implementation of the current strategy for Victorian government schools – Education for Global and Multicultural Citizenship 2009–2013
• participated in the development of the draft Victorian Languages Strategy Discussion Paper
• provided input into the revised National Statement and Plan for Languages
• participated in the national reference group devising guidelines for the ACARA paper, ‘Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages’
• offered 46 languages at VCE level for Victorian students
• produced a report on a national project to investigate strategies for improving student access to Asian and other language courses at the senior secondary school level
• continued to participate in a national project to develop courses for heritage learners in four Asian languages
• provided a range of VELS materials in 16 community languages
• conducted a wide range of seminars and workshops on VCE LOTE and on strategies for teaching LOTE in the VELS, including interdisciplinary approaches and approaches to teaching and assessing the standards of intercultural knowledge and language awareness
• provided a professional development program on VCE LOTE course writing for teachers and principals from approximately 80 community-based single-study providers
• conducted regular meetings with the leadership team of the Victorian School of Languages (the biggest LOTE provider in Victoria)
• provided access to VCE courses in English as a second language (ESL) for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds
• participated in a project conducted by Community Languages Australia and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to design curriculum materials to combat racism against Muslim students
• participated in a national project conducted by the Office of the Board of Studies in NSW to study proficiency levels in Asian languages attained by Year 12 students
• participated in a national project conducted by the University of South Australia and the Melbourne Language Testing Research Centre to study student proficiency in Asian languages at Years 3, 5, 9 and 12
• participated in a national project to produce reports on the current state of the teaching of Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean in Australian schools
• collaborated in a project conducted by Monash University to devise training courses for teachers in after-hours community language schools
• collaborated on the organisation of the International Division’s Symposium on Languages
• presented sessions at the Modern Language Teachers’ Association of Victoria’s Annual Conference, the Ballarat LOTE Conference, the Japanese Teachers’ Association Annual Conference, the Western Metropolitan Region Languages Forum, the AGM of the Chinese Teachers’ Association, the Indonesian Teachers’ Annual Conference and the Global Languages Convention
• participated in the Ministerial Council on LOTE, ESL and Multicultural Education; the annual conference of Community Languages Victoria; and the Languages Forum run by DEECD.
Indigenous affairs

- As the result of a successful submission, the VCAA received a large sum of money from DIIRD’s Collaborative Internet Innovation Fund (CIIF) to conduct a project to use Web 2.0 technologies to support schools in implementing the new VELS Aboriginal Languages curriculum document. This document sets out protocols for teaching Aboriginal Languages, cultures and reclamation in Victorian schools and generic standards for Aboriginal Languages. A part-time project officer was appointed to work in this area. The VCAA is leading this project and collaborating with the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc., the Victorian School of Languages, DEECD Wannik Unit, DEECD Student Learning Division and Monash University. Strong endorsement was provided for the project by the Aboriginal community.

- The VCAA continued to offer extensive support to schools that are teaching, or planning to teach, the VCE Indigenous Languages study – Indigenous Languages of Victoria: Revival and Reclamation.

- The VCAA Aboriginal Languages Implementation Group continued to meet regularly to provide support for teachers of Indigenous languages through planning professional development activities and the development of implementation support materials. This group is also a reference group for the CIIF project.

- The VCAA participated in the Eastern States Indigenous Languages Roundtable in Sydney.

- VCAA officers presented sessions on the teaching of Aboriginal Languages at the Grampians Regional LOTE Conference, the Modern Language Teachers’ Association of Victoria’s Annual Conference and the Global Languages Convention.

- The VCAA participated in the steering committee for a Monash University ARC project involving the development of a web portal, which will provide access to digital resources that support the teaching of Aboriginal languages in Victorian schools.

Women

The VCAA is committed to the promotion of equality of women, both in its communication with schools and within its own workforce. Within the VCAA, eligible female staff are able to nominate for the Julia Flynn Leadership program, which aims to develop women’s leadership and management skills. In developing educational programs that remain fair and accessible to all, the VCAA assures a commitment to equity and diversity at all times.
Youth

The VCAA provides advice and support for young people to help them make informed choices about pathways that will direct them into work and further study. This support includes a wide range of study options in the post-compulsory years of schooling.

The VCAA also supports young people by providing a telephone and email enquiry service, a range of publications offering advice on post-compulsory study options, face-to-face advice to students at Education Expos and a VCE and VCAL results call centre in collaboration with the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC).

Recognising achievement

The VCAA celebrates and promotes young people's achievements in several ways. This includes the annual VCE Season of Excellence, at which a representative sample of exemplary work in design, technology, media and the visual and performing arts completed by VCE students from the previous year are exhibited. Works are presented in two exhibitions – Top Arts and Top Designs. This year, Top Designs marked its tenth year at Melbourne Museum. In that time more than 1000 students, representing schools across the state, have displayed their work at the Museum.

At Top Screen, short films are shown, and the performing arts are showcased in the Top Class concert series and the final event, Top Acts. Season events are complemented by associated education programs, publications and online content.

The VCE Achiever Awards recognise the efforts of VCE students in promoting community involvement in their local school and wider community.

The VCAL Achievement Awards recognise the outstanding achievements of young people who participate in the VCAL, and the contributions and achievements of VCAL teachers and partner organisations in the development and delivery of innovative VCAL programs.

The Plain English Speaking Award provides an excellent opportunity for students to build self-confidence and extend their skills in oral communication, speech writing and research.

The Margaret Schofield Memorial scholarship, coordinated by the VCAA on behalf of the Margaret Schofield Memorial Trust, is awarded to a government school student of VCE Music Performance who has been accepted into a tertiary course and is committed to a career in music performance.

Disability

The VCAA has initiated a Disability Action Plan to review and refine its processes over the period 2009–11. The plan is aimed at improving outcomes for people with disabilities in relation to accessible curriculum, consultation, information and communication processes, employment, physical access to facilities and awareness among staff.