The financial year 2009–10 was a time of considerable change and significant challenge for the VRQA. The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 has been amended four times and the powers of the VRQA as regulator were strengthened in order to support quality in delivery of courses to overseas students and to protect their interests. In the school sector, the minimum leaving age was increased to 17 years, learning areas subject to free instruction have been amended to reflect the nationally agreed learning areas set out in the Melbourne Declaration, and senior secondary registration has been aligned with school registration for registered schools.

At the direction of the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation, the VRQA developed guidelines for vocational education and training (VET) Providers aligned with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) to strengthen quality standards required for registration as a registered training organisation (RTO) and delivery to international students. The guidelines support maintenance of quality provision in the vocational education industry in Victoria.

Also at the direction of the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation, the VRQA conducted Financial Health Assessments of RTOs. The Financial Health Assessments have required the VRQA to satisfy itself of the financial viability of RTOs. The aim of the assessments is to support a strong vocational training industry by establishing the capacity of providers to maintain their businesses and to avoid college closures that disadvantage students.

The Rapid Audit Program has continued and the risk criteria for assessing RTOs that deliver education and training to international students have been validated and adopted nationally.

There has been significant impact on the international education and training industry as a result of the global financial crisis, attacks on international students and the changes to Commonwealth immigration policy. These facts have resulted in declining international student enrolments and college closures. The VRQA has directly supported students affected by these closures.

The VRQA has been involved in Commonwealth education and training issues as they emerge. We have contributed to consultation on strengthening the Australian Qualifications Framework. We are preparing for the transfer of higher education registration and accreditation of Victorian providers to the new Commonwealth Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency. The work on the National Curriculum has continued and the VRQA is consulting with the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority regarding the impact on school education providers in Victoria.

The annual Board renewal process is established and this led to six new members joining the VRQA during 2009–10. I would like to acknowledge the work of those members who retired during the year and welcome new members who bring a range of expertise in education, industry, governance and management to our work on the Board and subcommittees. I thank my fellow Board members, the Director, Lynn Glover, and staff of the VRQA for their contribution to the successful implementation of the priorities of the VRQA.

Stuart Hamilton, AO
Chair

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