The 2010–11 reporting period saw increased participation in the national education initiatives, as well as the further development of a number of our curriculum and assessment programs. The VCAA Board reiterated the importance of looking internationally when benchmarking our work, and providing greater exposure of our programs to potential partners and students overseas. We need to continue to offer world-class services to Victorian students, and in the 21st century this requires an international perspective and increasingly sophisticated use of technology in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.

During this period we have strengthened our ties with university researchers with the commencement of three Australian Research Council Linkage projects. These projects are critical in linking us with the most contemporary academic research and our participation ensures that this research is connected to the real world of student learning. We are also working very closely with the University of Melbourne in the early years domain to develop indicators of learning. This is critical and groundbreaking work if we are going to better understand and more effectively act to promote the foundations for learning. We have increased our work with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on the development of Phase One of the Australian Curriculum in the four areas of English, Mathematics, Science and History for Prep to Year 10. State and Territory Education Ministers agreed to the content of these areas in December 2010 and during 2011 the VCAA has been working with ACARA on the validation of the associated achievement standards, managing a validation program with 57 Victorian schools participating.

**National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy**

NAPLAN tests were conducted between 10 and 12 May 2011 and staff from across the organisation contributed to their successful delivery to more than 250,000 Victorian students. I take this opportunity to once again thank the teachers and principals throughout Victoria for their support in ensuring that the implementation of this national program was successful. The information available to parents, schools, systems and the VCAA as a result of the tests is invaluable in the planning and development of improved teaching and learning. The data inform priorities for resource development, targeted intervention and the evaluation of the effectiveness of existing programs. We are continuing to develop our services to assist schools in using these data to improve student learning through statewide professional development and new reports in the NAPLAN Data Service.
On Demand Testing

Usage of the VCAA’s On Demand Testing service continues to increase. The VCAA also continues to add new functionality and expand the service’s scope as resources allow. This service is a critical example of how the VCAA is increasingly embedding the smart use of ICT into classroom practice. We are investigating with DEECD ways of linking this service with advice to teachers about strategies and approaches to improve student learning in areas of identified gaps.

Victorian Certificate of Education

The VCE continues to be a highly valued, end-of-school certificate that is accepted internationally as the basis for selection into university study. It continues to promote high-quality curriculum for the overwhelming majority of Victorian Year 12 students. The VCE is offered in China, the Middle East and Vanuatu by schools working in partnership with Victorian schools. We are continuing to expand the offering of the VCE in China on a sustainable basis. The success of VCE students from China gaining access into university study throughout Australia is testimony to its value.

The security and integrity of VCE examinations remains the highest priority to the VCAA. The examinations in June and November were conducted and marked accurately, securely and in a timely manner.

Online marking of VCE examinations was introduced in June 2010. It expanded in November 2010 to include the five science studies. As we develop the project, which will lead to further enhancements in our quality assurance processes, allowing for more monitoring of marking to ensure accuracy and timelines, teachers and suitably qualified curriculum experts from around Victoria will have more opportunities to participate in this important work.

Accurate results for all students were reported and distributed on schedule. This achievement requires a substantial effort from staff. Our examination setters, chief assessors, markers and numerous casual staff operate a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week program from October to early December to ensure that students receive their results mid-December. This provides students with the time to receive feedback, advice and counselling before finalising their tertiary entrance applications.

In relation to the 2010 end-of-year VCE examinations, the VCAA Review Committee penalised eight serious breaches of examination rules with reductions of one to four grades in the subjects in which the breach of rules occurred.

Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) provides a very important vocational pathway for senior secondary students. Participation continues to grow in terms of both students and providers, and it is now a well-established and necessary component of our senior secondary offerings. The annual VCAL awards ceremony always provides many inspiring stories of how students have developed and thrived under the applied learning of VCAL. It continues to cement partnerships between schools and communities, especially in rural Victoria.
In 2010, there were 19,175 certificate enrolments with 429 VCAL providers. In 2012, nine new providers will deliver VCAL for the first time. The On Track destination data for 2010 Intermediate and Senior VCAL students indicated that 27.4 per cent of the VCAL students continued with further education or training, and 59.5 per cent commenced an apprenticeship, traineeship or employment. This means that 86.9 per cent of VCAL students had a direct pathway to further education, training or work – an outstanding achievement.

**Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework**

During the reporting period, Victorian early years providers began implementation of the VEYLDF. This is a wide-ranging reform program involving education professionals across the whole of the early years. Our particular area of responsibility is to assist providers and our colleagues in DEECD to understand and use the VEYLDF to enhance early learning. This is a long-term cultural change. We are working closely on a number of research projects that are designed to assist practitioners in understanding the nature of learning, especially in the 0–3 years cohort where there is very little existing practice to build on. Our work on the Early Years Outcomes project is particularly important and exciting. It is vital that we continue to build mutual understanding between early years practitioners and teachers in the early primary years. Developing shared language and understanding of how learning is demonstrated and how it develops into literacy and numeracy at school is a great challenge and opportunity.

**Victorian Essential Learning Standards**

The VELS are now well established as the curriculum for Victorian schools in the P–10 years. While our focus has shifted somewhat to participation in the development of the Australian curriculum, we have maintained our commitment to continue supporting schools in the use of the VELS. We are very conscious that Victorian schools wish to maintain and further develop their understanding of the VELS design as the national curriculum is introduced. This informs our input into the national work and preparation for its use in Victoria.

Various VCAA curriculum teams have worked with DEECD on innovative and groundbreaking approaches to assessment. The first of these is in the area of health and physical education where we have produced validated tasks for use in assessing and reporting achievement against the standards in the area. The validated tasks and findings have been presented to State and national forums and conferences to great acclaim.

The VCAA also made substantial progress in the development of an online Bushfire Education curriculum resource as part of the Government’s response to Recommendation 6 from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.
Australian Curriculum

The VCAA has continued its strong contribution to the development of the curriculum. The VCAA Board Australian Curriculum Steering Committee continues to monitor Australian curriculum developments and to oversee consultation with Victorian stakeholders. David Howes, our General Manager, Curriculum, is an active member of a number of ACARA Reference Groups and Working Parties. Our senior curriculum staff are all actively involved in development work in their respective learning areas. Our experience with the VELS provides us with a unique perspective on the seven student general capabilities being developed by ACARA.

A priority for all school sectors is to continue to embrace a common cross-sectoral approach in Victoria which supports the effective implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

The implementation of Phase One of the Australian Curriculum, the ongoing development of Phases Two and Three, and the provision of effective professional development and associated resources will be an important and increasing focus of the VCAA’s work in 2011–12. In particular, advice will be provided to schools that will enable teachers to work from a single curriculum source during the transition to full implementation of the curriculum. We are developing a website for Victorian schools that will detail information about AusVELS, the new Victorian curriculum framework which is a revised version of the VELS that includes the Australian Curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and History. The AusVELS will continue to be developed for the foreseeable future, as the Australian curriculum is being introduced in phases over an extended period of time.

All jurisdictions will be implementing the Australian Curriculum within their own policies, timelines and processes. Victoria will incorporate Australian Curriculum as it is endorsed by Ministers but Victorian curriculum will not be constrained by the Australian Curriculum. The elements of the VELS that focus on innovation in the context of school decision making will be retained and further developed.

The VCAA conducted 27 sessions of professional development throughout the State during May and June 2011 to support the introduction of Phase One of the curriculum. Schools are seeking clarity about the use of the achievement standards for reporting when the curriculum is introduced in 2013. It is important that implementation is managed in ways that allow schools to exercise flexibility and innovation in responding to the needs and aspirations of their own students. We will be developing a program of support that includes more extensive trialling in 2012 so that Victoria schools will be well prepared for implementation.

Board membership

Professor Adam Shoemaker made a major contribution in his first full year as Chair. He has participated fully in the range of Board events and is a passionate advocate for recognition of student achievement, and our need to be international in outlook and to embrace ICT more comprehensively.

Both Vicki Miles and Professor Collette Tayler’s terms expired in May 2011. In August 2010, Polly Flanagan and Tony Larkin were reappointed for another three-year term.
Professor Sue Willis retired from the Board after serving nine years as a member. She chaired the Post-compulsory Assessment and Curriculum Committee over recent years and was a fully engaged, active and vibrant member. Her contributions were always sharp and incisive. Tony Coppola also retired after a three-year term, during which time he also served as a member of the Audit Committee and Review Committee. I thank both Sue and Tony for their service.

Finally I would like to thank staff for their outstanding work which reflects a real sense of shared purpose and commitment to improving the learning of all young Victorians.

John Firth