Workshop Material for Department of Education & Training Professional Learning Forum on 16 May 2006

Questions and Answers
1. Who do the Standards apply to?

The Standards apply to all Victoria Government Schools, TAFE Institutes and Universities.

This document sets out how the Standards impact on Victorian Government Schools. The Department of Education & Training is committed to providing a high quality education to all Victorian students.

A key component of quality education is the provision of inclusive education so that students with special educational needs are able to participate fully in educational programs provided by schools.

2. Do the Standards apply to students who are not eligible under the Program for Students with Disabilities?

The Standards apply to all students with disabilities - whether or not the student is eligible under the Program for Students with Disabilities.

The Department of Education & Training provides a range of resources to schools to enable the delivery of a high quality program for all students, including students who are having difficulty learning. These resources may be provided in the Student Resource Package, through other support services such as visiting teachers, social workers, guidance officers and curriculum consultants, or through specific early identification and intervention programs. The Standards will inform and guide schools in providing high quality education to all students with disabilities.

The Program for Students with Disabilities is an additional program for a defined student population with moderate to severe disabilities. The Program for Students with Disabilities provides a framework to support the educational programs of eligible students in Victorian government schools. Resources provided to schools are allocated to assist the education of students with disabilities, not to individual students.

On receipt of notification from the Department of Education and Training that a student is not eligible under the Program for Students with Disabilities, the principal is to:

- inform the parent/guardian/carer(s) of the outcome assuring them that the needs of their child can be met by the school;
- set a date for a Program Support Group meeting; and
- convene the Program Support Group, and set and prioritise educational goals.

The principal should consider the resources available in the school and match with the requests for support with the available resources.

In addition, the Principal should consider the application of the Standards to inform and assist in the provision of educational services to the student with the disability who is not eligible under the Program for Students with Disabilities.

Improving the learning outcomes of every student is the Department of Education and Training’s key objective.

This objective is central to the Blueprint for Government Schools (Department of Education and Training 2003), which states that all government school students are entitled to an excellent education and a genuine opportunity to succeed, irrespective of the school they attend, where they live or their home background. Priority 1 of the Blueprint is recognising and responding to diverse student needs.

The aims of the Blueprint are underpinned by the Effective Schools Model, which provides the framework for creating and sustaining effective schools. Effective schools recognise and respond to diverse student needs, expect that every student has the ability to learn, and endeavour to ensure that every learner is successful.

With 540,000 students in more than 1600 government schools, the diversity of the student population is recognised and celebrated. The Department is committed to delivering an inclusive system that ensures all students have access to a quality education to meet their diverse needs.

Two components of this commitment are the Program for Students with Disabilities and the Language Support Program. Along with these Programs, the Standards will assist schools to ensure that all students with disabilities are reasonably accommodated for.
3. How do the Standards operate?

The Standards specify how education is to be made accessible to students with disabilities. The Standards cover the following areas:

- Enrolment;
- Participation;
- Curriculum development, accreditation and delivery;
- Student support services; and
- Elimination of harassment and victimisation.

Each area describes:

- The rights or entitlements of students with disabilities consistent with the rights of the rest of the community.
- The legal obligations or responsibilities of schools and other education providers.
- The compliance measures that, if implemented, will be evidence of compliance with the legal obligation. The measures are examples only. They do not cover the needs of all students with disabilities and full compliance with the Standards may require additional or alternative actions.