Workers’ Union, National President, Australian Manufacturing
Mr Julius Roe, Principal, Presbyterian Ladies College
Ms Elizabeth Ward, Leading Teacher, Ararat Community College
Ms Joanne Tate, Director and CEO of Chisholm Institute of TAFE
Ms Virginia Simmons, Managing Director, Photography Studies College
Ms Julie Moss, Principal Consultant, Pilcan Consultancy
Mr Peter Annett, Employment Education and Training Manager and Principal Consultant, Pilcan Consultancy
Mr Paul Briggs, Principal Consultant, Pilcan Consultancy
Mr Peter Kirby, Deputy Director of Catholic Education
Mr Alan Clifford, Principal, Castlemaine Secondary College
Mr Stuart Hamilton, Principal Policy Adviser at the Victorian Employers’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI)

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Ms Elizabeth Ward, Principal, Presbyterian Ladies College
Mr Julius Roe, National President, Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union

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More than 100 employers and industry representatives from across Victoria attended an industry leaders’ event in September on the new certificate, hosted by the Minister for Education and Training, Lynne Kosky.

Ford Australia, Vey Industries, Alcoa World Alumina Australia, Spotless Group Ltd, Toyota, Quickval, McDonald’s, McPherson’s Printing and Bakers’ Delight were among the employers who came to learn more about the new hands-on option for Year 11 and 12 students.

Speaking at the event, Australian Industry Group Director Victoria, Timothy Piper said the inability to obtain skilled workers and the difficulty in attracting young people to some trades was the constant lament of manufacturers.

“Employers need young people with literacy and numeracy skills, computer skills and the ability to work as part of a team,” he said.

“They are looking for young people who have both a basic understanding and an interest in their industry.”

Mr Piper applauded the VCAL for providing a well-rounded learning program and practical hands-on experience.

“One of the benefits of the VCAL is that it gives young people the chance to get a taste of working life and the opportunity to find out what it’s like to work in a particular industry,” he said.

“I know many peak industry bodies will be supporting the VCAL. I hope that in turn, industries both large and small will get behind this innovative education program.”

Minister Kosky recently announced that more than 180 Government and 31 Catholic secondary schools have been selected to participate in the first round of the statewide rollout of the new certificate in 2003.

The interim report of the VCAL Trial evaluation is available on the VQA website - www.vqa.vic.gov.au

The Victorian Government has welcomed the report and has proceeded to immediately implement the first recommendation that supports the statewide rollout of the certificate. It has backed that implementation with an additional $47.7 million over four years to ensure that resources are in place.

Other recommendations that relate to the statewide implementation will also be addressed and those recommendations relating to further development and broader issues will be further considered by the VQA and the Department of Education and Training.

The Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) is the peak accreditation, certification and quality assurance body for post-compulsory education.

The VQA aims to:
- safeguard the standard of Victorian qualifications
- ensure that qualifications work for Victoria’s economic future
- provide qualifications options that help Victorians achieve their career and personal ambitions.

The VQA’s office is situated in the precinct of State Government, 41a St Andrew’s Place, East Melbourne, VIC 3002 (Melway reference 2F 1K3)

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Email: vqa@edumail.vic.gov.au

For further information visit the VQA’s web site www.vqa.vic.gov.au

Leading employers and industry groups have embraced the new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), describing it as a great way to prepare students for the workforce and further vocational training.

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5. Investigate the possibility of shifting the signifiers of VCAL levels to Work Related Skills, which along with Personal Development Skills incorporates Literacy.

6. Clearly distinguish the VCAL Foundation level either by developing VCAL access programs or by redesigning the level to fully maximise the benefits to students.

12. Explore ways in which these local partnerships can better coordinate funding provided to regions for programs to assist young people in transition from school to further education, training and employment.

14. Consider ways of assessing and improving the literacy and numeracy skills of students entering VCAL.

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The Way Ahead for VCAL: Evaluation of the VCAL Trial

n 2002, the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) was developed by the VQA and trialled at 22 sites across Victoria. The Research Institute of Professional and Vocational Education and Training (RIPVET) is currently conducting an evaluation of the trial (March 2002 - December 2002). An interim report was delivered in July with a final report to follow at the trial’s completion.

The general aims of the evaluation are to:

- assess the delivery of the certificate in the trial and how participating students and providers are responding
- analyse the VCAL learning programs being offered in terms of effectiveness and the resources and funding that support them
- recommend action to be taken to support VCAL as part of a statewide implementation in 2003.

VCAL learning programs comprise studies in four compulsory strands: Literacy and Numeracy Skills, Work Related Skills, Industry Specific Skills and Personal Development Skills. Each of the four strands is available at three levels: Foundation, Intermediate and Senior.

The interim report has already gathered together a great deal of information about the VCAL in action. Some aspects are of particular interest to educators and parents alike.

The VCAIs’ intentions is to meet the needs of young people for whom the current senior secondary curriculum lacks relevance.

The hands-on, vocationally-oriented focus of VCAL, and the importance of partnerships with organisations in the community, mean that different teaching and learning approaches are essential and should aim to:

- embrace vocationally-oriented pathways to the world of work
- develop teaching approaches that are informed by adult education models
- encourage organisations in the local community to contribute to the VCAL program
- use the task in the personal development strand as a context for integrating the skills and knowledge developed across the VCAL program
- forge partnerships and encourage collaboration between individual VCAL providers (including schools, TAFE institutes and ACE organisations) local communities, LLENS, and employers.

There are 473 students enrolled in the VCAL trial at 22 providers including 15 State and five Catholic secondary schools and two TAFE institutes. Based on research on similar initiatives, in-depth interviews with students, teachers and parents at each trial site and consultations with key stakeholder groups, the interim report advocates that the VCAL be developed, expanded and secured within the Victorian education system.

The report makes 17 recommendations. Of these, the VQA Board supports the following 13 for immediate action.

(Recommendations retain the numbering as they appear in the Evaluation of VCAL Trial 2002.)

1. Further develop and establish the VCAL in Victoria as an accredited course of study alongside those currently available.
2. Undertake a promotion strategy to unequivocally establish the VCAL’s status as a qualification with significant advantages including vocational pathways and development of the whole person through community engagement.

3. Provide clear information to prospective students regarding the many positive post-VCAL pathways.
4. Provide current pathway planning assistance to all VCAL students. This will ensure that students’ learning programs match their post-Year 12 employment or education preferences.
5. Strengthen welfare support services and professional development for teachers to assist them to effectively support students with the formal requirements of the VCAL.
6. Continue to make VCAL available to Year 10 students on the same basis as VCE units are currently made available to Year 10 students.
7. Undertake further development work in 2003 to pilot industry specific VCAL qualifications and those that recognise cultural contexts.
8. Develop incentive strategies for the delivery of VCAL in isolated and rural communities.
9. Facilitate regional collaboration and service delivery partnerships between individual schools, education and training providers, employers, LLENS and community organisations.
10. Establish a working party to oversee professional development for teachers to assist them to effectively support students with the formal requirements of the VCAL.
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15. Facilitate regional collaboration and service delivery partnerships between individual schools, education and training providers, employers, LLENS and community organisations.
16. Establish a working party to oversee professional development for teachers involved in VCAL.
17. Review the funding models for post-compulsory education and training to enable greater flexibility and resourcing for VCAL.

The interim report advocates that the VCAL sit alongside the more academically focused VCE as a qualification with a more hands-on, applied learning approach.

Successful utilisation of the VCAL will directly provide young people with a pathway to further education, training or employment and should therefore improve the current Year 11 and 12 retention rates.
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12. Strengthen welfare support services and professional development for teachers to assist them to effectively support students with the formal requirements of the VCAL.
13. Establish a working party to oversee professional development activities for teachers involved in VCAL.
14. Review the funding model/s for post-compulsory education and training to enable greater flexibility and resourcing for VCAL.
15. Review the claims and arguments that have been made about the many positive post-VCAL pathways.
16. Identify factors crucial to the development of quality VCAL learning programs and encourage more flexible usage of current resources.
17. Develop a system of data collection to cater for the different elements of the VCAL, particularly credit transfer.
Learning (VCAL) is a new qualification designed to provide additional pathways for Year 11 and 12 students interested in vocationally orientated career options or moving straight into employment.

Mr Piper applauded the VCAL for providing a well-rounded learning program and practical hands-on experience.

"One of the benefits of the VCAL is that it gives young people the chance to get a taste of working life and the opportunity to find out what it’s like to work in a particular industry," he said.

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