

**VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION**

**TO THE**

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE RELATIONS  
AND EDUCATION REFERENCES COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS  
WITH DISABILITIES**

## **Executive Summary**

Victoria commits substantial resources to the education of students with disabilities. Responsibility for policy development and delivery of education services to students with disabilities in Victoria rests with the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) in relation to school education, vocational education & training, adult, community and further education, and the Department of Human Services (DHS) in relation to early childhood, community care and transition to post-school options.

### ***Early Childhood/Preschool***

The Government is committed to providing one year of quality preschool education to all Victorian four year olds, recognising that a quality preschool experience provides the opportunity to significantly improve children's later education, employment and social outcomes. In Victoria, the preschool participation rate is now at a record high of 96 per cent.

The Government has recently committed additional funding to the early intervention sector for expanded therapy and education services for children with disabilities and developmental delay. Early intervention services include a range of specialist services such as the Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Service and therapy and education services provided by the regional DHS Specialist Children's Services Teams and private providers.

### ***Transition Processes***

In consultation with key community stakeholders, DE&T and DHS are liaising to develop a system that will improve communication between preschools and schools to assist the development of appropriate support for those students with significant special needs. These Departments are also liaising closely on the draft State Disability Plan to improve coordination between departments, including better alignment of policy and eligibility criteria.

### ***Primary and Secondary Schools***

Since 1993, Victorian government schools have received annual funding in the form of a School Global Budget. In 2002, all mainstream government schools and the majority of 80 specialist schools are funded under these arrangements. In the case of the specialist schools, however, core funding is higher per capita than in either mainstream primary or secondary schools.

The School Global Budget provides schools with increased flexibility in the use of their resources, enabling them to respond appropriately to the needs of the school community. The School Global Budget comprises six major funding elements:

- Core Funding
- Disabilities and Impairments
- Students with Special Needs
- English as a Second Language
- Rurality and Isolation, and
- Priority Programs.

Victorian government schools have been leaders in improving access to educational opportunities for all students, including those with special educational needs. Through the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments, DE&T provides additional resources to support eligible students who have a severe and ongoing disability or impairment. The budget for Disabilities and Impairments in 2001 was more than \$208 million.

#### **TAFE and ACFE**

All TAFE Institutes employ Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs), who determine students' support needs, in conjunction with the student and/or, as appropriate, their family or associates. There is ongoing monitoring of students' progress and support needs.

The Adult, Community and Further Education sector comprises a number of small, community-based providers. Consistent with the nature and educational philosophy of these providers, the needs of all learners and effective strategies to meet them are discussed and agreed on a case-by-case basis.

Providers in both sectors are committed to ensuring that students with disabilities are given the level of support necessary to successfully participate in the programs in which they enrol.

#### **The Legislative Environment**

The provision of education for students with a disability takes place within a statutory environment, with all providers having to meet the requirements of the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*, *Disability Services Act 1991* and the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA)

Under the auspices of MCEETYA, the Commonwealth has led a to develop education standards to underpin the DDA. A series of issues arise with the development of the standards and the Victorian Government is yet to commit to them. However, as a minimum Victoria will expect that the Commonwealth and States/Territories will closely monitor the cost impact of the standards over time and that the Commonwealth will recognise that it has some responsibility to meet any additional costs generated by the standards and to remove any legal uncertainty.

#### **Commonwealth-State Funding Issues**

The Commonwealth *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Assistance) Act 2000*, provides the legislative framework for the Commonwealth Specific Purpose Payment (SPP) funding of both government and non-government schools made through Quadrennial agreements. The Commonwealth determined that all the real growth in schools funding under the 2001-04 agreement would be directed to non-government schools.

At the time the Commonwealth Parliament was considering the *States Grants* legislation, Victoria, along with other jurisdictions, expressed strong concern that among a number of failings, the legislation did not support the achievement of the National Goals for Schooling. In terms of the participation, retention and completion

objectives in those goals, students with disabilities are among those most at risk of being unable to achieve their potential. Notwithstanding the significant contribution of Catholic and Independent schools in educating students with disabilities, the fact is that the large majority of these students attend government schools, yet in real terms, government schools will receive no additional Commonwealth funding through the period of the quadrennium 2001-04.

## **1 The Victorian Policy Context**

The Victorian Government welcomes this opportunity to outline its policies and programs for the education of students with disabilities. Victoria, with the assistance of some Commonwealth funding, commits substantial resources to the education of students with disabilities and impairments, and learning disabilities generally. In addition to the specific initiatives in place for students with a disability, there are a range of other programs and services available to all students that directly or indirectly facilitate their participation. Within this context, it is also important to understand the nexus between State-based arrangements and the proper role of the Commonwealth as a funding partner. These issues are examined in more detail in the body of the submission.

Responsibility for policy development and delivery of education services to students with disabilities in Victoria rests with the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) in relation to school education, vocational education & training, adult, community and further education, and the Department of Human Services (DHS) in relation to early childhood, community care and transition to post-school options.

The Victorian approach to the delivery of education services to students with disabilities will soon be strengthened with the introduction of a State Disability Plan, which will formalise existing good practice and provide a robust framework for future enhancement. The State Disability Plan, still in draft form following an extensive consultation process with the Victorian community, promotes a broad vision for the participation of people with a disability in all aspects of life, including education across the lifespan.

The vision proposed in the draft State Disability Plan is that:

*By 2011, Victoria will be a stronger and more inclusive community – a place where diversity is embraced and celebrated and where everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their aspirations and to participate in the life of the community.*

The vision is underpinned by the following principles:

- People with a disability enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other members of the community
- People with a disability can live and participate in the community in their own right
- People with a disability, their parents, families and carers are actively involved in policy planning and the delivery of services, and
- Families are supported and strengthened in their role as contributors to the health and well being of their members.

The Victorian Government is committed to a ten-year outlook, informed by the extensive consultation with the Victorian community noted above. The draft State Disability Plan was released in October 2001 seeking further feedback from the Victorian Community. The final plan will be released in the second half of 2002.

One of the strategies foreshadowed in the Plan is to encourage inclusive education for people with a disability by establishing partnerships between government agencies to:

- Promote the inclusion of children and young people with a disability in mainstream education settings
- Develop joint projects to promote quality education experiences and increased education options for people with a disability, particularly in relation to higher education, and
- Explore the outcomes of education for children and young people with a disability.

Within the framework of these broad objectives, a brief overview of initiatives for students with a disability in each of the education sectors is outlined below. The submission then specifically addresses the Terms of Reference of particular concern to the Committee.

### **1.1 Early Childhood Services**

A new vision for Community Care services has been developed in Victoria. This vision emphasises support for vulnerable groups and those most in need. There is a strong focus on the planning and delivery of services in order to promote social inclusion and strengthen individuals and families, especially children and young people. The Government acknowledges the importance of an equal start in life, and aims to offer services as early as possible, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised children and their families.

#### *Best Start*

Best Start is a whole of government prevention and early intervention project that aims to improve the health, development, learning and well-being of all Victorian children from pregnancy through transition to school (usually taken to be eight years of age). Best Start is focused on reducing the impact of disadvantage (from any cause) and enhancing the life chances of all children – particularly those who are vulnerable and not currently accessing services - through strengthening and making more effective universal, preventative and early intervention services. Improving universal early years services so that they are more responsive to the needs of both young children and parents with a disability so that they are better able to use and be supported by services is central to this endeavour.

The project will explore how best to involve parents, communities, providers and the three tiers of government in the design, use and evaluation of these services at the local level. The use of evidence-based approaches and effective models of care and support will underpin service developments. Developing more effective linkages with specialist services that can build upon the universal service platform and provide additional support for those with greater needs including those with more severe disabilities is a key areas of interest. Best Start will initially trial these approaches in 10 demonstration sites. The learnings from these projects will be broadly disseminated and will inform future policy, program and service development across the State.

### Early Childhood Intervention

Early Childhood Intervention services complement a range of services available for children and families within the community. The Government has recently committed additional funding to the early intervention sector for expanded therapy and education services for children with disabilities and developmental delay.

The Government is committed to providing one year of quality preschool education to all Victorian four year olds, via effective partnerships with families and local communities. The Government recognises that a quality preschool experience provides the opportunity to significantly improve children's later education, employment and social outcomes.

Recent Government initiatives to improve access to Preschool for disadvantaged families have been highly successful. In Victoria, the preschool participation rate is now at a record high of 96 per cent.

#### **1.1.1 The service system for children with additional needs aged 0-6**

The objectives of the service system for this group of children are to:

- Improve the family's capacity to care for and manage the child's disability and/or developmental delay
- Minimise the impact of the child's disability and/or developmental delay on the child and the family, and
- Enhance the access and participation of children with disabilities/developmental delays to generalist early childhood services.

Within Victoria there are a number of specific services providing Early Intervention. Early intervention services include a range of specialist services such as the Preschool Field Officer (PSFO) Service and therapy and education services provided both internally by the regional DHS Specialist Children's Services Teams, and externally by funded early intervention services. Each of these services has specific eligibility criteria. Eligibility for these services is described in Attachment 1.

#### **1.2 Primary and Secondary Schools**

Educational opportunities for students with special learning needs have been progressively revised and improved over the last decade. Victorian government schools have been leaders in improving access to educational opportunities for all students, including those with special educational needs.

At the same time, significant changes have occurred in specialist schools, such as the alignment of curriculum programs with the Curriculum and Standards Framework and an increased focus on transition of students into these schools and later into post-school options.

In addition, the way in which government schools are funded has changed and significant advances have been made in the development of self-managing schools, giving schools the flexibility to manage their resources in a way that best meets the unique needs of their students and their communities. The devolution of decision

making to school communities has highlighted the need to re-examine the policy framework and administrative arrangements that support schools to provide high quality educational opportunities and programs to all students.

### **1.2.1 Transition from Preschool to Primary School**

In order to assist the transition to school, DE&T and DHS are liaising to develop a system that will improve communication between preschools and schools to assist the development of appropriate support for those students with significant special needs. This process also involves consultation with representatives of early intervention service agencies.

Regional staff from DE&T and DHS are working together to conduct briefings on issues relating to transition for children with special needs and, in particular, the application process for the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments.

These Departments are also liaising closely on the Draft State Disability Plan to improve coordination between departments, including better alignment of policy and eligibility criteria.

DE&T also funds a limited number of early education programs for preschool students with intellectual disabilities, autism or vision/hearing impairments.

### **1.2.2 The Policy Context**

The Premier's goals and targets for Victorian schools demonstrate a commitment to the highest standards of achievement and excellence and to sound preparation for lifelong learning for all students, including students with special learning needs. The goals and targets are detailed in Attachment 2.

Victoria is committed to providing access to quality educational opportunities to all students with special educational need, and provides an inclusive education so that students with special learning needs are able to participate in the full range of programs and services and to access appropriate facilities provided by the education system.

The concept of a quality education rests firmly in the school experience being positive for all students, in a school environment and culture based on tolerance and acceptance. A key component of a 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.

Inclusive education is the term used to articulate the rights of all students, including those with disabilities, impairments and learning difficulties, to participate in the full range of programs and services, and to access any facilities provided by the education system. The term implies that all students have access to a system that consistently delivers a quality education and leads to outcomes best suited to their unique skills and competencies.



DE&T provides educational programs based on principles that embody and give meaning to the term 'inclusive education':

- Educational programs provided by schools will seek to ensure full acceptance and participation of all students in the life of the community.
- All students with special educational needs should have access to learning environments, appropriate program goals and targets as well as timely support from specialist professionals.
- Parents are valued partners in the educational process and play a vital role in setting learning goals for their children.
- The views of the student should be sought and reflected in learning and teaching arrangements.

### **1.2.3 School Funding**

Since 1993, Victorian government schools have received annual funding in the form of a School Global Budget. In 2002, all mainstream government schools and the majority of 80 specialist schools are funded under these arrangements. In the case of the specialist schools, however, core funding is higher per capita than in either mainstream primary or secondary schools. A small number of specialist schools are currently funded under historical resource agreements, but it is expected that they will also soon move to the School Global Budget model. Funding arrangements for non-government schools are discussed in section 6.2 below.

The School Global Budget provides schools with increased flexibility in the use of their resources, enabling them to respond appropriately to the needs of the school community. The School Global Budget comprises six major funding elements:

- Core Funding: this includes core operating funds for employment of teachers, premises and on-costs
- Disabilities and Impairments: specific funding to support the education of students with disabilities and their integration in mainstream schools
- Students with Special Needs: funding allocated through the Special Learning Needs Index, including support for students with learning difficulties
- English as a Second Language: support for students from language backgrounds other than English
- Rurality and Isolation: provides for a rural size adjustment factor, shared specialist teachers in small rural primary schools and location-based funding, and
- Priority Programs: specific programs which respond to Government education policy and the needs of individual school communities. Currently includes

Student Welfare and Support, LOTE, Koorie Educators, Literacy Coordination, Reading Recovery and Managed Individual Pathways, among other initiatives.

In providing specific and appropriate services for the range of students with disabilities who attend government schools, Victoria's approach is underpinned by strong observance of the definitions and guidelines promoted by the World Health Organisation and those required under legislation, such as the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (EOA).

Students with disabilities in Victorian schools present with a wide variety of conditions and the funding made available to support particular students consists of a 'package' drawn from the different components of the School Global Budget.

All Victorian government school students are supported equally by the core funding component of the School Global Budget. In the case of students with additional needs, such as students with disabilities, the level of support afforded by core funding is supplemented by other funding components based on an assessment of need.

For students with disabilities, the key additional funding sources are from the Students with Learning Needs and the Disabilities and Impairments components. The Students with Learning Needs component addresses a broad range of learning difficulties experienced by students. The Disabilities and Impairments component is focussed on students who have more severe and on-going conditions, with eligibility more rigorously defined.

A student who exhibits a very high level of need based on a severe disability or impairment may be supported by the combined resources of all three funding components: Core, Special Needs and Disabilities & Impairments.

#### **1.2.4 Students With Disabilities And Impairments**

Through the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments, DE&T provides additional resources to support eligible students who have a severe and ongoing disability or impairment. To be eligible for support under this program, documentation must be provided verifying the student's disability or impairment (see section 2.2.1 below).

In 2001, a total of 535,412.2 full time enrolled (FTE) students attended Victorian government schools –1,546 regular schools and 79 specialist schools - with an overall budget in school education of \$4609.3 million. In the same year 16,989 students were supported through the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments - 10,953 (FTE) in regular schools and 6,036 in specialist schools. The budget for Disabilities and Impairments in 2001 was more than \$208 million.

The key elements of the program include:

- Parental choice of either a regular or specialist school for eligible students
- Eligibility for support based on provision of evidence from professional assessments under one, or more, of seven eligibility criteria – physical disability, intellectual disability, vision impairment, hearing impairment, severe behaviour disorder, severe language disorder or autism spectrum disorder
- Allocation of resource levels based educational need as indicated in an Educational Needs Questionnaire completed at the school level
- Additional resource provision to the school for students with disabilities at one of six levels of funding ranging from \$3,928 to \$29,979, and
- School-level program design and delivery involving a partnership between parents and teachers.

### *Review Of Support To Students With Disabilities And Impairments*

Late in 2001 schools, parents, and community members were invited to take part in a series of statewide forums on proposed improvements to support students with special needs in Victorian government schools. Recommendations for change were set out in the consultation paper *Better Services, Better Outcomes in Victorian Government Schools: A Review of Educational Services for Students with Special Education Needs*.

This review was a process of examination and consultation attempting to better address the educational needs of students with disabilities and impairments in government schools in Victoria.

Issues examined during the consultation process included:

- the principles underpinning educational programs for students with special needs
- changing the way students are assessed for disabilities and impairments, moving to a focus on learning needs rather than disabilities
- more regular reviews of the educational needs of children on the program, and
- professional development for teachers to help them report on the educational progress of students with disabilities and impairments.

Final outcomes of this process are not yet available, but any changes to be implemented as a result of this review would support the Victorian Government's commitment to the highest standards of achievement and excellence for all students. Where possible, new approaches will be trialed to ensure they effectively meet the goal of improving outcomes for students with special needs and enhance the accessibility and inclusiveness of their educational experience.

#### **1.2.5 Students With Learning Disabilities**

There are an estimated 3,300 diagnostic categories listed in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems World Health Organisation – Geneva 1992. The range of causes for being considered as having 'special learning needs' is substantial and the degree and nature of adjustments

required by the school are highly complex, often subtle and vary in degree. The range of adjustments or adaptations required to support an educational program for a student with any one of these diagnoses varies significantly depending on the student's presenting behaviour at the school.

Within international literature, the definition of what constitutes a 'disability' is broadening. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently estimated that between 7 – 10 per cent of the global population are disabled (Geneva 16 June 1999). Similarly, in the Australian context, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has reported that 9.7 per cent of the Australian population of 5-14 year old students are disabled (4430.0 Disability, Ageing and Carers, ABS, 1998). The ABS data is collected at a point in time and is based on self-identification, or identification by a carer or associate.

In 1998, Centrelink provided Child Disability Allowances to 3.48 per cent of the student population (5 –16 years) in Victoria.

The internationally accepted proportion of a school population that has a significant disability, which can be measured by standardised procedures, varies from 2.2 per cent to 5.6 per cent depending on local management factors.

Consistent with the WHO and ABS estimates, DE&T recognises that, although they do not satisfy the criteria for the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments, approximately 10 per cent of the total Victorian school population at a particular point in time could have special needs such as a 'learning disability', and may require additional support (for details on the types of additional support available see Attachments 7 and 10).

### **1.3 Vocational Education and Training & Adult, Community and Further Education**

All TAFE Institutes employ Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs), who determine students' support needs, in conjunction with the student and/or, as appropriate, their family or associates. There is ongoing monitoring of students' progress and support needs.

The Adult, Community and Further Education sector comprises a number of small, community-based providers. Consistent with the nature and educational philosophy of these providers, the needs of all learners and effective strategies to meet them are discussed and agreed on a case-by-case basis.

Providers in both sectors are committed to ensuring that students with disabilities are given the level of support necessary to successfully participate in the programs in which they enrol. Such support can include:

- Note-takers: they provide concise notes of the content, discussion and specific instructions expressed during the lesson at a language level appropriate to the student. The format of the notes is discussed with the student

- Participation Assistants: this role varies, depending on the specific needs of the individual student, and may take the form of one or a combination of the following:
  - a. Provision of concise notes that the student will understand, that will give a true record of the content, discussion and specific instructions expressed during the class
  - b. Provision of back-up instruction and assistance to reinforce teacher instruction
  - c. Explanation of procedures, words and new concepts
  - d. Provision of tuition outside of normal classroom hours (when funding allows) to reinforce skills and theory covered in the classroom, and
  - e. Physical assistance where necessary.
- Special tutoring: this provides tutorial support for the student outside of the classroom situation, helping the student to understand elements of their study requirements with which they have difficulty, and
- Sign language interpreters: they interpret all of the classroom communication from the teacher, other students, deaf/hearing impaired students, audio-visual material (e.g. videos, films, overheads), jokes and asides, questions and rules, etc.

### Futures for Young Adults

The Futures for Young Adults Program is a joint initiative of DE&T and DHS. Adult students with disabilities aged eighteen years and over can move from school to adult education, training and supported vocational settings. Features of the program include:

- individual funding levels determined through a Support Needs Assessment Tool
- an individual transition plan completed in partnership with parents teachers, student and DHS transition worker
- adult placement organised by the transition worker according to the transition plan.

Adult Service Options include:

- TAFE and university placements
- employment on the open labour market
- programs provided by employment services, Institutes of TAFE and other vocational education and training providers

- community- based day programs.

#### TAFE Disability Network

This network comprises TAFE Disability Liaison Officers from TAFE institutions. The aim of the network is to promote the right of access and equal opportunity to students with disabilities, and to encourage the removal of all barriers that currently prevent participation in TAFE by people with disabilities. The functions of the network are to:

- regularly meet for networking and support
- liaise with the DE&T
- respond to major papers and policy documents
- conduct staff development seminars, and
- arrange guest speakers.

#### Centre of Excellence for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Centre is funded by the Victorian Government to provide leadership, support, training and further education to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The Centre conducts research on the state-wide TAFE needs of deaf and hard of hearing students. The research includes staff development, course development, technology and equipment developments.

#### Victorian TAFE Virtual Campus

The Virtual Campus is an internet-based online service platform which extends training delivery, enhances communications and administration for TAFE providers and teachers. The system increases opportunities for quality training for students, including students with disabilities.

The Virtual Campus offers teachers opportunities for:

- Networking
- Enhancing teaching methods
- New and improved resources, and
- Career development.

Students can benefit from:

- Choosing the required course across TAFE providers
- Online enrolment and results
- Contacting teachers directly for assistance
- Studying at any time and from any location, and
- Communicating with other students within the class.

### **1.4 Higher Education**

Victoria has no particular responsibility for monitoring or facilitating assessment and access by students with disabilities to higher education institutions. This is a Commonwealth Government responsibility. The Victorian Government has responsibility for planning, coordinating and monitoring higher education provision in

Victoria, including the development and implementation of legislation for the eight universities originating in Victoria. It also monitors university governance and compliance with the Government's reporting requirements.

Strategic planning assistance is provided to universities to respond to areas of present and future workforce and training needs, and encourages a more accessible higher education system through enhanced pathways into post-compulsory education.

DE&T accredits private providers of higher education courses to ensure course standards are comparable to those of public universities. It also maintains a register of Victorian higher education courses approved for delivery to overseas students.

### **1.5 The Definition of Disability**

An important issue to confront in any consideration of the education of students with disabilities is the range of definitions of disability that apply in various legislative contexts and program funding arrangements.

#### Legislation

In terms of legislation, the definitions contained in the DDA, the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*, and the *Disability Services Act 1991* are broad and have tended to be interpreted as such by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission (VEOC) respectively.

In the case of the DDA, the broad nature of the definition is exemplified in parts (f), (i) and (j) of the definition, highlighted below:

*disability, in relation to a person, means:*

- (a) *total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or*
- (b) *total or partial loss of a part of the body; or*
- (c) *the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or*
- (d) *the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness;*  
*or*
- (e) *the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or*
- (f) *a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or***
- (g) *a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;*

*and includes a disability that:*

- (h) *presently exists; or*
- (i) *previously existed but no longer exists; or***
- (j) *may exist in the future; or***
- (k) *is imputed to a person.*

We are waiting to assess the implications of a recent decision of the Full Court of the Federal Court in the matter of *Purvis v State of New South Wales (Department of Education & Training) [2002]* on the interpretation of the Commonwealth legislation.

In relation to education services, the potential demand impact of these legislative definitions is that, at any particular point in time, over 10 per cent of the student population will be recognised as disabled. This is roughly consistent with Australian Bureau of Statistics data referred to in section 1.2.5 above. The implications of these legislative definitions are discussed in more detail in section 9.

### Program Funding

The definitions used to determine student eligibility for Commonwealth and State program funding tend to be more restrictive than those in legislation. In relation to Commonwealth Targeted Program funding, a student with a disability means:

*a student who is attending a government or non-government school and who has been assessed by a person with relevant qualifications as having intellectual, sensory, physical, social/emotional or multiple impairments to a degree that satisfies the criteria for enrolment in special education services or programmes provided by the government of the State or Territory in which the school or centre is located. (A student whose only impairment is a specific learning difficulty or for whom remedial education or remedial support is appropriate is not an eligible enrolment for the purposes of calculating per capita funding)*

#### **Commonwealth Programmes for Schools-Quadrennial Guidelines 2001-2004**

Noting the definitional restriction around learning disabilities, the proportion of students with disabilities reported for Commonwealth targeted funding purposes varies across States and Territories, but amounts nationally to 3.4 per cent of all school students. This is broadly equivalent to the proportions of students who receive access to specific State disability funding in Victorian preschools (up to 5 per cent) and primary and secondary schools (3.17 per cent in 2001).



## **Responses to the Terms of Reference**

### **2. The criteria used to define disability and to differentiate between levels of handicap**

#### **2.1 Early Childhood Education**

As noted in the previous section, the criteria used to define disability and the assessment of student's disability-related needs are contentious. This is particularly the case during the early years of a child's life, when developmental concerns are first identified. The assessment criteria determining access to support services vary between State-funded preschool, Commonwealth-funded children's services and primary school.

While it is generally accepted that between three and five per cent of children aged 0-6 years may have a disability, this definition of disability does not fully reflect the broader group of children who have additional learning needs.

The *Intellectually Disabled Persons' Services Act 1986* (IDPSA) and the *Disability Services Act 1991* (DSA) identify the criteria and define the target group of the Disability Services Program, however, criteria to determine priority of access is largely based on an individual's relative needs and the urgency of those needs. These are set at the program level depending on the demand for the service type, available funding, objectives and targeting strategies. The definitions within the DSA form part of the Commonwealth-State Disability Agreement and are consistent across all states.

#### **2.2 Primary and Secondary Schools**

##### **2.2.1 Students with Disabilities and Impairments**

The criteria used to determine eligibility for the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments are based on guidelines set by the World Health Organisation.

To be considered for additional resources under the program, documentation must be provided that meets one of the following criteria.

1. Physical Disability.
2. Severe Language Disorder.
3. Severe Behaviour Disorder.
4. Hearing Impairment.
5. Intellectual Disability.
6. Visual Impairment.
7. Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Attachment 3 contains a detailed breakdown of the criteria and the participant identification process.

### **2.2.2 Students with Learning Disabilities**

#### **Diagnosis of Learning Disability**

In assessing children with a learning disability, it is important to evaluate developmental/cognitive processes, achievement skills, environmental demands, reactions of others and the interaction of these factors over time. Students might be considered part of this group if they:

- Have a profound/severe disability or impairment
- Have a learning difficulty that can be attributed to either a genetic and or an environmental cause
- Have an episodic or short term ‘crisis’ or incident that affects their learning process. (such as a death in the family), and/or
- Come from another cultural background that requires curriculum adjustment, such as the acquisition of a new language.

The Victorian Government recognises that these students will require additional consideration within the school environment.

### **2.3 Vocational Education and Training & Adult, Community and Further Education**

The definitions set out in the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) are used by TAFE Institutes, Adult, Community and Further Education providers and private vocational education and training providers in relation to government funded training delivery. The definitions are outlined in detail in Attachment 4.

## **3. The accuracy with which students’ disability related needs are being assessed**

Of critical importance is the adoption of an individualised planning and support framework to provide robust, person-centred planning and coordinated support focused on the holistic needs and aspirations of students with a disability.

### **3.1 Early Childhood Education**

Assessments that focus on diagnostic conditions, and/or level of disability, may not directly relate to the need or priority for services. This is most evident in cases where a client with a mild disability has complex and challenging behaviours. The holistic needs of the client and urgency of needs may be quite high but the level of disability quite mild.

The Preschool Field Officer Program (PSFO) enables access for five per cent of the preschool population, based on the ABS estimated number of four-year-old children with disabilities. It should be noted that the ABS definition does not reflect the

diversity of need along the continuum, such as children with behavioural issues or attention deficit disorders.

**Table 1 - Needs of children referred to the PSFO program in 2000**

<b>More than one area of developmental concern</b>	<b>One area of developmental concern</b>	<b>Behavioural concerns (only)</b>	<b>Diagnosed disability or developmental delay</b>
50%	18%	13%	10%

\* The remaining 9 per cent comprise children with a range of other additional support needs including severe disability, cultural and linguistic diversity, advanced skills and abilities and preschool deferral, etc.

The School Entry Health Questionnaire (SEHQ) for 2001 also provides an overview of areas of concern identified by parents upon entry to primary school. This data highlights that a child entering preschool may present with a number of complex individual or family issues that impact on their development. These variables determine the amount of additional support required to provide the child with the opportunity to access and participate in preschool education.

**Table 2 - SEHQ data - areas of concern identified by parents of children entering the primary school system**

<b>Area of Concern</b>	<b>% of Parents concerned about their child's health and development</b>
Speech / language	9.1%
Hearing	7.5%
Vision	5.3%
Disability	2.5%
Attention Deficit Disorder or Hyperactivity Disorder	9.2%
Learning difficulties	5.5%
General development	8.9%
Behaviour and emotional well being	10.1%

## 3.2 Primary and Secondary Schools

### 3.2.1 Students with Disabilities and Impairments

#### Incidence of Students with Disabilities and Impairments requiring additional resources

In 2001, the Victorian Government provided support to approximately 3.17 per cent of students in government schools through the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments.

Eligibility for support based on provision of evidence from professional assessments under one, or more, of seven eligibility criteria – physical disability, intellectual disability, vision impairment, hearing impairment, severe behaviour disorder, severe language disorder or autism spectrum disorder. The level of additional resources (Levels One to Six) is based on information provided by the initial Program Support Group in an Educational Needs Questionnaire. The key indicators of educational need are based on observable characteristics of the child without the need for extensive reference to formal records, specific professionals or other assessment tools.

#### Incidence of students by type of disability

The incidence of disability can only be approximated because:

- a) A significant number of allocations made prior to 1995 were not based on evidence of a disability, but rather on a discretionary determination by a regional committee which did not follow any benchmark criteria, and
- b) At least 20 per cent of students with complex conditions may have more than one diagnosis. For example, a profoundly disabled student may be intellectually disabled, autistic, deaf and blind. The incidence quoted in Table 3 is based on a sample of 1,500 (or 10 per cent of the school population) taken from the new applications in the annual application period. Information on disability type has only been collected in recent years. Prior to this, it was deemed inappropriate to ‘label’ students with a disability type.

**Table 3 - Incidence of students by type of disability**

Disability Type	% 2000	% 2001
Severe Behavior Disorder	3.2	5.1
Hearing Impairment	2.1	2.7
Intellectual Disability	57.1	55.1
Severe Language Disorder	28.9	29.3
Physical Disability	4.7	4.8
Visual Impairment	0.6	0.5
Autism Spectrum Disorder	3.4	2.6
Total	100	100

Given the relatively short time span covered by the data collection, it is clearly difficult to draw reliable conclusions about trends at this stage for particular disability

types. Table 4 describes the growth in actual and percentage terms in eligible students with a disability or impairment.

**Table 4 - Growth in the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments from 1984 to 2001**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Regular Schools</b>	<b>Special Schools</b>	<b>Total Students with Disabilities</b>	<b>DE&amp;T School Population</b>	<b>Percentage of DE&amp;T Population</b>
1984	0	5,314	5,314	572,613	0.93
1985	500	5,421	5,814	557,838	1.04
1986	2,140	5,243	7,561	546,137	1.38
1987	2,893	5,123	8,136	537,895	1.51
1988	2,744	4,916	7,867	532,217	1.48
1989	4,335	4,911	9,251	527,700	1.75
1990	4,918	4,849	9,829	526,576	1.87
1991	4,987	4,912	9,899	536,754	1.84
1992	5,619	4,738	10,357	539,231	1.92
1993	5,668	4,539	10,207	535,925	1.90
1994	5,705	4,604	10,309	528,152	1.95
1995	5,910	4,913	10,823	519,804	2.08
1996	5,950	5,336	11,286	522,524	2.16
1997	6,338	4,962	11,300	523,943	2.16
1998	7,039	5,231	12,270	525,998	2.33
1999	8,262	5,506	13,768	529,072	2.60
2000	9,918	5,799	15,717	531,934	2.97
<b>2001</b>	<b>10,953</b>	<b>6,036</b>	<b>16,989</b>	<b>535,412</b>	<b>3.17</b>

Since 1984 there has been an incremental and continuous growth in eligible students with a disability or impairment. DE&T currently provides additional support to 3.17 per cent of the student population. The method for providing these program resources to schools is described in Attachment 5.

### **3.2.2 Students with Learning Disabilities**

It is the responsibility of individual schools to work with parents and any specialists they engage to develop and deliver appropriate educational programs for students with special learning needs. Schools deliver educational programs to groups/classes of students. Modifications and adaptations to meet the educational needs of students with special learning needs are designed for delivery in classrooms. These modifications/adaptations may vary from quite modest modifications, such as seating within

classrooms, to the provision of an additional employee (a teacher aide) within the classroom to assist in the delivery of the program, or other student support services such as educational psychologists, social workers or speech pathologists.

### **3.3 Vocational Education and Training & Adult, Community and Further Education**

As noted, TAFE Institutes employ Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) to assess the support needs of students with disabilities and to provide ongoing monitoring of students' progress and changed conditions.

The Adult, Community and Further Education sector is grounded in a philosophy and culture of inclusiveness and is predominantly made up of small, community-based providers. The needs of all learners and effective strategies to meet them are discussed and agreed on a case-by-case basis.

Providers in both sectors have a clear focus on ensuring that students with disabilities are supported and can participate effectively in the programs for which they enrol.

## **4. The particular needs of students with disabilities from low socio-economic, non-English speaking and Indigenous backgrounds and from rural and remote areas**

In order for all students to have equal access to quality educational opportunities, a range of strategies and supports need to be made available to address the barriers currently experienced by this group. These may include:

- The development of accessible information
- Training and specialist support for staff
- Funding of specific services and supports (e.g. interpreter services), and
- Sharing the costs in a national approach, and between public and private schools, in the development of curriculum, student and teacher resources.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that all children, regardless of their socio-economic status, special needs or geographic location, will be given the opportunity to have their developmental, physical and emotional needs met through access to good quality children's services in their early years. Programming in early childhood in Victoria takes a holistic approach, catering for the developmental needs of each individual child, rather than being curriculum based. Some examples of this are outlined in Attachment 6.

### **4.1 Primary and Secondary Schools**

#### **4.1.1 Students with Special Learning Needs**

Funding for Students with Special Learning Needs (SLN) is targeted at those students whose readiness to learn is impaired for a range of reasons, including prior educational experience and family or other personal risk circumstances. Funding is allocated to schools based on the incidence of particular forms of disadvantage, and students attract extra funding for each additional category of disadvantage. Consequently, SLN funding supports programs that focus on students at risk of not achieving success at school with particular emphasis on students with literacy problems.

SLN funding (\$33.5 million) is allocated to schools through the Schools Global Budget. The funding is based on the SLN Index, which takes account of the following six factors:

- Proportion of students receiving Education Maintenance Allowance or Youth Allowance
- Proportion of students who transfer into the schools other than at the beginning of the year
- Proportion of students who are Koorie
- Proportion of students who mainly speak a language other than English at home
- Measure of family status, and
- Measure of occupational status.

SLN funding is allocated to 1023 schools, with amounts allocated ranging from \$2000 to \$270,925 per calendar year. Other allocations are made for programs for Koorie students, distance education and rurality/isolation, as described in Attachment 7.

#### **4.2 Vocational Education and Training & Adult, Community and Further Education**

Government recognized and funded providers in the vocational education and training and the adult education sectors are explicitly required to comply with all legislative requirements, including the DDA, and are provided with sufficient funds to do so.

A new funding model is being developed for post-compulsory pathways which will identify costs for training delivery to students with a range of attributes - singly or in combination - including Indigenous background, disability, geographic location and economic disadvantage.

In terms of specific initiatives, funding has been allocated under the 2001-2004 Indigenous Education Agreement with the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training for research to identify the quantum of Koorie students with impaired hearing enrolled in TAFE and to recommend actions to achieve better outcomes for these students.

## **5. The effectiveness and availability of early intervention programs**

At a broad level, early intervention, as it relates to early planning for transition points in the education system, will improve the retention rates of students with a disability as well as provide opportunities for these students to access post-school education and training options.

### **5.1 Early Childhood Education**

Victoria supports the need for early intervention and access to quality educational outcomes, as this will, in the long run, reduce the need for people to access secondary and tertiary services.

#### *Research evidence*

Recent research clearly relates brain, social and emotional development in the early years to effective school participation, educational attainment and future employment success. The provision of adequate support within universal services such as preschool can also directly influence longer-term outcomes for young children and their families. In fact, it has been well documented that the early provision of support not only significantly improves developmental outcomes for children, but also reduces the need for more intrusive tertiary interventions.

Ross Homel's Australian research<sup>1</sup> suggests that children who are exposed to a high quality preschool program demonstrated less juvenile crime activity. Furthermore, much of the literature confirms that *'the period of early child development is equal to, or in some cases, of greater importance for the quality of the next generation than the periods children and youth spend in education or post secondary education'*<sup>2</sup> in later years.

#### *Service Delivery*

Early Childhood Intervention services complement a range of services available for children and families within the community. Early Childhood Intervention services provide education, therapeutic and support services to children aged 0-6 with a disability and/or developmental delay and support for their families. For children with a disability aged 0-6 and their families, there are two key demand issues to be addressed:

- The need for greater access to and participation in universal services, in particular to preschools, and
- The need for greater access to specialist service provision.

---

<sup>1</sup> Homel et al (1999), Pathways to prevention: Developmental and Early Intervention approaches to crime in Australia, National crime prevention report: Attorney-Generals Department, Commonwealth of Australia

<sup>2</sup>McCain, M.N. & Mustard, F, (1999), Reversing the Real Brain Drain: Early Years Study, Final Report, Ontario, Publications Ontario



Work has commenced on the development of a common needs assessment tool and a resource and funding allocation model to overcome the inconsistent levels of support available to children 0-6 with disabilities among specialist services across the State.

## **5.2 Primary and Secondary Schools**

### **5.2.1 Students with Disabilities and Impairments**

For historical reasons, the DE&T provides some early intervention programs to preschool students with intellectual disabilities, autism or vision/hearing impairments. Detail of these programs is provided in Attachment 8.

### **5.2.2 Students with Learning Disabilities**

Over the last decade, Victoria has recognised that the complex individual needs of students are best addressed at the school level, rather than by the provision of add-on programs. In order to meet this need schools are:

- Provided with significant resources in their base budget
- Provided with maximum flexibility in the use of this budget
- Required to employ highly qualified personnel and sophisticated understandings of teaching and learning (minimally 4 year teacher trained), and
- Provided with access to personnel such as Student Support Service Officers, for example, with specialised skills that can be brought to bear as and when needed.

With the exception of the Program for Students with a Disability and Impairment Program, resources are distributed to schools on the basis of population indicators. Resources are distributed to schools for students who are identified as having a significant disability on the basis of an evaluation of the individual educational needs of each student (not on the category of disability or impairment).

Adaptations and adjustments that are made to teaching and learning programs are complex and extremely varied. Adaptations/adjustments may include items as described in the Table in Attachment 9.

Each school has responsibility for assessing the educational needs of students and, where there is evidence of 'special need', to assess the relevance of the existing programs in relation to the student with special needs and then make whatever adjustments or enhancements are required.

In most circumstances, students with special needs are catered for by the class teacher, who has responsibility for the planning and implementation of educational programs in the classroom. Class teachers, either as part of their basic training and/or through

professional development activities, are able to acquire the skills necessary to assist students with special needs.

If an individual student is still experiencing problems, a Program Support Group consisting of the principal, the parent, a parent advocate, the student and the class teacher may be established to assist with educational planning. This may result in referral to a DE&T guidance officer (educational psychologist) for an individual assessment to assist with program development and review both at home and school.

DE&T funds a number of programs and projects to improve the learning outcomes of students across all stages of schooling – early, middle and later years, including those students with special learning needs. A summary of these is provided in Attachment 10.

## **6. Access to and adequacy of funding and support in both the public and private sectors**

### **6.1 Primary and Secondary Schools**

#### **6.1.1 Students with Disabilities and Impairments**

Funding provided through the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments includes funding as determined by the Educational Needs Questionnaire, and core funding to specialist schools.

If evidence of a significant disability as determined by the eligibility criteria is confirmed, then the school the student attends is allocated additional resources through the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments.

In 2001 DE&T committed approximately 4.5 per cent of its budget to support the education of students with disabilities and impairments attending government regular and specialist schools.

### **6.2 Non-Government Schools**

Both the Victorian and Commonwealth governments provide funding for students with disabilities and impairments in non-government schools.

Since 1995, the Victorian Government has allocated funding for non-government schools for support services previously provided by DE&T. These funds are provided to the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV) and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) under Funding and Service Agreements. Allocations are made to schools on the basis of application to these organisations.

In addition, the non-government schools sector receives funding from the Commonwealth Government for students with disabilities and impairments under the Strategic Assistance for Improving Student Outcomes Program. The AISV and

CECV administer these funds, which are distributed to schools on the basis of application.

In general, the AISV and CECV utilise support services funding provided by the Victorian Government to resource visiting teacher services for students with disabilities and impairments. Commonwealth funding is generally utilised to support integration, including the provision of integration teachers/aides and minor capital works.

It should be noted that State support services or targeted funding is not the major source of Victorian Government funding available for use by the non-government sector for students with disabilities and impairments. The greater proportion of funding provided to the non-government sector in Victoria is allocated as general rather than targeted funding. In 2001, general funding provided through the State Recurrent Grant was over \$229 million. This funding is increased each year and has been further supplemented by an allocation of \$57.5 million over four years for the most needy and disadvantaged schools.

According to information provided by the AISV, the number of students with disabilities eligible for support in their schools has increased from 671 in 1995 to 1,186 in 2001. The CECV reports that enrolments of students with disabilities and impairments have increased from 1,346 in 1993 to 3,275 in 2001.

### **6.3 Vocational Education and Training & Adult, Community and Further Education**

As previously noted, Government recognized and funded providers in the vocational education and training and the adult education sectors are explicitly required to comply with all legislative requirements, including the DDA.

An agreed five-year national strategy, Bridging Pathways, focuses specifically on improving participation and outcomes for people with disabilities in vocational education and training. A range of specific initiatives supports the implementation of Bridging Pathways in Victoria. These include:

- Life Online - online training for students with a mild intellectual disability
- Gardening training for young adults with a disability
- Analysis of pathways to training and employment for people with a disability
- Annual allocation of a \$1.7 million Disability Support Fund to assist TAFE Institutes in providing individual learning support to enable students with a disability to access and participate in accredited TAFE programs, and

- Specific funding through the Priority Education and Training Program in 2001 for private providers to deliver training to students with disabilities. An evaluation is being conducted in 2002 to assess the extent to which training objectives were met and the net impact of the training experience on the individuals involved. This report will include advice on any aspect of training delivery or student support that should be taken into account when delivering training for students with disabilities.

A key issue is the growing population of learners with disabilities and the potential resource implications of providing sufficient and appropriate support. AVETMISS data since 1998 shows a significant increase in the number of students who identify themselves as having a disability.

**Table 5 - Self-Identified Students with Disabilities in TAFE and ACE, 1998-2001**

	1998	1999	2000	2001
<b>TAFE</b>	10,186	10,619	10,485	11,161
<b>Private Providers</b>	668	1,397	900	1,508
<b>ACE</b>	3,988	5,877	7,233	7,422
<b>Total</b>	14,842	17,893	18,618	20,091

## **7. The nature, extent and funding of programs that provide for full or partial learning opportunities with mainstream students**

The Victorian Government recognises that transition planning, facilitating access to mainstream services in conjunction with schools, needs to be provided earlier to ensure that students and families are aware of different entry points for mainstream post-school options, for example, the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre and Centrelink.

### **7.1 Early Childhood Education**

Research on critical risk and protective factors highlights the need to support families at particular developmental transition points. In this context, preschool is cited as a critically important and universally accessible service which supports the holistic development of children, and contributes to long-term educational outcomes.

Preschool provides an opportunity to redress the impacts of early disadvantage and improve developmental outcomes for children with additional needs, thus contributing to an equal start in life for these children. It also allows children to develop peer

relationships and acquire a range of skills and concepts that lay the foundation for future learning and success at school.<sup>3</sup>

Participation in preschool also provides socialisation and community building opportunities for a wide range of families and their children, including those with additional needs, such as disability or developmental delay, English language competence and economic disadvantage.<sup>4</sup>

For children with additional needs, it is recognised that a flexible service response is required, and this may include a diverse range of supports. Examples of preschool inclusion support services provided in Victoria are described in Attachment 11.

#### *Access to preschool for children with disabilities*

In 2000, the Victorian Minister for Community Services commissioned a review of preschool services in Victoria. The report of this review, *Review of the issues that impact on the delivery of preschool services to children and their families in Victoria* (Kirby Report), was released in June 2001. The review highlights research that consistently shows social and economic benefits from investment in the early years of education. Some of the key findings concerned access to services for children with additional needs, access to appropriate support and advice for preschool staff and quality of the programs.

The review found that children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and those who have special needs are least likely to have access to preschool education. The review noted the difficulties in gaining prompt access to appropriate assistance when additional needs are identified following commencement at preschool. For many children with a severe disability, access to preschool education is dependent on securing an additional assistant to support their participation in the preschool program.

Under existing Commonwealth and State program arrangements, an eligible child with additional needs is not able to access preschool full-time. Hence, the child's

---

<sup>3</sup> A recent study in the United Kingdom regarding the effective provision of preschool education highlights the positive effects of preschool in terms of improved cognitive and social behaviour outcomes. This study suggests that those children who attended preschool scored higher measures of attainment at school entry than those children who did not attend. The study concludes that 'preschool experience has a positive impact on children's cognitive attainment at entry to school and may help to combat educational disadvantage.' Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., & Siraj-Blatchford I, (2000), *The Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) Project: Longitudinal Study funded by the DfEE (1997-2003)*, Briefing Information prepared for The House of Commons Education Committee Enquiry into Early Years Education. Pp 6-7.

<sup>4</sup> *'For children with a disability, preschool is likely to be their first opportunity to play and learn with other children their own age in an environment outside of the family home. If they are successfully integrated with other children at the preschool, it will make a great difference to their subsequent experience at school'*, Review of the Issues that impact on the delivery of preschool services to children and their families. Kirby, P. & Harper, S (2001). Pp 45.

opportunity to benefit from full participation in a preschool program is significantly reduced.

This has been raised by the preschool sector as an equal opportunity issue to highlight those children with a disability or developmental delay who should be able to access the same hours of preschool as other children. Moore<sup>5</sup> states that children with additional needs are first and foremost children, with the same needs as other children, including social experiences. He cites evidence regarding the effectiveness of inclusion of young children with disabilities in mainstream early childhood services, and suggests that purposeful intervention, and the provision of additional support to the extent required, is necessary to improve individual outcomes.

DHS has also recently undertaken a review of the Preschool Field Officer program, for which the final report is currently in draft. The Preschool Field Officer review primarily highlights issues regarding the capacity of the program to effectively support children with additional needs in the preschool setting, and makes recommendations in the context of quality, individualised and inclusive service delivery within preschool. A summary of the issues posed by the review is in Attachment 12.

## **7.2 Primary and Secondary Schools**

### **7.2.1 Students with Disabilities and Impairments**

The Victorian Government is committed to providing all students with special educational needs with access to quality educational opportunities. The neighbourhood school, regular or specialist, is the first point of contact for all students. Parents or carers are provided with detailed and balanced information about all available educational options to help them make an informed choice regarding schooling for their child. This includes education at a regular school, a specialist setting or a combination of these.

#### *Program Support Group*

Schools are required to have a Program Support Group for each student with a disability. This group is made up of the principal, the class teacher, the parent, a parent advocate (if required), the student (if appropriate) and any consultant the group wishes to engage. The group is responsible for providing the principal with advice on the educational requirements of the student, contributing to the educational program developed for that student, including the provision of advice on the use of new and existing resources, and monitoring and evaluating the progress of the student. This process provides maximum protection for the interests of the student.

#### *Curriculum Support*

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) has worked with DE&T to produce curriculum course advice for students with a disability or impairment, titled, *Curriculum and Standards Framework Companion Documents*:

---

<sup>5</sup> Moore, T. (2001) Beyond Inclusion: Towards a universal early childhood service system, Paper delivered at 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Early Childhood Intervention Australia, p15.

*Students with Disabilities and Impairments.* Information on this curriculum advice and guidelines is in Attachment 13.

### **7.2.2 Students with Learning Disabilities**

The Victorian Government requires schools to manage their resources to develop educational programs for all students with a set Curriculum and Standards Framework II (CSF II). CSF II describes what students should know and be able to do in eight key areas of learning at regular intervals from the Preparatory year to Year 10. It provides sufficient detail for schools and the community to be clear about the major elements of the curriculum and the standards expected of successful learners. At the same time each school works out the best way to organise its own teaching and learning program, taking into account government policies and the school community's priorities, resources and expertise.

Schools are expected to develop the required expertise to be able to plan and modify the teaching and learning programs within this CSF II for all children. In addition, schools are provided with supplementary resources that recognise the presence of students with special learning needs.

These supplementary resources can be provided in a number of forms ranging from:

- Professional development for teachers
- Access to experts (Psychologist/Social Workers/Speech Pathologists/ Visiting Teachers/Curriculum Consultants)
- Access to exemplary programs (Early Intervention Programs for Literacy, Reading Recovery Programs, Making the Difference Program)
- Use of peripatetic resources such as Visiting Teachers
- Supplementary funding for recognition of poverty and hardship in families
- Supplementary funding for preventative program initiatives such as Early Literacy Intervention, and
- Supplementary funding to assist schools in the development of programs for students with very complex special needs as a result of a severe disability.

All these initiatives value add to the total budget that is used by a school to form an appropriate program.

### **7.3 Vocational Education and Training & Adult, Community and Further Education**

Students across the vocational education and training and adult, community and further education sectors generally learn with mainstream students. Although providers endeavour to maximize the sharing of assistance and resources where appropriate, and students with similar needs are therefore positioned in the same classes, this occurs within a mainstream environment.

## **8. Teacher training and professional development**

### **8.1 Primary and Secondary Schools**

Victoria provides a range of training and professional development opportunities to potential and existing teachers that support the provision of quality teaching practices for students with disabilities. These opportunities are summarized in Attachment 14.

### **8.2 Vocational Education and Training & Adult, Community and Further Education**

An Institute Workforce Working Party has been established to identify and respond to key challenges and transformational issues for the TAFE Workforce. A key issue for the group is equipping the workforce to respond to the needs of particular cohorts of students, including students with disabilities.

A key goal of the national strategy, Bridging Pathways, is 'improving the learning experience.' Strategies to achieve this include equipping the vocational education and training sector with skills in providing inclusive training, specifically by equipping training delivery staff and assessors with skills that assist the inclusion of people with a disability. To this end an 'Inclusive Teaching' video and support materials have been developed in Victoria and will be disseminated across the State and shared with other interested parties on request.

Teacher training and professional development are also being considered in the context of the likely introduction of education standards under the DDA.

## **9. The legal implications and resource demands of current Commonwealth and State and Territory legislation**

The provision of education for students with a disability takes place within a statutory environment, with all providers having to meet the requirements of the Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* and the Commonwealth DDA. On the basis of the number of complaints handled formally under these Acts, it can be concluded that Victoria complies with this legislation. Most complaints relate to a belief by the complainant that the level or type of resourcing provided to support the student with a disability at school is insufficient. Some complaints relate to a belief that the actions of an employee or the school in general have not taken into account the student's disability or particular needs.

Since 1999, a total of 35 complaints have been made by or on behalf of students with disabilities (4 under the DDA and 31 under the EOA). No complaint of disability



discrimination has proceeded to a full hearing of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). Some complaints lodged under the EOA have been referred to the VCAT by the complainant when they have been declined by the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) or have not been resolved at conciliation at the EOC. These have all been resolved through the mediation process at VCAT. One complaint of disability discrimination under the DDA was referred to the Federal Court but the complainants withdrew from the proceedings before the full hearing.

This submission has discussed the differing definitions used to describe disability, ranging from those used for the Victorian Disability and Impairment Program and Commonwealth Targeted Program funding through to those used in the State and Commonwealth legislation. This range of definitions is cumulative, with the definitions in the legislation applying to the largest population.

There is no definitive figure on the proportion of students who meet the definitions of disability in the legislation. However, using the ABS definition, approximately ten percent of students have a disability. Given that the definitions in legislation are broader than that used by the ABS, it is reasonable to assume that students meeting the legislated definitions make up more than ten per cent of the population. Some providers have argued as many as 18 per cent of students meet that definition, as interpreted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. It is not possible to be precise and there is some speculation that the recent decision in the Federal court (*Purvis v State of New South Wales (Department of Education & Training)*) may lead to a narrowing of the definition under the Commonwealth legislation and with it a reduction in the population covered by that Act.

The issue confronting providers in an environment where the dedicated program (in Victoria's case the Disability and Impairment Program and Commonwealth Targeted Program funding) does not cover the whole population covered in the statute, is whether the adjustments made as the result of other program initiatives (eg Special Learning Needs, Reading Recovery) or allocation of additional resources by an individual school, will satisfy a tribunal or court that a reasonable adjustment has been made.

For the last seven years the Commonwealth has led a project, under the auspices of MCEETYA, to develop education standards to underpin the DDA. When finalised, these standards will be tabled in the Senate and will have the power of a regulation under the Act. The wording of the draft standards has been negotiated with State and Territory governments, non-government schools and VET providers, the universities and disability groups.

A series of issues arise with the development of the standards. In terms of their legality, there is now a significant body of legal opinion that indicates that the standards extend the power of the Act. In the MCEETYA process, Victoria has argued that the DDA should be amended to ensure that the standards are in fact within power. In particular, it is essential that the unjustifiable hardship defence be available in all areas covered by the standards (as is proposed in the draft standards) and not limited to enrolment, as is currently the case with the Act.

A number of government school and VET systems, along with Catholic and independent school systems, have expressed concern at the potential cost of implementing the standards. The Commonwealth has argued that as the standards simply codify the Act, there should be no additional costs generated by the standards. Attempts to undertake a cost benefit analysis of the standards have not been successful.

Commonwealth agreement to amend the Act to ensure that the standards are within power can remove some of the risk of additional costs. However, there remains significant doubt as to the cost impact of the standards. As stated above, Victorian government providers believe they meet the requirements of all legislation and the evidence in terms of number of complaints and how they are resolved would strongly support that. In the case of the Commonwealth legislation, however, there is not a sufficient body of case law to be absolutely certain. In particular, as outlined above, the DDA has a definition of disability much broader than that used in school programs and it is not clear whether the adjustments made by providers at present for students who are outside the program definition, but included in the Act's definition, will be considered as appropriate by the Federal Court in the context of the standards codifying the Act.

Should it become evident that there is a requirement to provide the same type and level of adjustment to all students who meet the Act's definition, it has been estimated that costs in Victoria will increase by approximately \$100m per annum for government schools alone. If this scenario were to arise, the adequacy of the Commonwealth's program would also be brought into question.

The Victorian Government is yet to commit to the draft standards, with its position likely to be finalised in the lead up to MCEETYA in July 2002. However, as a minimum Victoria will expect that the Commonwealth and States/Territories will closely monitor the cost impact of the standards over time and that the Commonwealth will recognise that it has some responsibility to meet any additional costs generated by the standards.

## **9.1 Primary and Secondary Schools**

### **9.1.1 Students with Disabilities and Impairments**

Since it became law in 1992, the requirements of the DDA must be taken into account in all levels and aspects of education. The DDA specifies a 'learning disability' as a disability under the Act. This requires Victoria to make 'reasonable accommodation' for students with a learning disability. The Act uses the term 'reasonable accommodation' to describe equitable treatment for people with disabilities.

'Accommodation' in an educational setting can be defined as the modification or replacement of a usual educational procedure or facility with an alternative that is held to be valid and equitable. The rights of the individual student are balanced with the interests of all other students in the system (whether or not they have disabilities). The Act allows for exemption from making accommodation that would cause unjustifiable hardship to the agency.

The rights of the disabled as expressed in the Commonwealth legislation have been incorporated into the structure and processes of the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments.

## **10. What the proper role of the Commonwealth and States and Territories should be in supporting the education of students with disabilities**

### **10.1 Early Childhood Education**

There is a significant disparity between the support available from the Commonwealth for children with disabilities attending State-funded preschool programs and Commonwealth-funded childcare services.

Special Education Program funding for preschools is provided by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, however support for children attending Commonwealth-funded children's services through the Special Needs Subsidy Scheme is provided by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. The criteria and levels of funding differ, even though the Commonwealth provides the funding for both services.

This can create confusion for parents. Anecdotal evidence suggests that parents are choosing childcare in preference to preschool, as a higher level of support is available for their disabled children. Only children with disabilities with extremely high support needs are able to access funding for additional assistant support through the Commonwealth Special Education Program in preschools. This funding does not enable full time preschool access and many children who require additional support are not able to access funding.

On average, children receiving support through the Special Education Program in preschools receive significantly less than the level of funding children with disabilities are able to access when they enter primary school. In primary school, the level of support for children with a disability ranges from \$4,000 to just under \$30,000, depending on assessment of need. Additionally, the assessment process for children with disabilities entering primary school is vastly different to preschool/long day care.

The transition between preschool and school can also be problematic for parents attempting to negotiate service systems with different eligibility and assessment processes. DHS is currently working with DE&T to identify strategies to improve this transition process in Victoria.

Given the compelling research evidence concerning the importance of the early years of children's development, it is essential that national consideration be given to providing adequate support to children with additional needs during the preschool years. This is needed to redress the impact of early disadvantage, improve

developmental and educational outcomes and save more expensive tertiary interventions in later life

International research indicates that every dollar spent on preschool programs for high-risk children saves at least seven dollars in later years, in terms of special education, welfare and crime costs to the community.<sup>6</sup>

### Current program funding

The Victorian Government currently allocates approximately \$76 million per annum to support the delivery of preschool services.

The State now provides around \$25 million annually for early intervention services in Victoria to support families of young children with developmental delay and/or disability. This includes Specialist Children's Services teams, funding of early intervention agencies, the Early Choices Program, Family Choices program, Preschool Field Officer program and the Strengthening Parent Support program.

The State Government has recently committed additional funding to the early intervention sector for additional therapy and education services for children with disabilities and developmental delay. An additional \$1million was allocated for early intervention services in 2001/2002. This was combined with an additional \$470,000 through the Cut the Waiting List initiative in 2001/2002. Last year the State Government committed \$6.5 million over four years to reduce waiting lists for early childhood intervention services.

Additional funding for both the Special Education Program and the Preschool Field Officer program has been allocated in the 2002/03 state budget. Funds have been allocated through the Preschool Support Program to enable more children with severe and complex needs to access more intensive support in preschools. These funds will be packaged to enable an additional 50 children access a range of services to assist them to actively participate in preschools and will double the current funding rate for 450 children accessing preschool from 2003. A key focus of this initiative is to develop more flexible models of support for children with additional needs attending preschool.

Funding will also be provided to the Preschool Field Officer program to address current service demand issues for the Preschool Field Officer program to enable improved access and support for children at risk of developmental delay within preschool. \$1.65 million will be allocated in 2002/03 to commence these services in the 2003 academic year and this will rise to \$3.38million in 2003/04.

The objective of this additional funding is to enable more innovative, integrated approaches to inclusion support for children with additional needs in preschool.

---

<sup>6</sup> Karoly et al., (1998) Investing in our Children: What we don't know about the costs and benefits of early interventions, Rand Corporation.

The Commonwealth Program for Schools - Special Education Program - Non-Government Centre Support provides supplementary funding to improve the educational participation and outcomes of children and young people with disabilities. The funding allocation for this program in 2002 is \$5.45m. This provides funding for:

- *Capital Grants* - for projects at non-government centres for the benefit of children or students with disabilities
- *Early Intervention component* - supplementary funding to improve educational outcomes for children 0-6 years with developmental delays or specific disabilities
- *Preschool component* - supplementary funding for preschool initiatives to assist children with severe disabilities to access and participate in State funded preschool services, and
- *Children in Residential Care (CIRC)* - for children with very high educational needs.

## **10.2 Primary and Secondary School Funding**

The Commonwealth *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Assistance) Act 2000*, provides the legislative framework for the Commonwealth Specific Purpose Payment (SPP) funding of both government and non-government schools made through Quadrennial agreements. The funding includes General Recurrent Grants, Capital Grants and Targeted Programmes for the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2004.

One of the concerns raised by Victoria about the impact of the *States Grants Act* was that all the growth in schools funding under the 2001 –2004 agreement was directed to non-government schools. In order to achieve the National Goals for Schooling agreed by MCEETYA Ministers and the Victorian Government’s goals and targets for education and training, in particular school retention and completion targets, Victoria argued that additional Commonwealth funding should be directed to areas of most need. Students with disabilities represent a key group of the school population at risk of not reaching their full potential, and have arguably been disadvantaged by the Commonwealth approach to schools funding.

The evidence currently available points towards continuing growth in eligibility for services directed to the education of students with disabilities. In this regard, it should be noted that a large majority of students with disabilities in Victoria attend government schools, with a significant minority attending Catholic schools. In stating this, the Victorian Government also recognises the efforts made by Independent schools to address the needs of students with disabilities.

As noted above, the Commonwealth is also actively pursuing Disability Standards for Education under the DDA. While Victoria is yet to determine its position on the standards, it is worth noting that Commonwealth targeted programme funding for students with disabilities utilises a definition of disability considerably more narrow than the one that applies under the DDA. One effect of this is that Commonwealth funding cannot be used to address the needs of a significant population of students with disabilities as recognised under the DDA.

Since 1996, the Commonwealth has displayed a tendency to act unilaterally on school policy and funding issues. Its approach to the *States Grants Act* is the most obvious example of this. In order to make real gains in this area, and improve outcomes for students with disabilities, we need a national, cooperative approach to action around the National Goals for Schooling. Access to educational opportunities, and improved outcomes for students with disabilities, are an important component of this.

## **Eligibility for Early Intervention Services in Victoria**

### **Specialist Children's Services Teams**

Eligibility: Any child from birth to school entry whose development is a concern to parents/caregivers.

### **Early Intervention Agencies**

Eligibility: Any child from birth to school entry with developmental delay/disability and their families.

### **Preschool Field Officer Program**

Provides consultancy and advice to preschool teachers and families about inclusion of children with additional needs in preschool.

Eligibility: Children with additional needs attending a State funded preschool program and their families.

### **Commonwealth Special Education Program (SEP)**

Funds the provision of additional assistants for children with severe disability attending preschool.

Eligibility: Children with a severe disability who require support to access and participate in a State funded preschool program.

### **Early Choices**

Provides flexible support and respite packages operating on a case management/brokerage model.

Eligibility: Families with children birth to school entry with severe disability and high support needs where children are at risk of out of home placement.

### **Family Choice**

Provides a cross-divisional program co-ordinated by the Royal Children's Hospital on a statewide case management/brokerage model.

Target: Children birth to 18 years with complex medical needs and/or bio-medical technology dependence and their families.

### **Strengthening Parent Support Program**

Support for parents by providing opportunities for mutual support, networking, information sharing and training.

Target: Parents of children aged birth to 18 years with disability or developmental delay.

**Victorian Goals and Targets for Education and Training**

The Premier has set three specific targets for education and training in Victoria:

- By 2005 - Victoria will be at or above national benchmark levels for reading, writing and numeracy as they apply to primary students
- By 2010 – 90 per cent of young people in Victoria will complete Year 12 or its equivalent, and
- By 2005 - the percentage of young people aged 15 to 19 in rural and regional Victoria, engaged in education and training will increase by 6 per cent.

The targets are the means of measuring progress towards the Government's commitment to the following goals for education and training:

- Improve the standards of literacy and numeracy in primary schooling
- Increase the percentage of young people who successfully complete year 12 or equivalent
- More adults to take up education and training and so increase the overall level of educational attainment and literacy levels in Victoria
- Increase the level of participation and achievement in education and training in rural and regional Victoria and among groups where it is presently low, and
- Make near-universal participation in post-school education and training the norm in our society. Not just for the young, but for us all.



**Criteria for Determining Access to the Disabilities and Impairments Program**

**Physical disability**

**Criteria**

- A) A significant physical disability and/or
- B) A significant health impairment and
- C) Requires regular paramedical support.

**Severe language disorder**

**Criteria**

- A) A score of two or more standard deviations below the mean for the student's age in expressive and/or receptive language skills on two of the recommended tests and
- B) The severity of the disorder cannot be accounted for by hearing impairment, social emotional factors, low intellectual functioning or cultural factors and
- C) A history and evidence of an on going problem with an expectation of continuation during the school years and
- D) A score at or above minus one standard deviation from the mean on one comprehensive intellectual test and
- E) A score at or above minus one standard deviation on one additional non-verbal test of cognitive functioning.

**Severe behaviour disorder**

**Criteria**

- A) Student displays disturbed behaviour to a point where special support in a withdrawal group or special class/unit is required. and
- B) Student displays behaviour so deviant and with such frequency and severity that they require regular psychological or psychiatric treatment. and
- C) The severe behaviour cannot be accounted for by: Intellectual Disability, Sensory (vision, hearing), Physical and/or Health issues, Autism Spectrum Disorder or Severe Language Disorder. and
- D) A history and evidence of an ongoing problem with an expectation of continuation during the school years.

### **Hearing impairment**

#### **Criteria**

A bilateral sensory-neural hearing loss that is moderate/severe/profound and where the student requires intervention or assistance to communicate.

### **Intellectual disability**

#### **Criteria**

- A) Sub-average general intellectual functioning which is demonstrated by a full-scale score of two standard deviations or more below the mean score on a standardised individual test of general intelligence and
- B) Significant deficits in adaptive behaviour established by a composite score of two standard deviations or more below the mean on an approved standardised test of adaptive behaviour and
- C) A history and evidence of an ongoing problem with an expectation of continuation during the school years.

### **Visual impairment**

#### **Criteria**

- A) Visual acuity less than 6/60 with corrected vision or
- B) That visual fields are reduced to a measured arc of less than 10 degrees.

### **Autism spectrum disorder**

#### **Criteria**

- A) Significant deficits in adaptive behaviour established by a composite score of two standard deviations or more below the mean on an approved standardised test of adaptive behaviours and
- B) A score of two or more standard deviations below the mean for the student's age in expressive and receptive language skills and  
The severity of the language disorder cannot be accounted for by hearing impairment, social emotional factors, general intellectual disability or cultural factors and
- C) A score above the cut-off for diagnosis of autistic features on an approved standardised test (CARS) for the presence of autistic features in current behaviour  
OR  
Moderate and severe abnormalities in items 1, 3, 5 and 6 on an approved standardised test (CARS) for the presence of autistic features in current behaviour and
- D) A history and evidence of an ongoing problem with the expectation of continuation during the school years.

### **Method of identifying students and distribution of resources to schools**

For a student to be approved as eligible for additional support as a consequence of a disability or impairment DE&T, the following process is followed:

- (i) Evidence of a disability or impairment by a Medical Practitioner (including a Psychiatrist), Psychologist, Speech Pathologist, Audiologist or an Ophthalmologist. The evidence is required to meet the set criteria in a pre-determined format as published in the *Handbook of the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments, Booklet One*. Advice for Professionals regarding most criteria is also provided
- (ii) The student's Program Support Group (PSG), which includes the parent, is required to complete an Educational Needs Questionnaire
- (iii) The completed application form is sent to DE&T where a Resource Coordination Group (RCG) considers the details. This committee consists of senior officers with expertise in disability from the central and regional offices. The RCG considers approximately 4000 submissions per year. If there is any submission where the evidence provided is of a complexity beyond the skill levels of the RCG, external experts are consulted. The external experts include Professors and Senior Medical Practitioners, Professors of Special Education and Psychology, Audiologists and Ophthalmologists, and
- (iv) If the student is deemed eligible for support, the level of support is determined by the application of a weighted formula, which is applied to the Educational Needs Questionnaire. The application of this formula enables resources to be distributed at one of six levels of funding ranging from \$3,928 to \$29,979.

DE&T provides a package of three Handbooks as a guide for principals, teachers, parents and carers. The Handbooks provide comprehensive advice on the criteria, the Educational Needs Questionnaire and Program Support Group guidelines.

**AVETMISS Release 4.0  
September 2001**

**AVETMISS – The Standard for  
VET Providers**

---

**Rules**

The training provider normally collects this information via a standard question on the enrolment form (refer to Section 4: Standard Enrolment Questions).

A client may have one or more disability, impairment or long-term condition.

A *Disability Type Identifier* must not be repeated for each unique *Client Identifier* in the Client Disability (NAT00090) file.

Code '19 - Other' must only be used when codes '11' to '18' are not applicable.

Code '99 - Unspecified' must only be used when the client has a Disability Flag of 'Y' in the Client (NAT00080) file but the type of disability, impairment or long term condition was not specified.

There must be at least one record in the Client Disability (NAT00090) file for each client who has *Disability Flag* of 'Y' in the Client (NAT00080) file.

**This field must not be blank.**

---

**Guidelines - Disability Type Identifier**

**NAT00090**

The following are definitions of the type of disability, impairment or long-term condition (source Australian National Training Authority, January 2001).

**'11 - Hearing/Deaf'**

Hearing impairment is used to refer to a person who has an acquired mild, moderate or even a severe or profound hearing loss after learning to speak, communicates orally and maximises residual hearing with the assistance of amplification. A person who is deaf has a severe or profound hearing loss from, at, or near birth and mainly relies upon vision to communicate, whether through lip reading, gestures, cued speech, finger spelling and/or sign language.

**'12 - Physical'**

A physical disability affects the mobility or dexterity of a person and may include a total or partial loss of a part of the body. A physical disability may have existed since birth or may be the result of an accident, illness, or injury suffered later in life. For example amputation, arthritis, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, paraplegia, quadriplegia, post-polio syndrome.

### **'13 - Intellectual'**

There is diversity in the underlying concepts, definitions and classifications of intellectual disability adopted in Australia. In general, the term intellectual disability is used to refer to low general intellectual functioning and difficulties in adaptive behaviour, both of which conditions were manifested before the person reached the age of 18. It may result from infection before or after birth, trauma during birth, or illness.

### **'14 - Learning'**

There has been widespread debate in Australia and overseas regarding the causes and characteristics of learning disabilities. In recent years a definition proposed by the United States National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) has become widely accepted:

...A general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviours, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability (*US National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1988*).

### **'15 - Mental Illness'**

Mental illness refers to a cluster of psychological and physiological symptoms that cause a person suffering or distress and which represent a departure from a person's usual pattern and level of functioning.

### **'16 - Acquired Brain Impairment'**

Acquired brain impairment is injury to the brain that results in deterioration in cognitive, physical, emotional or independent functioning. Acquired brain impairment can occur as a result of trauma, hypoxia, infection, tumour, accidents, violence, substance abuse, degenerative neurological diseases or stroke. These impairments may be either temporary or permanent and cause partial or total disability or psychosocial maladjustment (*The Ministerial Implementation Committee on Head Injury, 1995*).

### **'17 - Vision'**

A partial loss of sight causing difficulties in seeing up to and including blindness. This may be present from birth or acquired as a result of disease, illness or injury.

### **'18 - Medical Condition'**

Medical condition is a temporary or permanent condition that may be hereditary, genetically acquired or of unknown origin. The condition may not be obvious or readily identifiable, yet may be mildly or severely debilitating and result in fluctuating levels of wellness and sickness, and/or periods of hospitalisation; for example, AIDS, Cancer, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Crohn's Disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Asthma, Diabetes, Multiple Sclerosis and Muscular Dystrophy.

## **Method for Provision of Disability and Impairment Resources to Schools**

Since 1993, schools have received funding in the form of a School Global Budget. This annual allocation gives schools increased flexibility in the use of their resources to enable them to respond to the needs of the school community.

The Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments is an additional program of support for a defined student population with significant disabilities and impairments. A six level per-capita funding model was developed in 1994. The funding model used an Educational Needs Questionnaire as the basis for determining the level of resources to be provided to the school for each eligible student.

Additional resources are now provided to schools for each identified eligible student with a disability using the six level Disability and Impairment funding model based on the outcomes of an Educational Needs Questionnaire. In 2002 the funding ranges from Level One (\$3,928) to Level Six (\$29,979). Schools are responsible for providing an appropriate educational program within the budget allocation. This funding is above the core funding provided to all schools for all children (able and disabled).

The Educational Needs Questionnaire determines the level of funding allocated to schools for each eligible student. The level of funding is based on the educational needs of the student, not the disability type. The key points regarding the completion of the Educational Needs Questionnaire are outlined below:

- The Program Support Group completes the application for support through the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments. The Program Support Group consist of the principal (or nominee), parent(s) or guardian, parent advocate (if requested by the parent) and a DE&T nominee
- The Program Support Group completes the Educational Needs Questionnaire by providing a rating against each of the following 12 indicators:
  1. Mobility
  2. Fine Motor Skills
  3. Receptive Communication
  4. Expressive Communication
  5. Challenging (Excess) behaviour
  6. Frequency
  7. Safety
  8. Hearing
  9. Vision
  10. Self care
  11. Medical
  12. Cognitive skills

- The key indicators of educational need are based on observable characteristics of the child without the need for extensive reference to formal records, specific professionals or other assessment tools
- The information provided in the questionnaire is considered by the Resource Coordination Group after eligibility has been established, and
- The scores or ratings on the Educational Needs Questionnaire are entered into the Resources Index which calculates the level of funding to be allocated.

A reappraisal can be initiated where the school believes that the resource allocation will not meet the student's educational needs.

There are also a small number of students who may have a serious medical condition that results in a rapid deterioration of physical condition that is life threatening. Applications on behalf of these students are considered a priority.

## **Special Needs Initiatives in Early Childhood Education**

### Free Kindergarten Association Multicultural Resource Centre

The Free Kindergarten Association is contracted by the State to provide a preschool multicultural advisory service for staff and committees of management of State funded preschools and support for preschool programs in child care. The centre provides bilingual support, a library and bookshop with resources focussing on exploring cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood services, a mobile resource service and training and seminars.

### Koorie Early Childhood Education Program

The DHS Koorie Early Childhood Education program aims to increase the number of Koorie children attending preschool and to encourage all preschool programs to become more culturally relevant for Koorie children.

The Koorie Early Childhood Education Program consists of three components:

- Nine regional Koorie Early Childhood Field Officers (KECFOs)
- The Koorie Preschool Assistants Program (KPSA), and
- The State Co-ordinator for the Koorie Early Childhood Education Program.

The Koorie Early Childhood Education Program is currently being evaluated. One element of the evaluation is the identification of opportunities for improving the numeracy and literacy outcomes for Koorie children in preschools/early childhood services.

While there is currently no specific data available on the particular needs of preschool students with disabilities within the categories identified under term of reference (1)(a)(iii), some general access issues within preschool have been identified for children from non-English speaking backgrounds and from rural areas.

The *Review of the Issues that Impact on the Delivery of Preschool Services to Children and their Families in Victoria* (Kirby and Harper, 2001) and evidence from the field suggests that there has been a significant increase in demand for interpreter/language services within preschool services. This increase in demand has been problematic in terms of access to these services, particularly in areas where there is a high concentration of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, which in some areas is up to 90 per cent of the preschool population. This highlights the need for more intensive multicultural support/inclusion advisory and support services, to achieve improved long term educational outcomes for children from diverse backgrounds.

The *Review* also identified that access to preschool in rural Victoria is of particular concern and that children with additional needs living in rural and remote areas



continue to be disadvantaged. These groups of children generally have to wait longer for services or are required to travel further to access the support required. In some cases, children living in rural and remote Victoria have limited or no local access to preschool education services.

Additionally, the School Entry Health Questionnaire has identified that children from single parent families, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families and children who do not speak English appeared to present with higher concerns than the state average in some areas.

**SEHQ data - areas of concern identified by single parent families, ATSI families and non-English speaking children**

<b>Area of Concern</b>	<b>Single parent family</b>	<b>ATSI</b>	<b>Non-English speaking child</b>
Speech / language	*11%	13.4%	14.9%
Hearing	10.6%	13.2%	
Vision	7.5%	-	9%
Disability	3.5%	2.8%	-
Attention Deficit Disorder or Hyperactivity Disorder	2.3%	2.4%	-
Learning difficulties	*3.5%	5.5%	-
General development	*12.5%	15.4%	18.8%
Behaviour and emotional well being	*20%	15.1%	7.6%

\* These percentages are an average of single parent mothers and single parent fathers.

## **Special Needs Initiatives in Government Schools**

### Koorie Students

Victoria has developed a number of programs to support Koorie students and to raise teacher and student awareness and understanding of Koorie culture.

Under the *Indigenous Education Act*, Victoria receives Commonwealth funding to develop programs to support the learning needs of Koories students. Targets are negotiated for Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program funding over a four-year period (2001-2004) for the following:

- Supplementary Recurrent Assistance. Funding for 2002 is \$2.499 million with this funding calculated on a per capita basis according to educational sector weightings. Funding is used to develop programs and projects for Koories students, and
- National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) Funding for 2002 totals \$0.952 mil

A number of projects and programs have been developed through these funding sources to support the learning needs of Koorie students.

In addition, the 2002-03 Victorian State Budget provided \$3.6

### Koorie Student Support Team Strategy

This Strategy support students in their learning and involves the establishment of three Koorie Student Support Teams. The teams provide support to schools, students and families to help improve both literacy and attendance outcomes. Each team includes one Literacy Officer and one Home School Liaison Officer to provide support to school communities. Data collected through statewide assessment and attendance surveys will be used to target areas within regions, rather than a specific region. Each team provides assistance to schools in their allocated region using available attendance, literacy benchmark and individual teacher assessment data. Teams assist school communities in providing a more culturally inclusive environment, student support and literacy advice and assist families in supporting student's improved outcomes. It is expected that up to 600 students (200 in each of the three regions) will benefit from this initiative.

### Scholarship Program

The objective of the Scholarship Program is to provide support for existing Koorie staff to undertake training as teachers through the provision of HECS support and a contribution to income support. Two scholarships of \$10,000 each per annum will be made available to assist in increasing the number of Koorie teachers. This initiative will draw on the expertise of existing Koorie education workers, harnessing their experience in educational and Koorie community issues. It will also allow existing Koorie Education Workers to, as teachers, contextualise their programs to best cater for students including Koorie students while acting as a role model at school. This

initiative will create career development opportunities and employment pathways for existing Koorie Education Workers to become teachers and potential Koorie Education Workers, by creating a vacancy to backfill the scholarship recipient. It is expected that eight teachers will benefit from this initiative.

#### Koorie Literacy Links Project (P-4) and Koorie Middle Years Links Project (Years 5-9)

The objective is to improve literacy outcomes for students involved in the project. Student data included for tracking purposes, involves longitudinal data collection and an in depth analysis of this data. Data collected will include formal testing results as well as comprehensive anecdotal records. The project has been continued after being successfully implemented as a Strategic Results Project in 1998. In 2000, two hundred and fifty students participated in the Links project across 14 schools. It is intended that this initiative will be implemented statewide.

Increased use of video technology has had a positive impact on student's motivation to listen, speak, read and write and increased the desire to take the opportunity to collaborate with peers. Teachers and Koorie Educators are becoming more skilful in utilizing a range of approaches, methodologies and resources with Koorie students through the discussion and sharing facilitated by the videoconferencing network. The role and profile of Koorie Educators involved in literacy programs has increased and their potential contribution realized to a greater extent through increased involvement in literacy support programs.

#### Accredited Training for Koorie Educators

This initiative is to provide accredited training in a Certificate III in *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education* to Koorie Educators. It is expected that this will help improve the level of support provided to schools and students as well as improve career opportunities. While it is expected that all Koorie Educators complete a minimum number of modules of the Certificate III, Koorie Educators will also have the opportunity to complete the Certificate 3 in total. It is expected that at least 56 Koorie Educators will be able to access training under this initiative.

#### Koorie Educator Program

This program supports the employment of Koorie Educators in schools with significant Koorie student populations. It is expected that Koorie Educators will be able to provide valuable classroom support, especially in terms of literacy and numeracy, and an important role in the liaison between family and schools. It is expected that an equivalent of 56 full time Koorie Educators will be employed to provide support to Koorie students in the classroom, schools and families. It is anticipated that approximately 2000 students across from Prep to 12 in a minimum of 50 schools will benefit from this initiative. In the 2002-03 Budget, the Government has provided \$3.6 million over four years to strengthen and build upon the Koorie educator program and to establish 6 Koorie Home Liaison officers.

#### Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA)

In addition to Supplementary Recurrent Assistance and NIELNS funding, ASSPA funding for Koorie students is paid to schools by the Commonwealth Government on a per capita basis. ASSPA committees are formed at the school level comprising the school principal and Koorie parents to determine how this funding is to be allocated to

best support the needs of Koorie students. A minimum of 30 per cent of this funding is to be allocated to Koorie Parent Programs.

### Distance Education

The Distance Education Centre Victoria is a P-12 school that provides personalised learning support to students who are unable to attend school for reason such as:

- Distance from school and bus routes
- Physical /Chronic health
- Social Emotional Issues
- School referral
- Travel

This school is funded through the School Global Budget and received \$8,333,902 to cater for the learning needs of 1228.8 students in 2002.

### Rurality and Isolation

In order to support the additional learning needs of students in small primary schools, secondary colleges and P-12 colleges in non-metropolitan locations and non-provincial locations, schools are funded through the School Global Budget under the Rural School Size Adjustment Factor.

The total Rurality and Isolation budget in the SGB is \$32,071,600. This consists of \$29,515,298 for rurality and \$2,556,302 for Location Index funding.

## **DE&T Early Education Programs**

An early education program for children with disabilities in a DE&T special developmental school is defined as ‘an educational program specifically designed for pre-school children with severe to profound or multiple disabilities aged between 2 years 8 months and 4 years 8 months as at 1 January of the year of entry.’

### Entry Criteria

The entry criteria for acceptance into a DE&T early education program for children with disabilities are:

- Evidence of severe to profound or multiple disabilities which have manifested before the child attains the age of 4 years 8 months, and
- The child’s need for a specific educational program that is individually planned and managed in conjunction with any specialised interdisciplinary service provided by other agencies.

Entry to an approved DE&T early education program for children with disabilities requires the recommendation of a guidance officer and endorsement by a Regional Director of Schools.

### Educational Programs

Educational programs are designed for individual students by the school in conjunction with the parent and any other specialist provided by other agencies. Schools are advised to follow the planning format outlined in the Program Support Group Guidelines for Students with Disabilities and Impairments.

### Program Duration

The maximum duration of an educational program for each child is 3 days per week. In exceptional circumstances the Regional Director of Schools may approve more than 3 days per week, subject to school capacity to provide such a program within its designated budget allocation.

On reaching the entry age to a government school (4years 8 months as at 1 January) a child attending an early education program for children with disabilities is enrolled as an ‘ordinary student.’

On reaching school age, all procedures relevant to inclusion in the Program for Students with Disabilities and Impairments must be completed. This includes meeting all the entry criteria and priorities, including the completion of an Educational Needs Questionnaire.

### Resources

Each special developmental school approved to conduct an early education program for children with disabilities will be provided with a per capita allocation for a pre - determined number of FTE places. This allocation is separate from any other per

capita funding provided through the School Global Budget. The school is responsible for determining the nature and mix of staff and other resources.

**Possible Adaptations and Adjustments for Students with Special Learning Needs.**

Reorganisation of classrooms to adjust for learning styles
Consideration where a student sits in class
Modified work requirements
Tutoring
Modified programs
Pastoral care, monitoring and consideration
<b>Special investigations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• psychology</li> <li>• speech pathology</li> <li>• paramedical</li> <li>• medical</li> <li>• behavioural</li> </ul>
<b>Individual planned programs</b>
<b>Special use of centres of knowledge e.g.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual Resource Centre</li> <li>• RVIB</li> <li>• Deaf Support Services</li> <li>• Autistic Association</li> <li>• Royal Children's Hospital</li> <li>• Educational Institute Royal Children's Hospital Care Program</li> <li>• Family Care Program</li> </ul>
<b>Use of peripatetic services</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visiting teacher for deaf, visual impaired, physical disability</li> <li>• Psychologist</li> <li>• Speech pathologist</li> <li>• Social Worker</li> </ul>
<b>Targeted resources from within the School Global Budget.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading Recovery Teachers</li> <li>• Remedial Teachers</li> <li>• Integration Teachers</li> <li>• Integration Aides</li> <li>• Physiotherapists</li> <li>• Occupational Therapist</li> <li>• Interpreters</li> <li>• Teacher of the Deaf</li> <li>• Specialist Teacher</li> <li>• Student Welfare Co-ordinator</li> <li>• Speech Pathologists</li> <li>• Specialised Equipment</li> <li>• Consultancy Services</li> </ul>

**Early Intervention - Current programs /support for students with disabilities/special learning needs**

Early Years Literacy and Numeracy Programs

The Early Years Literacy and Numeracy Programs are based on a whole school design for school improvement (Hill and Crevola, 1997) and represent a coordinated and strategic approach to student achievement with an outcome of improved student learning and well being. The Early Years Programs provide a form of 'primary prevention' (*Pianta, R 1990, Exceptional Children Vol 56.4*) to reduce the incidence of students requiring additional support.

The Early Years Programs are characterised by:

- Daily focussed teaching designed to meet students individual learning needs
- Additional assistance to complement the classroom teaching programs
- Strategically planned home-school liaison
- Focussed professional development that support teachers to extend their understanding of effective literacy and numeracy teaching
- Leadership and coordination support program implementation, and
- Whole school commitment to all aspects of the program.

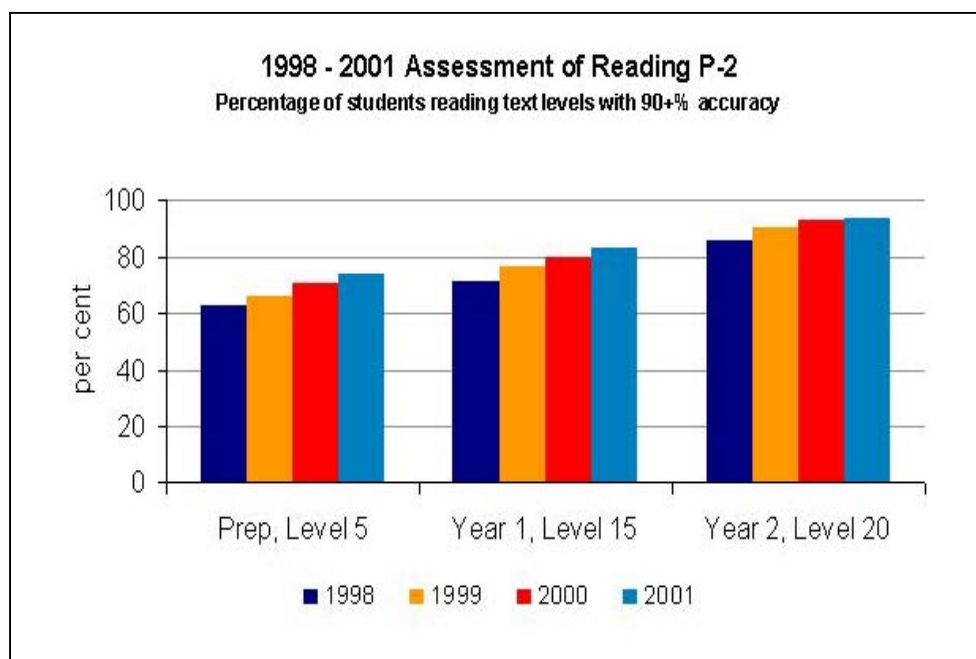
The government provides \$25.6 million annually to fund Early Years Literacy Coordinators to support the implementation of early years literacy programs in schools. Over the next three years the Government will provide \$34.6 million to assist schools in the provision of early years numeracy coordination.



### Early Years Assessment of Reading P-2 Data

The reading ability of students participating in the early years literacy program has improved for each of the last three years (1999, 2000 and 2001) for all three year levels (Prep, Year 1 and Year 2).

### Assessment of Reading P-2, 1998-2001



### Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is a one-to-one early intervention literacy program and is a key element of the Early Years Literacy Program. Reading Recovery provides a second chance for students in Year 1 who need individual assistance to get underway with reading and writing. . Students participating in the Reading Recovery Program are given individual half-hour sessions, five days per week for a period of 12 to 20 weeks.

The Reading Recovery program aims to:

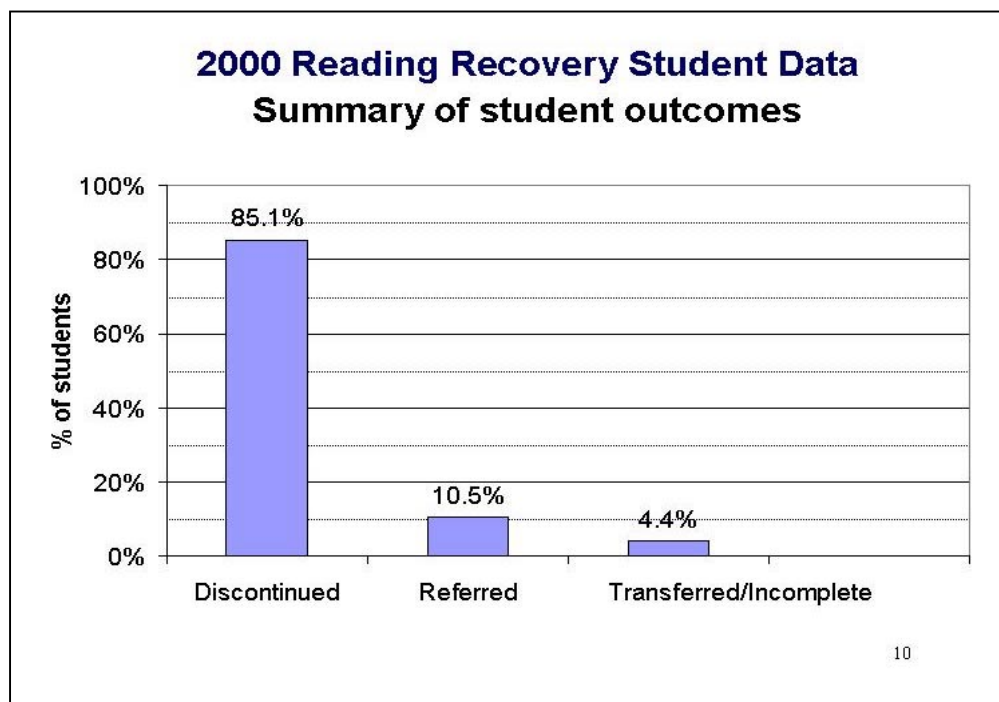
- Build on children's strengths
- Develop strategies for reading and writing, and
- Help children participate successfully in classroom literacy activities.

Research studies in New Zealand and the United States have demonstrated that after participating in the program, children in the lowest 20 per cent of their class acquired strategies necessary to read at or above their grade level in approximately twenty weeks. These conclusions have been replicated in many studies, including Victoria's Early Literacy Research Project, which found that providing access to Reading Recovery, as the intervention program within a whole-school design approach to improving early literacy learning outcomes, resulted in significant improvement for targeted students.

Students are selected for the Reading Recovery Program based on individual measures of assessment and teacher judgement. Reading Recovery is an inclusive program, and students who have lower intelligence, are learning English as a second-language, have low language skills, poor motor coordination, appear immature, who score poorly on readiness measures, or who have been categorized as learning disabled, are not excluded from the program. (Clay 1991)

In 2000, 19.4 per cent of the State Year 1 cohort had access to the Reading Recovery program. Program outcomes for 2000 showed that 85 per cent of students were successfully discontinued from the program, that is they had developed effective strategies for literacy learning and were able to participate in regular classroom reading and writing activities. Students referred from Reading Recovery are those that after a full program are not yet able to participate within the average achievement band of students in their classroom for literacy instruction. These students are identified as requiring long term, and ongoing support beyond that of the Reading Recovery Program.

### **2000 Reading Recovery, Student Outcomes**



### **Reading Recovery Funding**

The Government provides \$31 million annually for one to one intervention programs such as Reading Recovery for students in Year 1.

Funding is provided to schools at a base rate of \$214.39 per P -2 student, uncapped. For schools with a Students with Special Learning Needs index that exceeds the threshold of 0.80, this base rate is increased by \$83.43 multiplied by the amount that the school's SLN index exceeds this threshold. In addition, for schools with a P-2 enrolment of less than 50, a size adjustment factor is included.

### Reading Recovery Funding Formulae

For schools with an SLN index above a threshold of 0.80

$$\text{Allocation} = (\text{School SLN Index minus } 0.80) \times \$83.43 + \$214.39 \times \text{P-2 enrolment} \times \text{SAF (Size Adjustment Factors)}$$

For schools with an SLN index below a threshold of 0.80

$$\text{Allocation} = \$214.39 \times \text{P-2 enrolment} \times \text{SAF (Size Adjustment Factors)}$$

### Reading Recovery Allocations for Specialist Schools

Allocations for primary schools are based on the P-2 enrolment in each school. Specialist schools will receive funding based on the age equivalent, defined as students aged 5-8 years. The formula is calculated as for primary schools with the exception of the Special Learning Needs Weighting.

### Early and Middle Years Programs – Additional Assistance Pathway

The Additional Assistance Pathway has been developed to support students who are not demonstrating successful literacy and/or numeracy behaviours and development in the early years of schooling (P-4). Central to the Additional Assistance Pathway is the development and implementation of Individual Learning Improvement Plans. A similar strategy is to be implemented to support students in the middle years of schooling (Years 5-9).

The pathway comprises of the following elements:

- Identification
- Home School Group
- Teaching, and
- Review.

#### *Identification*

Student learning needs are identified through the collection and analysis of classroom assessments. Student health and welfare needs are also considered. A student may be referred to one or more of the following individuals or agencies for additional assessment:

- Educational psychologists
- Medical practitioner
- Social workers
- Speech pathologists
- Hearing or Visual specialists
- Medical and nursing programs, and/or
- Student support services, curriculum consultants and independent educational consultants.

#### *Home-School Support Group*

A Home School Support Group for students with specific learning needs has been established. This group, comprising parents, teachers and others, meets to consider the student's additional learning needs and develops an Individual Learning Improvement Plan for the student. This plan:

- Reviews the student's progress to date and considers additional health and welfare needs of the student
- Sets achievable improvement goals based on the individual needs of the student
- Lists the relevant learning outcomes linked to the improvement goals
- Lists the specific teaching and learning activities that the classroom teacher will use to achieve the goals, and
- Lists specific activities that can be implemented at home.

### *Teaching Program*

The classroom teacher prepares the teaching program according to the needs and goals for the student in the Individual Learning Improvement Plan. The short-term goals of the Individual Learning Improvement Plan will determine the teaching approaches and activities selected.

### *Review*

There is a process of continuous monitoring and assessment. This includes the use of a range of assessment tasks as outlined in the Early Years programs. The Home-School Support Group meets regularly to review and revise the individual Learning Improvement Plan on the basis of classroom assessment strategies and input from parents.

### Restart Initiative

Restart recognises the need for additional support for Year 7 students. It allows selected schools to provide additional assistance to students identified as most at risk of not achieving minimum literacy benchmarks. The Restart initiative links with the overall Middle Years Strategy and, in particular, with the Middle Years Reform Program. The Middle Years Reform Program focuses on literacy, attendance and ultimately retention through to Year 12 or its equivalent. Restart provides a very significant opportunity to identify the students who are at risk of leaving school early due to inadequate levels of literacy achievement and puts in place the necessary supports for student retention. Restart goals include:

- Providing specific support to targeted students
- Linking support for low achieving students to teaching and learning in all Key Learning Areas
- Monitoring & collecting evidence of improved literacy learning
- Increasing students' self-esteem and confidence, and motivation
- Changing attitudes & beliefs about responsibility for literacy learning in secondary schools, and
- Developing teacher knowledge about literacy learning and expanding teaching repertoires.

### *Restart Funding*

Restart funding, provided to schools, commencing 2002 to 2004 totals 26.67 million. Funding allocation is based on Year 7 literacy achievement, SLN index, Koorie enrolments and VCE achievement data and provides for 100 additional teachers in 100 schools. The restart program will provide support for 1500 Year 7 students each

year. Funding is capped at Year 7 enrolment of 320. Teacher allocations are rounded to the nearest 0.1 teacher FTE and have been converted to dollars for inclusion in the School Global Budget at a rate of \$55,944 per FTE as follows:

Teacher salary rate	\$52,050
Payroll tax (6.03%)	\$3,139
Relief teaching	\$755

#### Middle Years Reform Initiative

The Government has provided additional funding of \$84.3 million over four years for new Middle Years reform, providing grants to primary and secondary schools to employ 70 teachers and develop local solutions to keep students actively engaged in education in the important middle Years 5 to 9. This program provides support to schools to ensure that all students remain engaged in their learning, build relationships and achieve satisfactory standards in literacy and numeracy in particular, in order for them to remain at school and complete their Year 12 or its equivalent.

#### Access to Excellence

\$81.6 million has been provided over four years for the Access to Excellence initiative, including 300 additional secondary teachers in schools with higher than average absentee rates and lower than average rates of Year 12 or equivalent completion.

A feature of this new program for students in Years 7 to 10 will be more 'face-to-face' contact and educational mentoring with students. The program is aimed at boosting literacy and numeracy skills, cutting down on absenteeism rates and keeping all Victorian students engaged and stimulated at school.

#### Managed Individual Pathways

The Victorian Government's targets for education and training as outlined by the Premier are:

- By 2010, 90 per cent of young people in Victoria will complete Year 12 or its equivalent, and
- By 2005 the percentage of young people, 15-19 in rural and regional Victoria engaged in education and training will rise by 6 per cent.

It is in this context that the targeted resources to support the Managed Individual Pathways program are provided. As a key component of the implementation of the recommendations of the Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways in Victoria (the Kirby Report), the Government has announced the introduction of the Managed Individual Pathways initiative.

The focus of the program is the development of Managed Individual Pathways for young people that enable them to develop and enhance their skills, knowledge, understanding and experience to manage their pathways and to move through the transition from compulsory schooling to further education, training and employment, and includes the following features:

- One adult having primary responsibility for working with a young person to

assist them to negotiate a pathway to continued education, training and employment and to follow them through their pathway

- Choosing a current, or creating a new, mechanism for developing the pathway, such as those available through ‘The Advocacy Project’, Pathways Project and mentoring programs. While these mechanisms are designed for all students, the initial priority is for those seen as unlikely to continue with education, training or ongoing employment, and
- The provision of appropriate programs to effectively meet the needs of young people identified through the pathway plans. This could include a percentage of the resources being made available to:
  - ensure that the VET in Schools program contributes to effective Managed Individual Pathways for particular students and the achievement of the required outcomes (not the purchase of VET programs)
  - enable schools to report on the destinations of early leavers
  - provide time release, where appropriate, or engage suitably skilled individuals and/or agencies to implement programs as identified above.

The expected key outcomes for the Managed Individual Pathways program are:

- Increased participation and successful completion of post compulsory education and training programs
- Improved employment outcomes and other education outcomes by young people
- Greater cross-sectoral integration of programs and provision of support for young people
- Improved tracking of young people as they leave school, which will include the monitoring of standards and outcomes against local and statewide benchmarks, and
- Improved participation and outcomes for groups of young people who currently have poor education and employment outcomes.

The Government has made a major commitment to this initiative through the allocation of \$15 million for each of the next three years.

#### Vocational Education Training in Schools (VET)

All VET in Schools programs are designed to:

- Expand vocational opportunities for senior secondary students
- Provide opportunities for students to learn in different environments including in the workplace, and
- Better prepare young people for the workplace of the future.

Two VET pathways are available to VCE students – VET in the VCE and Part-time Apprenticeships and Traineeships. In 2001, 26,222 VCE students were enrolled in VET in the VCE programs and 787 in Part-time Apprenticeship and Traineeship programs.

There are 31 VET in the VCE programs which cover both emerging and traditional areas including primary industries, automotive and engineering, hospitality,

information technology and multimedia, music and dance, community services, business and sport and recreation. There are also Part-time Apprenticeship and Traineeship programs available in 12 industry areas.

The number of schools offering VET in the VCE programs has increased from 24 in 1994 to 441 in 2001(all sectors).

#### Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

The Government has provided \$47.7 million for implementation of further trials of the new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). This fully accredited Certificate provides young people in Years 11 and 12 with new vocational pathways to achieve their aspirations and goals.

The funding will help ensure that 200 government schools and 19 TAFE institutes are well supported as the new Certificate is progressively implemented across Victoria. The Certificate will be available to all Victorian schools in 2004.

## **Preschool Inclusion Support Services**

### **Preschool Field Officer Program**

The Preschool Field Officer Program (PSFO) is a State-funded early intervention outreach service that is universally available within preschool for any child with developmental concerns. The primary role of the Preschool Field Officer Program is to support children with additional needs to access and participate in State-funded preschool services. Children referred to the program present with diverse support requirements that span a continuum ranging from mild language or developmental delays to severe behavioural issues and multiple disabilities. In addition, the PSFO program also provides support to children identified as at risk of developmental delay, where the preschool teacher has identified a developmental concern.

The PSFO program fulfils a number of functions, and is able to provide a flexible response along a service continuum that ranges from information provision, programming advice, assessment and referral, and in some cases, coordinating access to range of supports for children and families with additional support needs. Preschool Field Officers undertake a consultative, educative and advisory role with preschool teachers rather than acting as an additional assistant.

Children with severe disabilities who meet eligibility criteria are also able to access Commonwealth funded support for an additional assistant through the Special Education Program to assist with inclusion in preschool.

### **Special Education Program**

The Commonwealth-funded Special Education Program offers supplementary funding for preschool initiatives to support the inclusion of children with severe disabilities in a preschool setting. Priority is given to those children with severe disabilities who require additional support to access and participate in a State-funded preschool educational program.

Additional assistants employed with Special Education Program funding provide direct support to enable children with a disability to access and participate in the preschool education program. These additional assistants work as members of the teaching team.



## **Review of the Preschool Field Officer Program**

The Preschool Field Officer review highlights a number of issues in the current service system. These include the:

- Need for earlier identification and referral of children with developmental concerns
- Fragmentation of the service system and the inconsistent level of supports across the State
- Difficulty in accessing a range of specialist and community services, due to increased targeting and waiting lists
- Lack of cohesive information on the range of support services available
- Limited availability of preschool field officers to provide the level of support required by preschool staff and families
- Limited capacity of Special Education Program (SEP) funding for additional assistants to enable access to preschool for children with disabilities
- Inadequate support for children with severe behavioural issues and other developmental concerns who do not meet eligibility criteria for specialist programs
- Need for a clear definition of inclusion and documentation of inclusive practices
- Requirement for improved training support and resource development for preschool teachers in relation to working with not only children with disabilities, but vulnerable families with high needs whose children have a diverse range of additional needs, including behavioural issues
- Limited access to support for children with additional needs from Koorie and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Perceived disparity of support for children with additional needs between State and Commonwealth funded children's services, and
- Need for improved transition to preschool and between preschool and school for children with additional needs.

Many of these issues were also highlighted in the review. A number of these issues have been acknowledged in the Victorian Government Response.

## **Curriculum Advice and Guidelines for Schools**

The VCAA advice is based on the principle that individual learning programs should be developed in conjunction with program support groups, where applicable, for students with disabilities and impairments. These programs should be based on the Curriculum & Standards Framework II, which is developed to meet the needs of all Victorian students. Individual programs are tailored to individual circumstances but there is a compelling case for all students' programs to be clearly related to the CSFII.

Curriculum guidelines produced by DE&T state that students with disabilities and impairments, in common with all students, require a curriculum which:

- Is broad and comprehensive and enables access to the eight Key Learning Areas
- Is relevant to the student's physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs
- Is age appropriate
- Is part of the continuum of learning for life
- Offers opportunities, challenges and choices
- Encourages independence while recognising the inter-dependence of members of the community
- Values individual learning styles and preferred learning styles
- Provides for different rates of learning
- Enhances the student's self-esteem, worth, identity and dignity
- Provides a range of opportunities for individualised and group learning of skills, knowledge and attitudes
- Provides a broad range of experiences, processes and approaches
- Is realistic, achievable and has clearly stated goals, and
- Anticipates the student's future needs.

The DE&T has also produced support materials relating to the assessment and reporting for students with disabilities and impairments, and advice for schools to measure academic progress for students against each Key Learning Area.

## **Teacher Training and Professional Development Opportunities**

### Scholarships

Schools are being encouraged to apply for 2002 Teaching Scholarships. Approximately 220 one-year scholarships are being offered annually through to 2003. The scholarships include a \$3,500 cash payment and a guarantee of ongoing employment in Victorian government schools, and are available to student teachers during their final year of teacher training. Specialist schools have been asked to identify vacancies for scholarship holders in 2003. Preference for these scholarships will be given to applicants who are qualified to teach subject areas where there is increased demand for teachers and in geographic locations where there are recruitment difficulties.

### School Services Officers (SSO / Integration Aides)

An accredited training framework of training is provided for School Service Officers leading to accredited higher education courses.

### Accredited Teacher Professional Development

The Framework for accredited teacher professional development establishes a set of principles and a structure for the delivery, recognition and accreditation of teacher professional development across Victoria. The Framework is the outcome of a groundbreaking agreement between all of the major professional development providers in Victoria. Within the Framework, teachers are able to undertake high quality, flexibly delivered professional development modules, gain credit for their work and gradually build the credit towards a Graduate Certificate of Education (Professional Development) awarded by one of eight Victorian universities.

### School Professional Development Plans

The school professional development plan is a statement of the school's professional development priorities and implementation strategies over a period of time. It reflects the school's charter goals and priorities and provides details of proposed action for each priority area. The school professional development plan is a structure within which schools can also make detailed plans for the professional growth and career development of all staff.

### Goal Setting Professional Development

The booklet, 'Measuring Academic Progress Against Each Key Learning Area – Students with Disabilities and Impairments', provides guidelines for the measurement and reporting of academic progress of students in receipt of funding for students with Disabilities and Impairments. A professional development program accompanied the publication of the booklet.

### Quality Communication

Quality Communication professional development was provided across the state to improve partnerships between schools and parents of children with disabilities.

### SOFnet

DE&T has also developed a series of SOFnet programs that provide professional development for all teachers of students with learning difficulties. These programs, which are available on video, are particularly useful for teachers who are located in those areas where it is difficult to access other programs.

### Reading Recovery Training

Reading Recovery Teacher Training ensures teachers working with students experiencing difficulty in literacy acquisition develop further understanding of literary learning theory. To achieve this, Reading Recovery training involves participation in a year-long training program involving the daily teaching of at least four students and attendance at fortnightly in-service training sessions. The program integrates theory and practice and is characterised by intensive interaction with colleagues as lessons are observed and discussed behind a one-way viewing screen.

Trained Reading Recovery teachers continue to receive professional development and support through attendance at Continuing Contact sessions. Each Reading Recovery teacher attends six half-day sessions a year that focus on supporting the needs of students experiencing difficulty in learning to read and write.

Reading Recovery teacher training is provided by Reading Recovery Tutors. Reading Recovery Tutors undertake a one-year, full-time training program that covers theoretical and practical aspects of literacy development. This training is conducted by the DE&T in collaboration with The University of Melbourne. Following the training year, Tutors continue their specialised professional development through ongoing interaction with their colleagues and Reading Recovery Trainers.

The year-long, full time training for Reading Recovery Trainers incorporates academic study at a post-masters level. The role of the Reading Recovery Trainer is to provide the initial training of Reading Recovery Tutors and provide subsequent professional development and ongoing support.

### Early Years Literacy and Numeracy Training

The implementation of the Early Years Programs is supported by a multi-layered professional development strategy. The training supports teachers to develop understanding of effective literacy and numeracy teaching as they work to improve student learning outcomes.

Initial training and ongoing development is provided for Early Years Trainers. Early Years Literacy Trainer Training has occurred since 1997. In that time 295 trainers from DE&T, AISV, and CECV have been trained. These trainers then work as part of regional teams facilitating initial and ongoing development to designated school-based Early Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators and classroom teachers. The professional development programs focus on:

- Whole school design model for program implementation
- Knowledge of literacy and numeracy
- Developmental stages of students growth
- Effective classroom teaching practices, and
- Theory of teaching and learning.

All Victorian schools have a trained Early Years Literacy Coordinator who provides professional development and support to their schools early years teaching team.

Early Years Numeracy Trainer training has been developed, funded by the Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program. Training programs conducted in 2001 and 2002 have provided training for 222 trainers from DE&T, AISV and CECV. Trainers facilitate training and professional development for school-based coordinators who are then able to provide professional development and support too school based early years teachers.

During 2001 and 2002 Early Years Numeracy professional development events for classroom teachers were delivered by regional –based numeracy trainers and via schools television. This provided an opportunity for teachers across the state to access professional development that focused on assessment and teaching approaches in early numeracy.

#### Middle Years Literacy Training

Profession development to support teachers to strengthen teaching and learning programs for students in this stage of schooling are provided through the Middle Years Literacy Training Strategy. This program, funded by the Commonwealth Quality Teacher Program, has trained 125 DE&T and 48 non DE&T Literacy Leaders who work with regional personnel to facilitate middle years literacy training and professional development for school-based co-ordinators.

In addition, four middle years professional development events for classroom teachers are planned and will be delivered during 2002. These programs will profile successful literacy strategies and approaches and provide information on innovative practices.