

**CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
OF VICTORIA LIMITED**

**SUBMISSION TO THE
INQUIRY INTO THE ACADEMIC
STANDARDS of SCHOOL
EDUCATION**

**BY THE SENATE COMMITTEE OF EMPLOYMENT,
WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION
OF THE PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) supports and advances Catholic education in Victoria. There are 184,000 students in Victorian Catholic schools. These students attend 94 Catholic secondary schools and 382 Catholic primary schools as well as 8 special schools. The schools employ about 14,500 teachers and are supported by the Catholic Education Offices of the four Dioceses: Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale. The CECV speaks on behalf of the Victorian Catholic education sector.

The CECV welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into whether school education prepares students adequately for further education, training and employment.

2. SUBMISSION

Findings of research studies both in the USA and Australia demonstrate that Catholic school education provides an excellent grounding for students in preparation for further education and training, and to become members of the community.

The literature comments on the distinctive contribution that Catholic education makes to the community as measured by student educational outcomes and the strong positive effects of Catholic schools. A list of some of the references that support this view is provided at the end of this document.

Specifically, a research report commissioned by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd in 2004, *The Contribution of Catholic Schools to the Victorian Economy and Community*, by Victoria University's Centre for Strategic Economic Studies, provides data that support the statement that, after taking account of socio-economic status (SES) and other relevant factors, Catholic schools achieve higher outcomes than would be predicted.

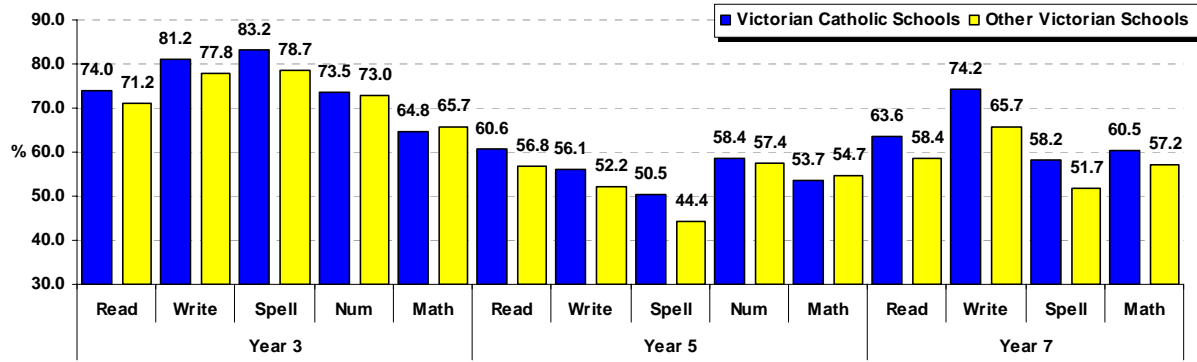
The 2004 Victoria University study found that Victorian Catholic schools achieved better than average outcomes on a range of measures, and that this was particularly pronounced for students from lower SES backgrounds. The study used three pieces of evidence: the analysis of results from the 2002 Achievement Improvement Monitor (AIM), the statewide testing program of student literacy and numeracy achievement at years 3 and 5; the results of a multi-level regression analysis using VCE results by student and school for 2003; and a brief analysis of the post-school destination data from the 2002 On Track Survey, a state-wide post-year 12 transition survey conducted annually by the Victorian Department of Education. Findings in the 2004 Victoria University report include:

- 1) *Catholic schools performed better than average in the 2002 AIM testing undertaken at years 3 and 5.*

In the 2002 AIM, virtually all of the test areas and for both years 3 and 5, Catholic schools showed higher proportions in the expected and better than expected performance levels.

Similarly **Figure 1** below shows that in 2005 Victorian Catholic schools were continuing to achieve a higher percentage of students at or above the expected level for nearly all cohorts in Years 3, 5 and 7, and the gap between Catholic schools and other schools tended to be larger for the English strands.

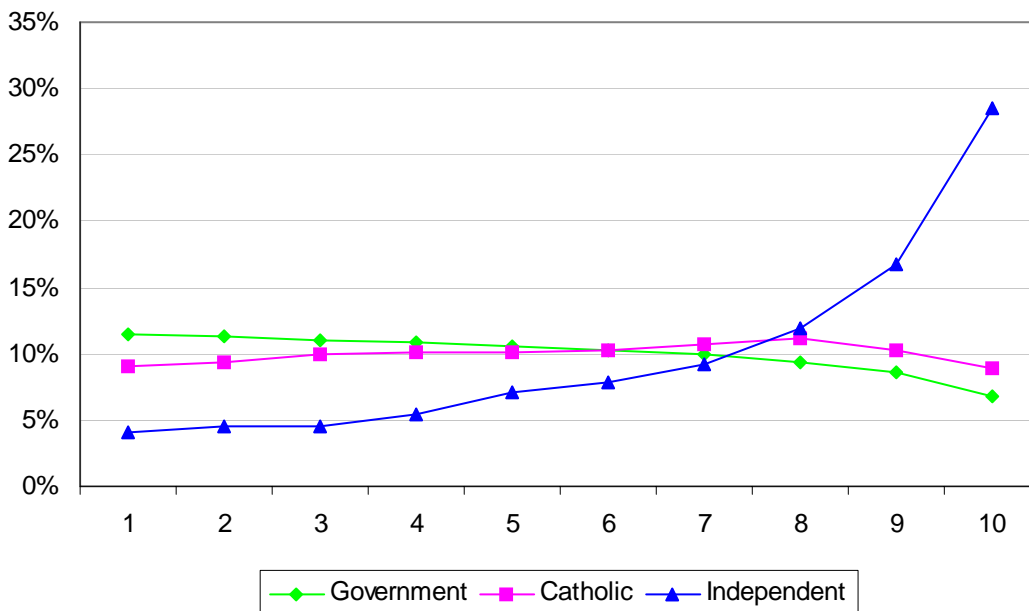
Figure 1. AIM results, Victoria 2005, Catholic schools / Other schools, by Year level and Strand



Source: Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2005 data

Although neither of the above analyses made any corrections for the school’s SES, in Victoria the Catholic enrolments of school age students is very evenly distributed across SES groups. The 2004 Victoria University report calculated the percentage of enrolments across SES groups for each of the school sectors. It found that, according to the 2001 census, Catholic enrolments were very close to being almost 10% in each SES decile, even though they were somewhat under-represented at both ends of the distribution (9.1% of enrolments in the lowest and 9% in the highest decile). Government schools had a similar distribution, except for variations at the top and bottom SES deciles, with 11.4% of students in the lowest decile and only 6.8% in the top decile. Non-Catholic independent school enrolments were heavily skewed towards higher SES groups, with 4.1% of their enrolments in the lowest decile and 28.6% in the highest decile.

Figure 2. Proportion of Systems Enrolments, Victoria, 2001 across SES deciles



Source: Estimates of the authors of Victoria University report (2004), based on unpublished ABS data.

- 2) *After correcting for SES and other relevant factors, Catholic schools achieve higher Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) results than Victorian schools as a whole. There is also evidence that the beneficial impact of Catholic schools is particularly pronounced in lower SES groups.*

In the 2004 study, after adjustment for Victoria's General Achievement Test (GAT), estimates were provided of 2003 average VCE study scores by SES decile, by gender and by school type. These results provided one way of assessing the impact of school type, after taking account of all the relevant variables. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 1, with the percentage difference in average scores for students in Catholic schools relative to all Victorian students highlighted.

For males, the adjusted average scores for Catholic school students are higher than those for all students in the seven lowest SES deciles, but somewhat lower in deciles 8-10. In the lowest SES deciles, the effect is particularly pronounced, with mean Catholic scores being 4% above that for all students in the lowest decile, and 2.7% above in the second lowest decile.

For females the adjusted average scores for students attending Catholic schools are higher than those for all students in nine out of ten deciles, and again with stronger effects at lower levels of SES.

Table 1. Average VCE Score, by SES Decile, School Sector and Gender, Adjusted for GAT, 2003

SES Decile	Government	Catholic	Independent	State Average	% Difference between Catholic and State averages
Males					
Low	27.6	29.1	30.0	28.0	4.0
2	28.5	29.6	30.7	28.8	2.7
3	28.8	29.6	31.6	29.2	1.4
4	28.9	29.9	31.2	29.4	1.8
5	29.1	29.9	31.5	29.5	1.2
6	29.3	30.0	31.6	29.8	0.8
7	29.9	30.4	31.8	30.3	0.3
8	30.4	30.2	32.0	30.7	-1.7
9	30.7	31.0	31.9	31.1	-0.4
High	31.4	32.4	33.1	32.4	-0.1
Females					
Low	27.7	29.2	29.8	28.1	4.0
2	28.5	29.8	30.9	28.9	3.2
3	28.9	29.8	31.4	29.3	1.8
4	28.9	29.8	31.6	29.4	1.4
5	29.3	30.1	31.7	29.7	1.2
6	29.5	30.2	31.5	29.9	0.9
7	30.0	30.5	32.0	30.4	0.2
8	30.2	30.9	32.0	30.8	0.5
9	30.9	31.2	32.2	31.4	-0.5
High	31.0	32.1	32.7	32.1	0.1

Source: Estimates provided in Victoria University (2004) report, based on data provided by Victorian Curriculum and Accreditation Authority.

The results in **Table 1** are also reflected in the findings outlined in the US literature, and indicate that Catholic schools have substantially beneficial effects on VCE performance, especially in the lower half of the socio-economic distribution.

- 3) *Students from Catholic schools achieve higher than average rates of transition to university, after correction for socio-economic status and gender, than Victorian students as a whole.*

The On Track Survey is a comprehensive study undertaken annually by the Victorian Government, covering about 35,000 individuals who have completed VCE in a given year. The survey of school leavers provides a range of information about the destinations of VCE graduates, including school type, and enables the use of geocoding methods to assess the SES of students.

Table 2. Transition to University, by School Type, SES quartiles and Gender, 2002

SES Quartile of Student	Girls		Boys	
	% from Catholic Schools	% from All Schools	% from Catholic Schools	% from All Schools
Highest	65	63	56	54
Upper Middle	50	44	38	37
Lower Middle	48	37	36	29
Lowest	45	34	34	26

Source: On Track Survey (Polesel and Teese 2004).

While transition to university is not by any means the only indicator of performance in secondary school education, it is an important indicator nevertheless. **Table 2** shows that students from Catholic schools had higher transition rates to university education than the all schools average, and that this was very pronounced in the lower middle and lowest socio-economic quartile. For girls in these two quartiles the transition rate was 11 percentage points higher in Catholic than in all schools, while for boys the difference was 7-8 percentage points.

Table 3. Destinations of Students leaving Catholic Schools after Year 12 and Comparison with All Schools, Victoria, 2002–2005 (%of students)

Destination	Catholic Schools				All Schools			
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2002	2003	2004	2005
University	47.5	46.8	47.2	49.5	41.6	43.4	43.1	46.1
TAFE / VET	27.3	27.6	23.4	21.3	26.3	26.1	23.4	20.4
Apprentice / Trainee	5.3	6.2	10.1	9.4	5.7	6.4	10.0	9.2
Employed (excl. Deferred)	11.2	11.6	10.3	10.4	15.8	14.3	13.1	13.0
Unemployed (excl. Deferred)	2.6	2.5	2.2	1.8	5.0	3.8	3.8	3.3
Deferred	6.1	5.3	6.7	7.6	5.6	6.0	6.6	8.0
Total	100.0	100.0	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: On Track data provided to the CECV by Victorian Department of Education (2005 survey results)

Table 3 shows that in 2005 nearly half (49.5%) of respondents among Year 12 leavers from Catholic schools entered university. This was 2–3 points higher than the percentages of the previous 3 years and exceeded the state average (46.1%).

The incidence of Catholic school leavers enrolling in a TAFE/VET course (21.3%) was slightly higher than the state average. Likewise, the take-up of apprenticeships or traineeships (9.4%) was higher than the figure across all schools.

In the labour market destination categories, the Catholic figures were smaller than for all schools, which confirms that about 8 in ten (80.2%) of the Catholic Year 12 cohort were engaged in higher education or further training in the year after finishing school. If the figures were included for those who were *employed who deferred study*, approximately 98% would be in education, training or employment.

3. SUMMARY

The findings of the 2004 Victoria University report and of other research studies, as well as the data collected by the CECV, all demonstrate that Catholic schools in Victoria provide high quality educational outcomes, especially for students from lower socio-economic settings. Students in Catholic schools acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for successful transition into further education, training or employment, and the strong foundations needed for lifelong learning.

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