



priority area two

Improving Education and Helping People into Work

Reducing educational inequality, supporting young people at risk and reducing barriers to workforce participation

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Why Education, Skills and Work?

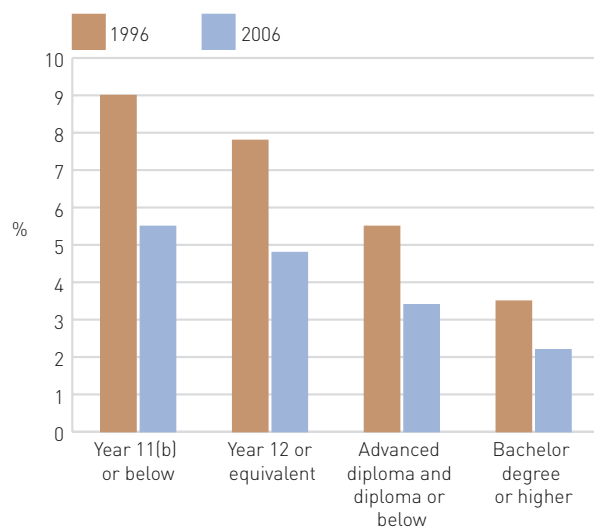
The Government will invest an additional \$218 million over the five years to 2011-2012 through *A Fairer Victoria 2008* to reduce educational inequality and helping Victorians into work.

In a knowledge economy good education and skills are fundamental to obtaining quality employment. Achieving Year 12 or its equivalent opens up a lifetime of learning and exciting career prospects. Student destination data from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development found that in 2005, students completing Year 12 were over three times more likely to undertake higher level vocational education and training two years after leaving school and four times less likely to be unemployed than those who didn't. (OnTrack data from DEECD, 2007.)

The following graph shows the ongoing importance of education attainment for employment prospects. It shows the higher a person's educational attainment, the less likely they were to be unemployed.

Research completed for the Business Council of Australia and Dusseldorp Skills Forum estimates that, across Australia, \$8.2 billion (in net present value terms) could be gained for the economy by halving the numbers of early school leavers between 2004 and 2012.

National unemployment rate by highest level of education (a)



(a) People aged 25-64 years.

(b) Includes people who are still at school.

Source: ABS 1996 and 2006 Survey of Education and Work, Cat. No. 4102.0

What We Have Already Done

The proportion of young Victorians completing Year 12 or its equivalent has improved from 81.8% in 2000 to 86.1% in 2007, the highest of the Australian states. A raft of new initiatives has helped achieve this, including the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) which is reaching students who may otherwise have dropped out of traditional learning.

More students are also enrolling in training courses to help them transition from school to work. Enrolments in Vocational Education and Training (VET) increased from 28,000 in 2002 to 51,000 in 2006. Local Learning and Employment Networks and youth transition workers are also engaging with young people, and finding them new avenues to learn and work. Of the young people participating in the *Early School Leavers* (ESL) program, 91% have returned to education or training or moved into the workforce.

The TAFE guarantee, introduced in 2007 through the *Education and Training Reform Act*, guarantees all young people under 20 a training place to help them complete Year 12 or equivalent through TAFE or Adult Community Education. This is bringing significant benefits, along with programs in government schools that are giving all students plans for their future careers.

In December 2007, the unemployment rate in Victoria was 4.7% and workforce participation reached 65.4%. Regional Victoria has recorded employment growth of more than 134,000 jobs since October 1999 and reached a near record workforce participation rate of 63.7% in 2007.

Our *Workforce Participation Partnership* initiatives with some 146 employers and other partners have made a real difference, with more than 3,200 people who faced significant barriers to finding work now in ongoing employment.

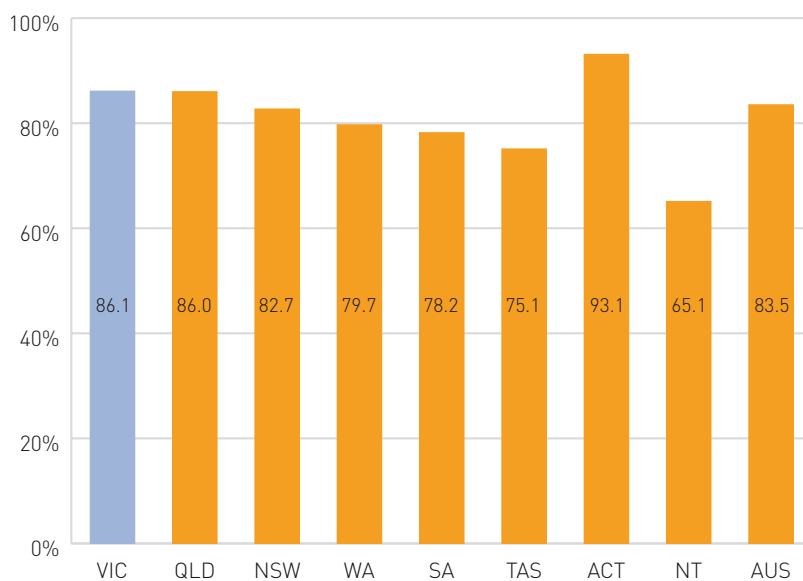
The Government has an ambitious reform agenda to address disadvantage in education and training and has released discussion papers on a *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform*. The aim is to improve education and early childhood outcomes so that all children learn and develop, with stronger attention on the needs of Indigenous children and young people with a disability, and increased support for vulnerable families. More accountability for educational outcomes and greater community and business involvement in schools are proposed to give young people more experience and avenues to work.

The discussion papers are currently the subject of public consultation, which will shape the content of the final *Blueprint* to be released later this year.

Other achievements that are improving education and helping people into work include:

- increasing the Educational Maintenance Allowance by more than 60% to help low income families with education costs
- assistance for more than 2,000 students into further education, training or work as part of the *OnTrack* program, and
- help for almost 30,000 young people a year through Local Learning and Employment Networks.

Persons aged 20-24 years with Year 12 or equivalent



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Work (Attainment Rate 2007)

Next Steps

The aim of new initiatives this year is to provide increased support for young people to maximise outcomes in education and work. Greater support will be given to early school leavers in particular parts of the state where there are risks of non-completion and unemployment, and to Indigenous young people and children being cared for out of the family home. There will also be a revitalised effort to improve workforce participation among adult jobseekers with low skills and other disadvantages. Victorians who have most difficulty getting and staying in paid work will be assisted by linking community support services with new employment and training opportunities.

Stronger Support for Students with High Needs

Consistent with the objectives of the *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform*, new incentives and more support will be provided for schools to boost their performance. We will provide well-targeted, systemic interventions to lift performance, focusing on strengthening school governance, developing the teaching workforce and greater resourcing of schools and their students. Schools with larger numbers of high-need students are expected to benefit significantly as we improve the opportunities and outcomes for all students, including young people at risk of dropping out.

Schools will also be assisted by new regionally based support systems, with the establishment of 67 school improvement leader positions (one for each school network). They will provide more support for teachers to keep abreast of new developments in teaching practice and assist schools to develop improvement strategies.

Our Goal

Increase the proportion of young people who complete Year 12 or its equivalent and reduce barriers to employment

The student support program - which provides psychologists, guidance officers, speech pathologists and visiting teachers to step in when a student needs extra assistance - will also be expanded. By providing early, targeted intervention and specialised support, this program helps to improve educational outcomes for students who require assistance for learning, disability or behaviour-related needs. This program will also be better linked to early childhood intervention services, other student wellbeing programs and school improvement initiatives.

Building on the lessons of *A Fairer Victoria 2007*, literacy programs will be significantly boosted as the building block for successful learning. More than 55% of the 6,000 students who were assisted by Literacy Improvement Teams have progressed beyond expectations, with almost 15% of students progressing nearly two years ahead of where they were six months earlier.

We will extend the Literacy Improvement Teams of 45 experts for a further three years and appoint an additional 15 literacy experts for schools with high enrolments of Indigenous children. These teams build the capacity of classroom teachers and school leaders to achieve sustained improvement in literacy outcomes for all students.

Children in State care face more hurdles in staying in school and training and need greater support to increase their opportunities for education and employment in later life. A new, stronger, therapeutic model of residential care will be piloted for these children and young people, along with greater support and training for staff and carers and improved support for kinship care placements.

Access to the *VET in Schools* program will also be strengthened by giving schools additional funding to provide these programs, so that students are less likely to be excluded from taking the course of their choice.

Mentoring has proven highly successful in engaging young people at risk of dropping out of learning, employment and social life. We will continue this vital work.



Paul Kelly points out a koala to eco-tourists in the Tower Hill Nature Reserve.

Indigenous Victorians Setting and Achieving Economic Goals

Through the Worn Gundidj Aboriginal Co-operative, Tower Hill Nature Reserve provides an economic boost to the local Indigenous community. Worn Gundidj provides training and work for Indigenous people in community managed activities and enterprises and operates the Tower Hill Visitor Centre.

Under the careful guidance of CEO John Collyer, Worn Gundidj has drawn on the *Aboriginal Land and Economic Development Program* to help fund the employment of a business manager, marketing, staff training, improvement of interpretive materials and signage, and installation of a hospitality service in the Visitor Centre.

As John noted recently, while the funding they've received through *A Fairer Victoria* has helped the Worn Gundidji Co-operative maximise its business potential, the greatest benefit to local people has been the freedom they've had to set – and achieve – their own goals.

A Whole of Government Approach: Closing the Gap in Indigenous Outcomes

Since 1999, the Government has made the biggest investment in programs to address Indigenous disadvantage in Victoria's history. This is framed by a sustained, long-term plan - the *Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework* - aimed at achieving measurable improvements against 21 key outcomes over the next generation.

A Fairer Victoria 2008 builds on these investments and reinforces new priorities to improve education and employment opportunities for Aboriginal children through a significant schools' reform package.

As detailed in *Wannik: Learning Together - Journey to Our Future (February 2008)* which outlines the education strategy for Koorie students, each Indigenous student will have their own educational plan to lift their educational achievements and job prospects. The Koorie Education Support Workforce will better support students and forge better links between schools, families and their communities.

The key focus is on improving literacy and numeracy, with specialist support staff to run accelerated literacy and numeracy programs for under-performing students. Fifteen specialists will be targeted to schools with high numbers of Indigenous students.

We will also increase economic opportunities with a tailored *Learning and Working* program to reduce the number of young Indigenous people in Victoria who become long-term unemployed. This practical program will help Indigenous young people gain the skills and find the jobs, and work with families and communities to get over the local barriers to jobs and training.

These education and work reforms support other important initiatives that will build on the strength of Victoria's Aboriginal communities.

The welfare and safety of Aboriginal children with complex needs and who are unable to live at home will be improved by expanding the level of support for their kinship carers. This will improve the sustainability of care placements and increase the child's life chances.

More resources will also be provided to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop the skills and management of their workforce, and improve in-house systems to meet requirements under Victoria's child protection legislation, thereby improving the delivery of services to vulnerable children and families.

Following on from the success of Koorie courts at a Magistrate's level, the Koorie County Court will be established to provide access to a higher court that is more culturally accessible, acceptable and comprehensible to the Koorie community. This will increase community confidence in the criminal justice system and reinforce the status of Elders and Respected Persons.

Together these initiatives will contribute to the Government's overarching goal through the *Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework* to close the gap in life expectancy and improve quality of life for Indigenous Victorians. Breaking the cycle of disadvantage for children, reducing education inequalities and getting more people into jobs are important objectives in the partnership between the Brumby Government and Victoria's Indigenous leaders.

Integrating Education and Community Facilities for Lifelong Learning

Beyond places for learning, schools are important social hubs for children and families to connect. We will continue to support new partnerships that bridge schools to the wider community, developing facilities for increased use by all the community.

Major school redevelopments across the State will provide opportunities to regenerate entire neighbourhoods such as in Geelong, where a community hub and global learning centre is being created as part of the redevelopment of Western Heights College. Similarly in Colac, a state of the art facility that will house a school and community library, TAFE shop front, technology hub, meeting and seminar space will form part of the redevelopment of Colac High School and Colac College.

The Government is creating a new lifelong learning precinct in Wendouree West as part of the Neighbourhood Renewal program. Community wellbeing will be significantly boosted. This will co-locate occasional care, a kindergarten, a Prep to Year 8 school, information technology centre, adult education services and a Neighbourhood House.

Helping People into Jobs

Skills are a critical driver of economic growth and are associated with higher productivity and higher participation. A more skilled workforce is also fundamental to social inclusion, providing more rewarding employment opportunities and reducing poverty.

The Government is considering a range of initiatives to overcome skill shortages and ensure we have the right number and mix of skilled workers to keep our economy and communities strong. On 30 April we released a discussion paper on skills reform entitled *Securing our future economic prosperity*.

The principles informing consideration of these reforms include:

- boosting numbers of individuals and businesses accessing training, which will increase the skills of Victoria's workforce
- developing a Vocational Education and Training system that is easier to navigate
- ensuring the system is more responsive and flexible to the changing skills needs of individuals and businesses, and
- creating a stronger culture of lifelong learning.

The aim of these reforms is to enable more Victorians to fully participate in the workforce and in their communities, by making it easier to access the foundation skills in literacy and numeracy that are required to be job ready.

Not only does the Government want to encourage and support thousands of Victorians to take up training for the first time, we also want to attract thousands more people to upgrade their qualifications.

A consultation with key stakeholders is now being undertaken to inform the nature and extent of the reform required in the training system to tackle our skills challenges.

The major investments we are making in lifting school completion and skills training will be complemented by efforts to assist disadvantaged job seekers into sustainable jobs. The focus will be on new workforce partnerships for migrants, Indigenous Victorians, *Neighbourhood Renewal* residents, people with alcohol and drug problems, mental health issues or in transition from care or the justice system. This initiative is about treating disadvantaged job seekers as people with complex needs rather than clients of single services and helping them get a foothold in the job market.

A new 26 week fixed rent policy will reduce the current disincentives for people living in public housing to return to work. Until now, rent for public housing tenants was reviewed and backdated to whenever household income changed. Now, residents will have an increased incentive to start work and earn extra income because they will no longer face an immediate increase in rent. This has the potential to encourage up to 60,000 public housing residents to get into work or extend existing part-time jobs. There will be no backdating of rent, reducing pressure on tenancies. This initiative meets multiple priorities of *A Fairer Victoria* and mainstreams a reform approach piloted successfully through the *Neighbourhood Renewal* initiative.



Steve Bruhn applies his machinist skills at Jenkin Bros Engineers in Bayswater.

New Partnerships to Get People into Work

Despite having experience in electronics and engineering, 59 year old Stephen Bruhn was unemployed for six years.

With the assistance of the Skill-Up and Placement Project, Stephen completed a 12-week full time Computerised Numerical Control (CNC) operation and programming course and is now working for Jenkin Bros Engineer's (Australia) Pty Ltd, in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

The Skill-Up and Placement Project is run by the Australian Manufacturing Technology Institute Limited (AMTIL), a national body that represents the interests of companies in the machine tool and ancillary equipment sector. With the sector facing severe skill shortages, AMTIL has been working with Federal and State Governments to promote training and employment.

The Victorian Government's *Workforce Participation Partnerships* (WPP) program has been important in helping AMTIL address workforce issues.

The WPP project is also supporting long-term unemployed people build their confidence, as well as their skills, and return to work.

Stephen Bruhn now sees each day as a learning experience. He also sees a brighter future for himself. "I want to learn more about CNC manufacturing, become a CNC specialist and contribute to improved designs for CNC work cells."

Together, this package will assist more young people complete their education and help the most vulnerable jobseekers find work.

Priority Two: Improving Education and Helping People Into Work: Reducing educational inequality, supporting young people at risk and reducing barriers to workforce participation.	Total \$ Million Investment Over 4 Years
School Reform Resourcing to Support the Blueprint	\$71.4
Expanded Student Support Funding to meet the Learning and Development needs of at risk Students	\$33.2
Literacy Improvement Teams	\$22.1
Improving Outcomes for Children in Out of Home Care Services	\$39.4
Improving Year 12 or Equivalent Completion by Young People in Victoria - VET †	\$7.3
Youth Mentoring	\$3.8
Improving the Lives of Indigenous Victorians ††	\$36.2
New Workforce New Workplace †	\$5.0
Sub Total	\$218.4

Summary of Initiatives Funded Through Other Sources:

Vines Road Community Precinct at Geelong

Colac Shared School and Community Library

Lifelong Learning Precinct in Wendouree West

26-week Fixed Rent Policy

† One year only.

†† Over five years.