



# Stronger futures for all young Victorians

Discussion paper on the youth transitions system





“All young people should be given the opportunity to reach their potential.”

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# Ministerial Foreword



The Hon. Bronwyn Pike, MP

All young people should be given the opportunity to reach their potential.

As young people reach the end of their compulsory schooling, they commence a crucial phase in their lives, the transition to work and life as independent adults. The knowledge and skills they acquire are critical to the decisions they make and to the success of this transition.

Equally, the knowledge and skills our young people possess on entry to the workforce are critical to our overall prosperity. The Victorian economy's most important resource is its skilled workforce, and highly skilled new entrants are a key element of this resource.

Parents, educators, mentors, employers and governments all play a role in supporting young people through this phase. Governments play their role by providing and supporting world-class education and training systems.

The Government has made a commitment in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians that our education system will equip all young Victorians to lead fulfilling lives, participate fully in their communities and the economy, and effectively carry out their responsibilities as citizens. We are investing heavily to fulfil this commitment.

Our agenda over the next five years for learning and development from birth to adulthood includes system improvements, partnerships with parents and communities, and workforce reform in our early childhood services and schools, including the senior years of schooling.

In the 2009–10 Budget, the State's education system received a \$1.7 billion boost to build the best early childhood and school system for the future.

The Government is also supporting young Victorians to enable them to continue onto further education and training, develop strong career paths and secure employment.

The Victorian Government has invested \$316 million in the reform of our vocational education and training system to make it more student-centred, more responsive and better able to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. This reform will provide an additional 172,000 training places for Victorians over four years, beginning 2009–10. In 2009–10, the Government provided a further \$121 million over four years for a skills and employment package.

In 2009, the Government released a new policy for the adult and community education sector to position it to support more young Victorians in acquiring additional skills.

Our investments are delivering strong returns. In 2009, Victorian students performed significantly higher than the Australian average in national assessment tests of reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and numeracy.

In addition, in 2009, 86.8 per cent of 20–24-year-olds completed Year 12 or its equivalent, which represents an increase of 5 percentage points since 2000. This is higher than the Australian average and the averages for all other Australian States.

Our VET and higher education sectors also perform very well on measures of student and employer satisfaction, labour market outcomes for graduates, and the percentage of our population with university qualifications.

The number of Victorian students undertaking high-level qualifications (diploma and above) is growing at more than double the national rate, and Victoria has a higher rate of attainment of higher education qualifications at a bachelor level or higher (for 25–34-year-olds) than any other Australian State.<sup>1</sup> Victoria also has the lowest proportion of young people not engaged in education, training or employment.

In March 2010, I released an Expert Panel report on the development of a Victorian Tertiary Education Plan, a roadmap for the further growth of tertiary education in Victoria to 2025.

In supporting young Victorians make the transition to working life, we want to do even better. We invite you to provide your ideas on how we can do this.



**The Hon. Bronwyn Pike, MP**

Minister for Education

Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation

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<sup>1</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Students and Courses 2008*.

# Introduction



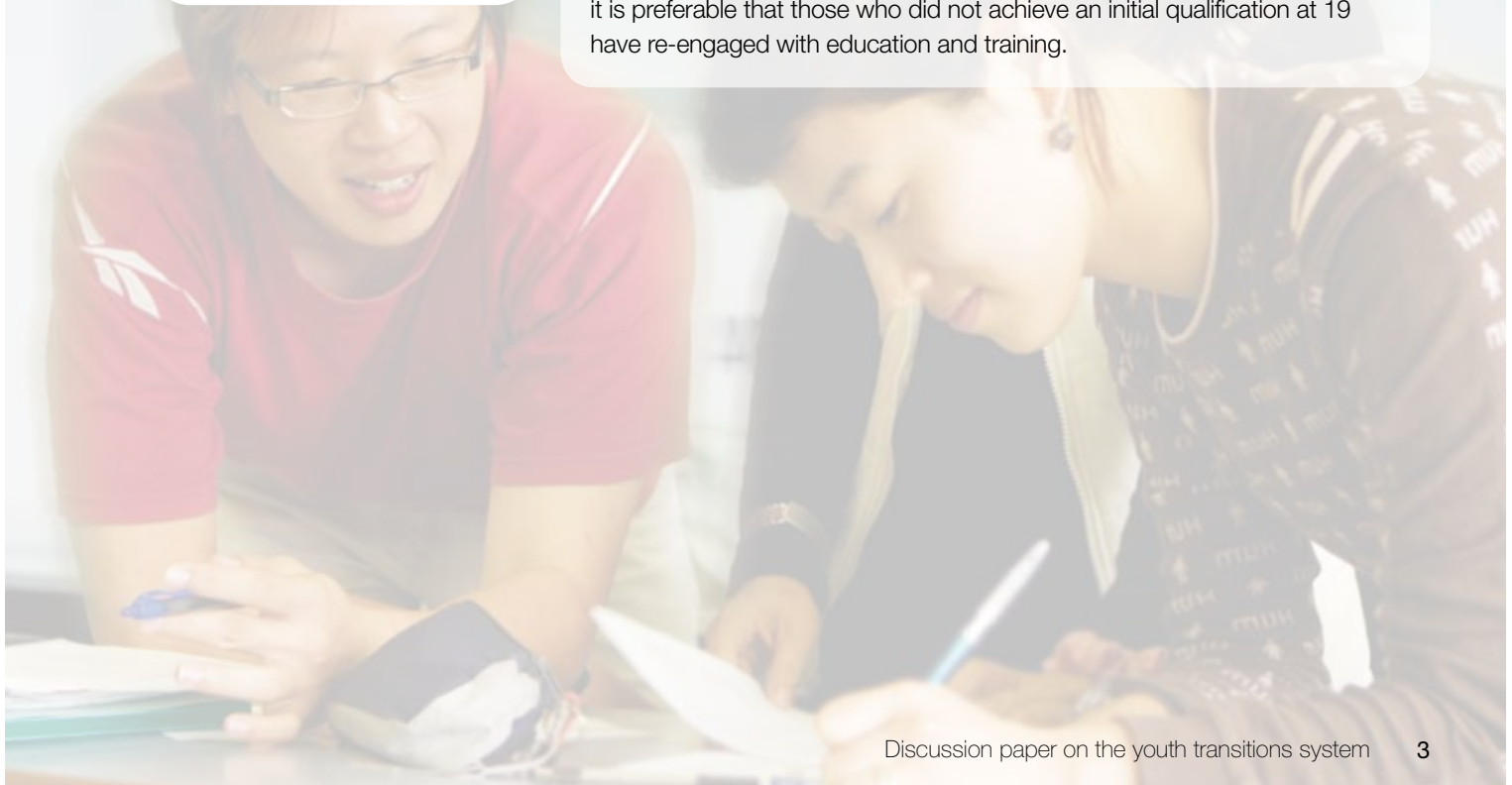
The term 'youth transitions' refers to the phase in a young person's life during which they progress from compulsory schooling to independent adult working life. For some, this is a fairly straightforward linear process. For other young people, establishing a career path involves many twists and turns.

Research indicates that young people have the best chance of a successful transition if they achieve a sequence of milestones between the ages of 15 and 24.

First, at 15 years of age, when young people are about to enter the senior secondary years, they need to be engaged in education and have the literacy and numeracy skills to successfully complete senior secondary or initial vocational qualifications. They also need sound knowledge of career options and the education and training pathways that lead to them.

Second, at 19 years of age young people should have attained (or be in the process of attaining) an initial qualification that provides a strong basis for further education or employment. This enables them to emerge from the initial phase of education as successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

Third, by 24 years of age, young people should be establishing strong career paths. An increased proportion should have attained higher level vocational education and training (VET) or higher education qualifications. Additionally, it is preferable that those who did not achieve an initial qualification at 19 have re-engaged with education and training.



The majority of young Victorians follow this sequence of milestones in the youth transition years. But some young Victorians miss out and others could be supported to achieve more.

The Victorian Government wants to address this. Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), Victoria has signed up to an ambitious reform agenda designed to lift the educational profile of the Australian population to sustain a prosperous Australia in future decades. This agenda covers the school, VET and higher education sectors.

COAG has set national targets to:

- lift the Year 12 or equivalent completion rate to 90 per cent
- halve the proportion of people aged 20–64 without a Certificate III or above
- double the number of diploma and advanced diploma completions.

The Australian Government has set targets to:

- lift to 40 per cent the proportion of people aged between 25 and 34 who hold a bachelor degree, with 20 per cent of those enrolled in higher education from low socio-economic status backgrounds.

Achieving these targets and meeting Victoria's future skill needs will require that more young people reach the milestones in the youth transitions years set out above. This will require greater retention of students at school and greater enrolment of people in the VET and higher education sectors following school. There will need to be greater rates of articulation from school to VET or higher education, from lower to higher level VET qualifications, and from VET to higher education. The challenge for Victoria is therefore to improve the general level of educational achievement across the entire 15–24 years cohort.

A particular focus is required on individuals from those groups most at risk in youth transitions: those from indigenous backgrounds, those from low socio-economic backgrounds, those in families under stress, low achievers, refugees and other newly arrived communities, and those in neighbourhoods of pronounced poverty or in remote locations.



“Young people have the best chance of a successful transition if they achieve a sequence of milestones from the ages of 15 to 24.”

# Knowledge and skills underpin economic prosperity

Countries the world over acknowledge the strong links between economic productivity and performance and the proportion of the population with higher level skills and knowledge. The overall prosperity of our economy and society and our capacity to provide high living standards for all have become increasingly dependent on the knowledge, skills and productivity levels of our population. Indeed, international research shows that lifting a country's literacy scores by one percentage point (relative to the international average) is associated with a rise of 1.5 per cent in per capita GDP.<sup>2</sup>

Skilled jobs will dominate job growth as Victoria moves to a more knowledge-based economy. Modelling of industry demand for qualifications by Monash University<sup>3</sup> and Access Economics<sup>4</sup> has indicated a need for increasing proportions of the population to possess higher level VET and higher education qualifications.

Young people are the major source of new entrants to the workforce and we need to ensure that they are well prepared to 'meet the demands of a rapidly moving global economy'<sup>5</sup>. This means that young people completing compulsory schooling must have the capacity to complete Year 12 or its equivalent and to continue onto higher level VET and higher education qualifications.

# The economic recovery and young people

Victoria has emerged from the recent economic downturn in a very strong position and is well placed to take advantage of the economic recovery. Victoria's unemployment rate is 5.3 per cent<sup>6</sup> and the forecast annual growth rate has been revised upward to 3 per cent by 2011–12<sup>7</sup>. The partnership with the Commonwealth Government to deliver the largest infrastructure program in Victoria's history, combined with sound fiscal management and an active economic reform program, has helped to moderate the impact of the downturn.

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<sup>2</sup> Cited by Ms Megan Lilly, Associate Director, Education & Training, AI Group in a presentation to the VCAA *Lunchtime Seminar Program*, August 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Monash University, Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, *The Labour Market and Qualifications in Victoria*, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Bradley, D., Noonan, M., Nugent, Dr H., & Scales, B., *Review of Australian Higher Education – Final Report*. Commonwealth of Australia, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Bradley, D et al., *Review of Australian Higher Education – Final Report*. Commonwealth of Australia, p xi.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *March Labour Force, Australia*, January 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Treasurer of Victoria, 2009–10 Budget Update, November 2009.



However, economic downturns have more serious repercussions for the labour market outcomes of young people (aged 15–24) than they have for the broader population.<sup>8</sup> There are three main reasons for this:

- a high proportion of young people are employed in industries that are heavily affected during periods of slower economic growth
- young people lack skills and experience, which means that they are more likely to be laid off
- young people often have less secure types of employment, such as part-time or casual jobs.

Governments around Australia are introducing urgent reforms to support young people through the economic recovery. Recently, the Victorian Government accelerated the State's infrastructure program in order to secure up to 35,000 jobs.

Major capital works projects in 2009–10 include the initial stages of the Victorian Transport Plan, the continuation of the Victorian Schools Plan and the partnership with the Commonwealth Government to deliver its Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan. Net infrastructure investment by the general government sector is projected to be \$6.9 billion in 2009–10, with an average of \$5.0 billion a year from 2010–11 to 2012–13.

Victoria has worked collaboratively with other jurisdictions through COAG to help more young people participate in education and training. Under the National Partnership, which commenced on 1 January 2010, the Australian Government will provide \$135.2 million over four years to support young people to complete Year 12 or equivalent and make a successful transition from school to further education or employment. New programs in Victoria will focus on:

- strengthening the connections between education and work through workplace learning coordinators
- improving career development through establishment of a careers curriculum
- targeted careers mentoring
- introducing a careers coach in each DEECD region
- providing intensive support to new apprentices to encourage and increase the rates of completion
- supporting Koorie students to continue in school and to make effective transitions from education and training into employment.

In addition, the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions will deliver the Youth Compact, which 'requires young people to complete Year 10 and then to be in full-time education, training or employment until the age of 17; offers a training entitlement to all 15–24-year-olds; and provides improved support through career advice and better assistance with the transition through school to further training and work'.<sup>9</sup> The training entitlement for

<sup>8</sup> Youth Employment in Victoria, unpublished report prepared for the Interdepartmental Policy Unit on Youth Transitions – Access Economics, 2009.

<sup>9</sup> COAG Communiqué, 2 July 2009.



15–19-year-olds commenced in July 2009, followed by the entitlement for 20–24-year-olds on 1 January 2010.

As a part of improved Commonwealth careers and transition support services, the Youth Connections service commenced in all regions of Victoria in January 2010. Youth Connections provides a safety net for young people who have disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education, and offers flexible case-managed support and services that recognise the role that family and community play in a young person's wellbeing and development.

Under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, States will progressively take over responsibility for youth careers and transition support services from the Commonwealth, with a view to offering better, more effective services and reducing wasteful duplication.

Australian Apprenticeships have also been identified by COAG as a key area for reform. In December 2009, COAG agreed to a series of measures to maximise the number of apprentices commencing and completing apprenticeships, and to strengthen the apprenticeship system.

While early childhood services and the compulsory years of schooling have an impact on youth transitions, they have been addressed primarily in the 2008 *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, meaning that they are largely outside the scope of this consultation, as are arrangements for those beyond the age of 24.

## What works?

Research indicates that international best practice in youth transitions systems is based on:

- literacy and numeracy support in the post-compulsory years and broad preparation for work and life
- support for making education and training choices
- arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications with strong employment and further education outcomes
- systems with strong pathways that assist students to move effectively between courses, institutions and sectors
- student pathways that are strongly connected to workplace learning opportunities and employment destinations
- opportunities for young people to re-engage with education and training.

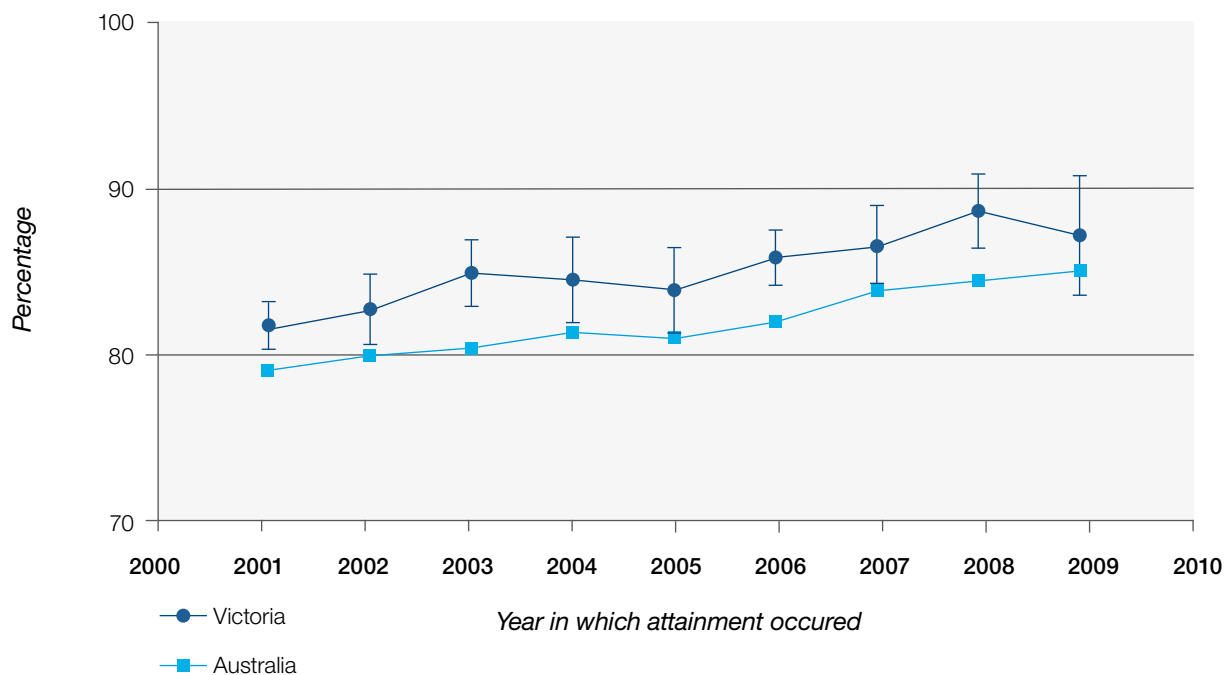
The investment and initiatives of the Victorian Government to date have focused on these areas.

# Key achievements to date

The completion of Year 12 or its equivalent is now widely accepted as the base level of education required for successful youth transitions and effective social and economic participation in adult life.

The percentage of 20–24-year-olds who had completed Year 12 or Certificate II or above rose to 86.8 per cent in 2009 (see Figure 1), the highest of all the states and well above the Australian average.

Figure 1: Percentage of 20–24-year-olds who attained Year 12 or its educational equivalent



Source: ABS, Survey of Education and Work

Notes:

- In the Australian context, Year 12 or equivalent has been defined as a senior secondary certificate or Certificate II or above.
- These results are sourced from the Survey of Education and Work conducted in May each year.
- This chart illustrates the uncertainty associated with survey samples by showing the survey estimate with a 95% confidence interval. This means that there is a 95% probability that the 'true' value, which would be derived if the full population was sampled, lies within the confidence interval.
- The confidence interval for the Victorian estimate increased in 2009, but it is expected that in 2010 it will return to its 2007 or 2008 level.
- The confidence intervals for the Australian estimates are not shown on this chart.



Young Australians and young Victorians have high levels of literacy and numeracy achievement at age 15. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey shows that young people in Australia perform strongly on reading, mathematics and scientific literacy at 15 years compared to young people in other OECD countries. In the 2006 PISA survey, Australia ranked sixth of 31 OECD countries in reading, ninth in mathematics and fifth in science.

In 2009, the percentage of Victorian students at or above the minimum standard in the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was similar to the percentages in the best performing jurisdictions – NSW, SA and the ACT – and higher than elsewhere in Australia in reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and numeracy.

Young Victorians generally make a successful transition to further education, training or employment in the year following Year 12. Data from the 2009 *On Track* survey indicates that 71.7 per cent of those who attained a senior secondary certificate in 2008 went on to further education and training in 2009, 12.4 per cent were employed (full or part-time), 12.1 per cent had deferred taking up their education and training place, and only 3.8 per cent were looking for work.

Our VET and higher education sectors also perform well.

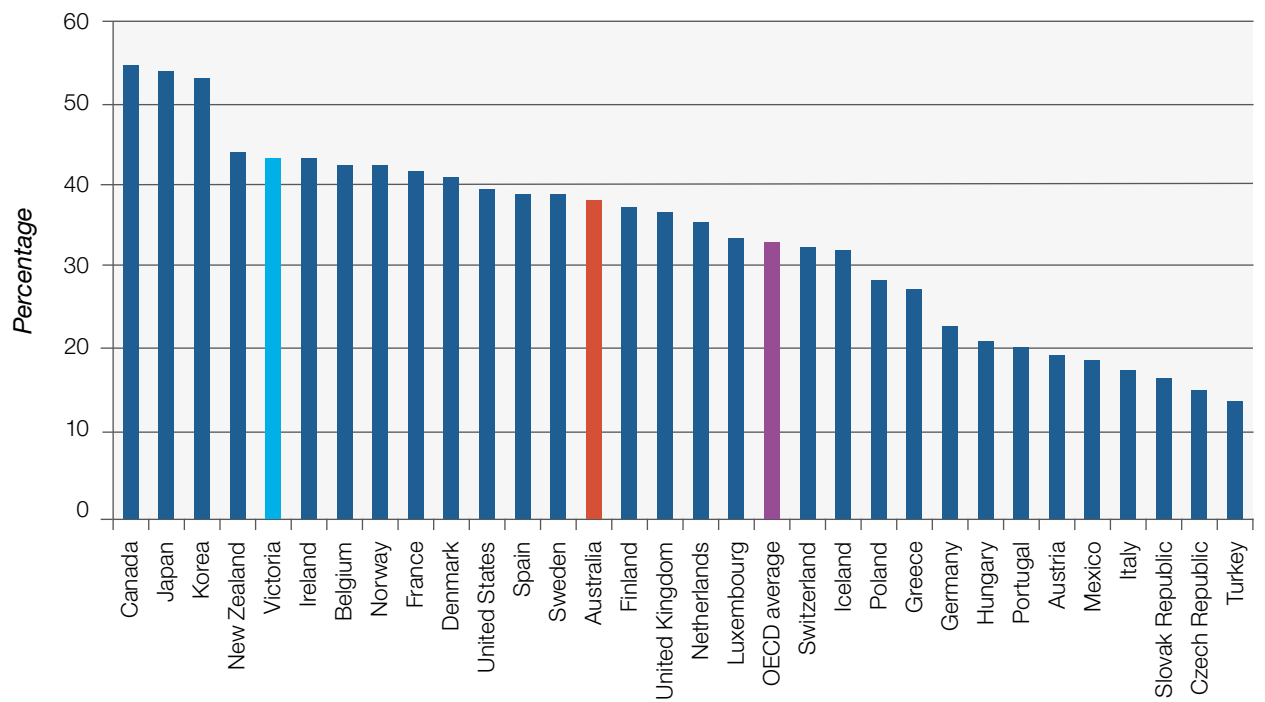
The 2009 Student Outcomes Survey indicates that 88.4 per cent of VET graduates were satisfied with the overall quality of their training. Related surveys of employers also indicate that Victoria is above the national average on several measures, including employer satisfaction with training and employee skill levels, and apprentice and trainee satisfaction with TAFE.

VET graduates achieve strong labour market outcomes, with 78.5 per cent of all Victorian graduates being employed after training (74.6 of 15–24-year-olds) and 32 per cent enrolled in further study in 2009.<sup>10</sup>

Victoria performs strongly in tertiary qualifications, with over 40 per cent of 25–34-year-olds attaining tertiary qualifications in 2006, placing us fifth in a ranking of OECD countries (see Figure 2).

<sup>10</sup> NCVER Student Outcomes Survey 2008.

Figure 2: Percentage of population aged 25–34 years with tertiary qualifications, 2006



Note: tertiary qualifications refers to International Standard Classification of Education qualification 5A and 5B, diploma and degree qualifications.

Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance*, DIIRD & DEECD, 2009.

“Over time there should be more students achieving above the national minimum standard in literacy and numeracy.”





# How can we continue to improve the current youth transitions system?



## Strengthening literacy and numeracy in the post-compulsory years

One of the great strengths of the Victorian youth transitions system is that most students arrive at the end of the compulsory years of schooling with the knowledge and skills required to enable them to successfully undertake a senior secondary certificate or initial VET qualification.

Low achievement in literacy and numeracy is associated with low levels of engagement with schooling and with the non-completion of initial qualifications. This can be the start of a vicious cycle: those with poor literacy skills and no qualifications are less likely to be employed. If they are employed, they are more likely to be in lower paying jobs, and they are less likely to participate in further training or be selected or encouraged to take up further training in their workplaces.<sup>11</sup>

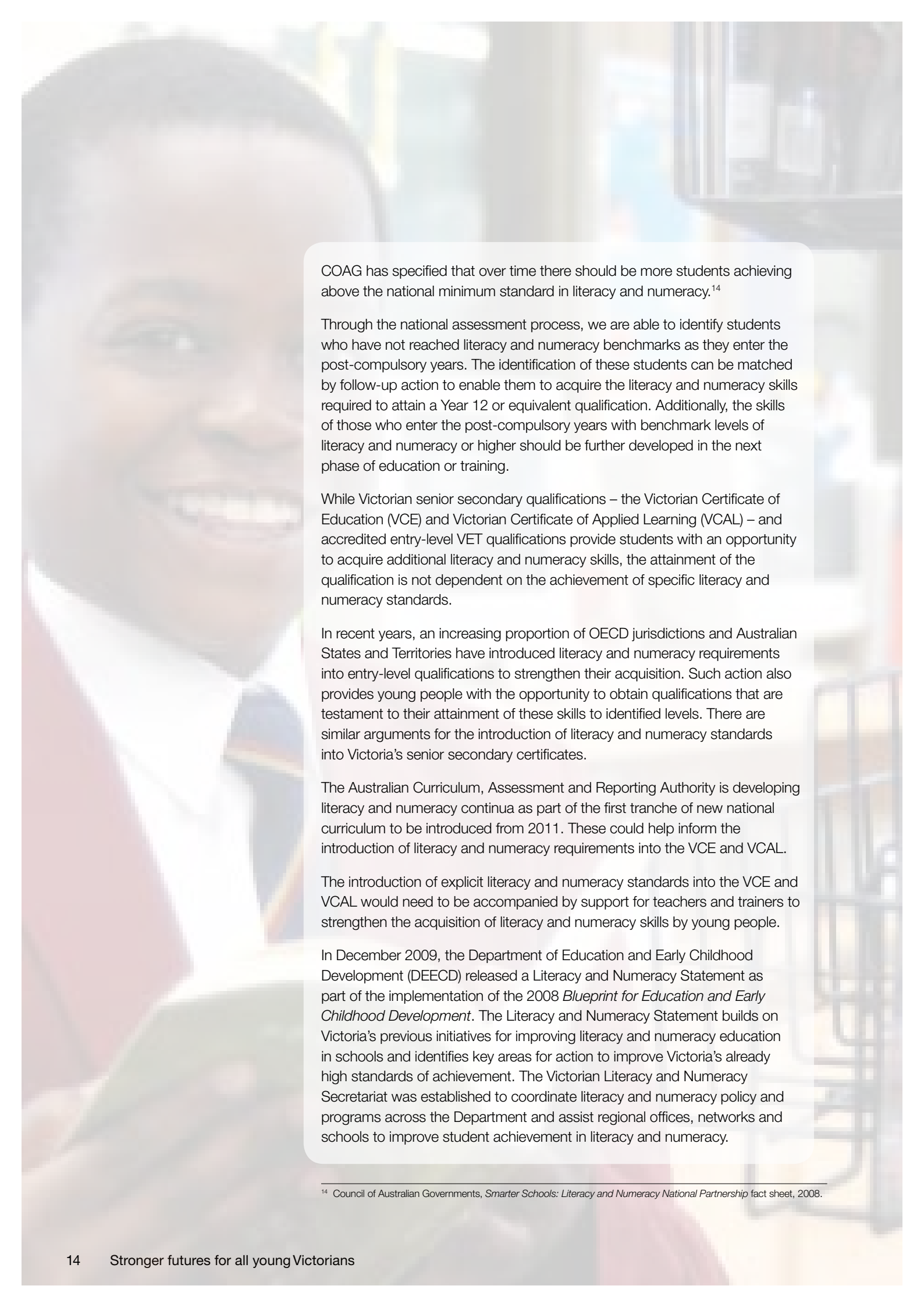
The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) has stated that low levels of functional literacy and numeracy can serve as a barrier to business growth. ACCI believes that sound literacy and numeracy skills must be taught in primary school and reinforced in secondary school and further education.<sup>12</sup>

The Victorian Auditor-General recently noted that while the evidence indicates that the greatest improvements in literacy and numeracy come from systematic and sustained intervention in the early years, Victoria should also 'sustain support for those who need it as they progress through school'.<sup>13</sup> An opportunity to strengthen the Victorian youth transitions system relates to the Auditor-General's call to 'sustain support' as students progress through education.

<sup>11</sup> Perkins, K. *Adult Literacy and Numeracy, Research and Future Strategy*, NCVER, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *Skills for a Nation: a Blueprint for Improving Education and Training*, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Victorian Auditor General, *Literacy and Numeracy Achievement*, PP No. 171, Session 2006-09, Victorian Government Printer, February 2009.



COAG has specified that over time there should be more students achieving above the national minimum standard in literacy and numeracy.<sup>14</sup>

Through the national assessment process, we are able to identify students who have not reached literacy and numeracy benchmarks as they enter the post-compulsory years. The identification of these students can be matched by follow-up action to enable them to acquire the literacy and numeracy skills required to attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. Additionally, the skills of those who enter the post-compulsory years with benchmark levels of literacy and numeracy or higher should be further developed in the next phase of education or training.

While Victorian senior secondary qualifications – the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) – and accredited entry-level VET qualifications provide students with an opportunity to acquire additional literacy and numeracy skills, the attainment of the qualification is not dependent on the achievement of specific literacy and numeracy standards.

In recent years, an increasing proportion of OECD jurisdictions and Australian States and Territories have introduced literacy and numeracy requirements into entry-level qualifications to strengthen their acquisition. Such action also provides young people with the opportunity to obtain qualifications that are testament to their attainment of these skills to identified levels. There are similar arguments for the introduction of literacy and numeracy standards into Victoria's senior secondary certificates.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is developing literacy and numeracy continua as part of the first tranche of new national curriculum to be introduced from 2011. These could help inform the introduction of literacy and numeracy requirements into the VCE and VCAL.

The introduction of explicit literacy and numeracy standards into the VCE and VCAL would need to be accompanied by support for teachers and trainers to strengthen the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills by young people.

In December 2009, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) released a Literacy and Numeracy Statement as part of the implementation of the 2008 *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*. The Literacy and Numeracy Statement builds on Victoria's previous initiatives for improving literacy and numeracy education in schools and identifies key areas for action to improve Victoria's already high standards of achievement. The Victorian Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat was established to coordinate literacy and numeracy policy and programs across the Department and assist regional offices, networks and schools to improve student achievement in literacy and numeracy.

<sup>14</sup> Council of Australian Governments, *Smarter Schools: Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership* fact sheet, 2008.



Additionally, in government secondary schools it is proposed that those students who have yet to meet the literacy or numeracy benchmark in Year 9 will be provided with a specific learning plan as part of their Managed Individual Pathways plan to ensure that they achieve and exceed this benchmark.

The National Quality Council (NQC) and COAG in their 2009 final report *VET Products for the 21st Century* recommended that language, literacy and numeracy requirements be made more explicit in the development of occupational and foundation VET qualifications. The report indicated that there was support from VET stakeholders for making competency in language, literacy and numeracy, knowledge and core skills (such as occupational health and safety) a requirement for participation in qualifications at Certificate III and above.<sup>15</sup>

Consistent with this finding, many Victorian VET and adult and community education (ACE) providers have adopted the practice of enrolling students in programs to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills where low prior achievement is diagnosed, particularly in VCAL, so students can strengthen these skills while undertaking an accredited vocational qualification.

## Questions ►

**What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards take?**

**In what other ways can the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills be strengthened in the post-compulsory years?**

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<sup>15</sup> *VET Products for the 21st Century*, Final Report of the Joint Steering Committee of the National Quality Council and the COAG Skills and Workforce Development Subgroup, June 2009.

# Support for making informed education and training choices

Supporting young people to make informed choices about their future education, training and employment options is a vital part of the youth transitions system. Quality career development services are a key element of this support.

In Victoria, the post-compulsory choices that young people need to make in terms of the types of institutions and qualifications that are available are greater than in any other State or Territory. Victoria has had two senior secondary qualifications since the introduction of VCAL in 2003 for those students better suited to a 'hands on' approach to learning and vocational and employment destinations. The VCE and VCAL, as well as a wide range of accredited vocational qualifications, are available through schools and TAFE institutes and an expanding range of ACE providers and private registered training organisations (RTOs).<sup>16</sup>

These post-compulsory choices require young people to have an understanding of their career and study alternatives, interests and aptitudes to be able to select the pathway that is right for them.

Victoria is also moving towards student demand-driven VET and higher education sectors. The ability of young people to understand their options, recognise where strong employment opportunities exist and make sound decisions will be crucial if they are to take advantage of the opportunities that will open up as a result of these reforms.

Quality career development services also have the potential to raise student aspirations, heighten engagement with education and increase motivation to complete a qualification. They are critical in assisting students to make the link between initial qualifications and their preferred employment destinations. The 2008 *On Track* survey shows that one of the factors that would have encouraged early leavers to stay at school and attain an initial qualification is better career advice – a factor identified by almost half of early leavers.

Good-practice career development programs are characterised by:

- effective school leadership
- specially qualified and experienced careers staff
- quality experiential learning
- curriculum-embedded career education
- culturally sensitive services
- incorporation of a range of services and activities
- delivery by a combination of school, RTOs and external providers, including employer and industry bodies
- commencement early in school.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Additional information on Victoria's education and training system is at Appendix 1.

<sup>17</sup> Making Career Development Core Business, unpublished report prepared for the Interdepartmental Policy Unit on Youth Transitions, October 2009.



In Victoria, research indicates that the provision of career development services to young people is better than in other Australian States and that there are many examples of good practice, but the quality of these services is uneven.<sup>18</sup>

Participation in career guidance activities is almost universal for senior students. However, the range of careers services provided to students in Years 7–9 is more limited, and affects early school leavers disproportionately.

Research also shows that a significant proportion of young people are not making education choices that match their career aspirations. At the national level, approximately 20 per cent of young people do not know what is required to meet their career aspirations. Of those planning a technical or associate professional occupation, 56 per cent plan to attend university and only 25 per cent plan to commence a VET qualification.<sup>19</sup>

Research suggests that career advice regarding vocational pathways is less than optimal and is provided inconsistently.<sup>20</sup> In particular, when surveyed, students rated the quality and availability of information on apprenticeships, traineeships and employment opportunities lower than information on university and TAFE courses.<sup>21</sup>

While about 60 per cent of careers staff have a postgraduate qualification and 20 per cent have a VET qualification in careers (across all school sectors), approximately 20 per cent do not have any specialist career training.<sup>22</sup>

The National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions, a joint initiative of the Australian and Victorian Governments, is improving career development services through the provision of funding for four new initiatives:

- development of a dedicated careers curriculum for Years 7 to 12
- provision of greater professional development opportunities for eligible career advisers
- development of specific careers mentoring programs for Koorie students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, including refugees, and students from families experiencing intergenerational poverty
- establishment of Regional Careers Coaches to support education and training providers to improve services to students and their families.

There is evidence that the approach used by most providers in Victoria strongly supports young people to make decisions just prior to exiting the education system. However, it does not focus on developing their skills so that they can manage their careers into the future. There is also evidence that the provision of services at TAFE and ACE is generally less developed than the provision of services in school.

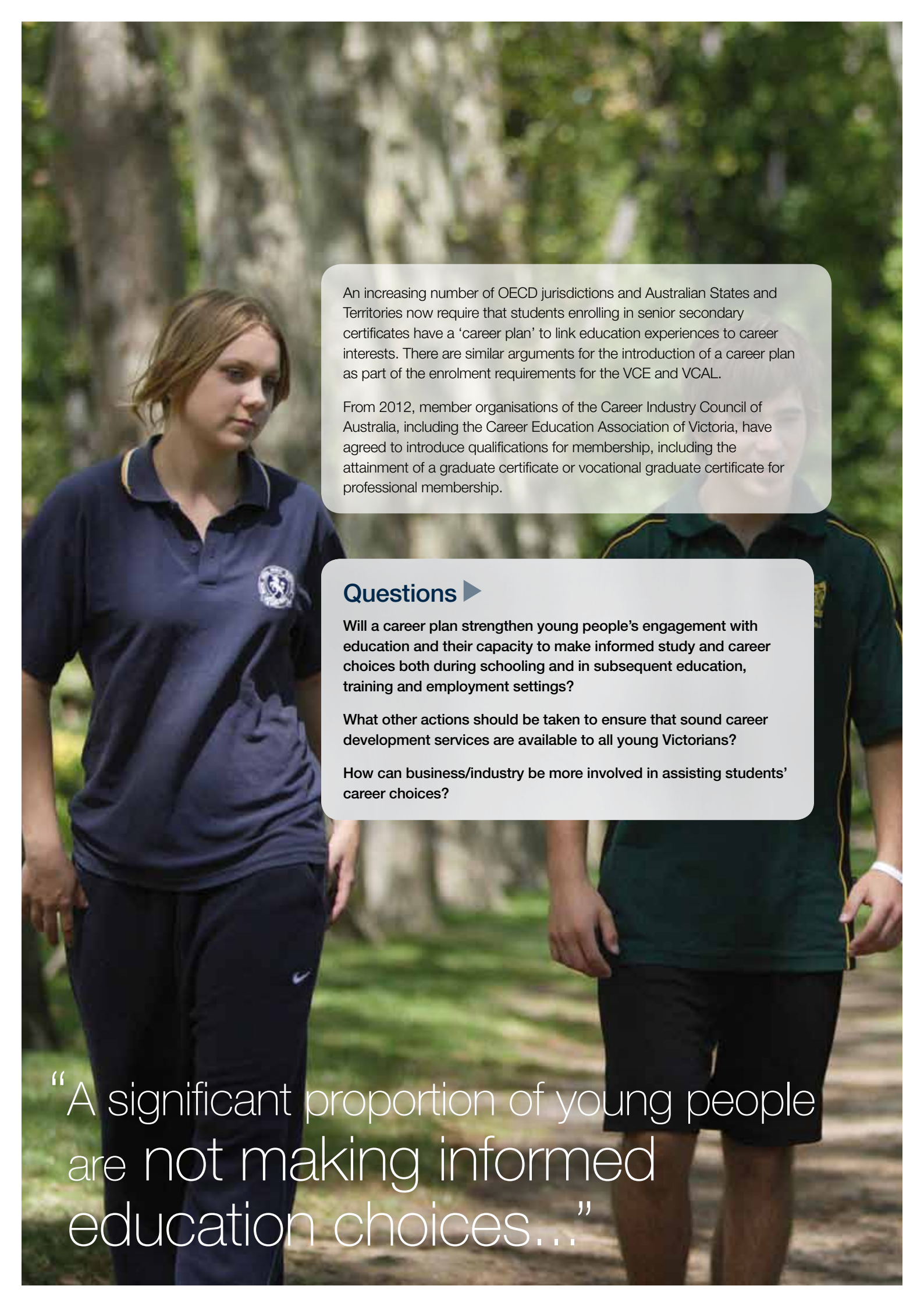
<sup>18</sup> Making Career Development Core Business.

<sup>19</sup> Curtis, D & McMillan, J, *School Non-completers: Profiles and Initial Destination*, LSAY research report 54, ACER, p. 31, July 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Rainey, L, Simons, M, Pudney, V, & Hughes, E, *What Choice? An Evaluation of Career Development Services for Young People*. NCVER, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Apprenticeship and Traineeship information rated 3.7/5 for availability and 3.5/5 for quality compared to 4.6/5 for availability and 4.5/5 for quality for information on universities. Unpublished report prepared for the Interdepartmental Policy Unit on Youth Transitions, 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Making Career Development Core Business.

A photograph of two students walking on a path outdoors. On the left, a female student in a dark blue polo shirt and dark pants looks down. On the right, a male student in a dark green polo shirt and dark shorts looks towards the camera. The background is a blurred natural setting with trees and grass.

An increasing number of OECD jurisdictions and Australian States and Territories now require that students enrolling in senior secondary certificates have a 'career plan' to link education experiences to career interests. There are similar arguments for the introduction of a career plan as part of the enrolment requirements for the VCE and VCAL.

From 2012, member organisations of the Career Industry Council of Australia, including the Career Education Association of Victoria, have agreed to introduce qualifications for membership, including the attainment of a graduate certificate or vocational graduate certificate for professional membership.

## Questions ▶

**Will a career plan strengthen young people's engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices both during schooling and in subsequent education, training and employment settings?**

**What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?**

**How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?**

“A significant proportion of young people are not making informed education choices...”



## Arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications

Research strongly supports the contention that young people are more likely to make a successful transition into the workforce if they have attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. From this solid starting point, they can move onto further education, training at higher levels or employment.

In 2007, 15–24-year-olds without a qualification were two and half times more likely to be unemployed and seeking full-time work (23 per cent) than those who had completed a Year 12 or equivalent qualification (9 per cent).<sup>23</sup>

In Victoria, a Year 12 or equivalent qualification means a senior secondary qualification such as the VCE or VCAL. It also includes vocational education and training qualifications at Certificate II level or above.

While Victoria outperforms every other State in Year 12 or equivalent qualification attainment for 20–24-year-olds, we have to keep on improving. Under the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transition, Victoria has adopted the ambitious target of achieving more than 90 per cent attainment of Year 12 or equivalent by 2015.

Over the past decade the Victorian Government has introduced significant reforms to lift completion rates. This has included helping students at risk of dropping out of school through the Managed Individual Pathways program in government schools, expanding vocational subjects in the VCE, establishing the VCAL as a ‘hands on’ alternative to the VCE, and creating youth-friendly environments in TAFE institutes through the establishment of Technical Education Centres (TECs).

Victoria’s Youth Guarantee program, introduced in 2006, provides a guaranteed place in a school, TAFE and many ACE providers for those under 20 without a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. This program has been expanded to include the Victorian Training Guarantee, which provides a guaranteed place for all unqualified Victorians, no matter what their age.

<sup>23</sup> ABS, Participation in Education, Trends in Leaving School, *Australian Social Trends 2001*, cat no. 4102.0.



In the VET sector, governments also provide incentives to increase the take-up and completion of apprenticeships and traineeships. The Australian Government's Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program provides financial payments to employers, predominantly at commencement and completion of an apprenticeship. Other programs, such as the Victorian Government's Apprentice/Trainee Completion Bonus program, provide completion payments rather than commencement payments.

In December 2009, COAG agreed to review apprenticeship and traineeship incentives to target better quality outcomes and commencement and retention of trade apprentices.

These reforms target all unqualified young people, whether they are at school, are studying under a VET or ACE provider, or have left the education and training system.

The incidence of failure to attain Year 12 or equivalent qualifications at 19 years of age is concentrated in particular locations in Victoria and is strongly correlated to a low socio-economic background – about 50 per cent of non-attainment is concentrated in 15 Victorian local government areas.

In 2010, under the National Partnership on Low SES Communities, primary and secondary schools in these areas will be targeted with sustained and intensive strategies over four years to raise attainment in the compulsory years of schooling and beyond to increase Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates. These strategies include building school leadership and workforce capacity, improving learning opportunities for students (for example through individual learning plans and case management), effectively using data to monitor and diagnose performance, and implementing school–community partnerships to extend learning opportunities (for example extended school hours, homework clubs and community engagement programs).



## Further strengthening completions in the school sector

Many students leave school without completing a qualification because they do not have access to the subjects they are interested in. In the 2008 *On Track* survey, over 60 per cent of early school leavers indicated they would have stayed at school if there had been a wider choice of subjects, and over 50 per cent indicated that they would have been encouraged to stay at school if there were more vocational programs and a more adult environment.

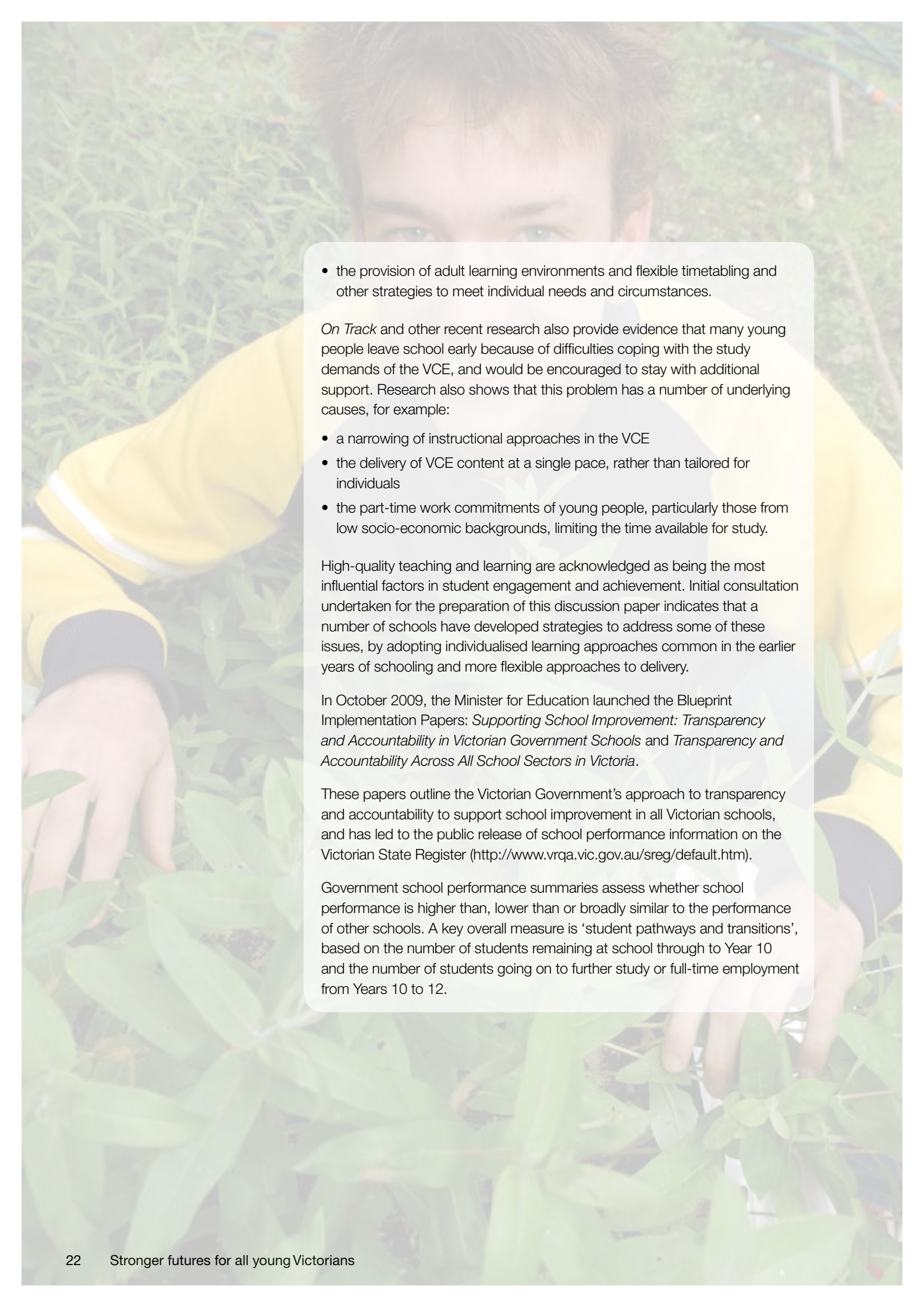
In many locations around Victoria, partnerships between government, Catholic and Independent schools have already emerged to improve student program options. These arrangements often include partnerships with VET and ACE providers, particularly TAFE institutes and employers, to improve the delivery of vocational programs as part of senior secondary certificates. Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) have been effective brokers in establishing these arrangements. The Commonwealth Government funded Trades Training Centre program has accelerated and reinforced these partnerships.

To support more young people to complete Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification and to strengthen links to subsequent destinations, some localities and jurisdictions have established greater institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualifications, both within the school sector and between the school and the VET sectors; for example the provision arrangements in Wangaratta between Wangaratta High School and the Goulburn Ovens TAFE Technical Education Centre (TEC) and in Tasmania with the introduction of the academies and polytechnics focused on general and vocational pathways respectively. For such arrangements to work, strong support for student pathways choice, including effective career advice, is required, along with provision planning for all institutions and pathways.

The *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* states the Government's intention to develop school provision standards and provision plans for networks of government schools.<sup>24</sup> Initial consultations undertaken in the preparation of this discussion paper indicate that provision planning should encompass:

- programs that lead to employment opportunities and structured workplace learning, particularly for those who have lost jobs during the economic downturn
- vocational pathways to apprenticeships, traineeships and higher level VET courses relevant to local employment opportunities and economic development priorities
- higher education pathways for students, including the opportunity to study subjects that are prerequisites for popular tertiary courses

<sup>24</sup> Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, 2008.

- 
- the provision of adult learning environments and flexible timetabling and other strategies to meet individual needs and circumstances.

*On Track* and other recent research also provide evidence that many young people leave school early because of difficulties coping with the study demands of the VCE, and would be encouraged to stay with additional support. Research also shows that this problem has a number of underlying causes, for example:

- a narrowing of instructional approaches in the VCE
- the delivery of VCE content at a single pace, rather than tailored for individuals
- the part-time work commitments of young people, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds, limiting the time available for study.

High-quality teaching and learning are acknowledged as being the most influential factors in student engagement and achievement. Initial consultation undertaken for the preparation of this discussion paper indicates that a number of schools have developed strategies to address some of these issues, by adopting individualised learning approaches common in the earlier years of schooling and more flexible approaches to delivery.

In October 2009, the Minister for Education launched the Blueprint Implementation Papers: *Supporting School Improvement: Transparency and Accountability in Victorian Government Schools* and *Transparency and Accountability Across All School Sectors in Victoria*.

These papers outline the Victorian Government's approach to transparency and accountability to support school improvement in all Victorian schools, and has led to the public release of school performance information on the Victorian State Register (<http://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/sreg/default.htm>).

Government school performance summaries assess whether school performance is higher than, lower than or broadly similar to the performance of other schools. A key overall measure is 'student pathways and transitions', based on the number of students remaining at school through to Year 10 and the number of students going on to further study or full-time employment from Years 10 to 12.



Since its introduction, the *On Track* survey has provided schools with information on the destinations of early school leavers. The Victorian Student Number was introduced in schools in 2009 and will be implemented in the VET sector through 2010. It will provide the capability to accurately detect patterns of student movement through, and departure from, the Victorian education and training system. It will greatly improve the collection and analysis of timely and accurate data about education in Victoria. Schools will be able to use the information to refine school programs and program delivery partnerships to support all their students to complete qualifications and accurately monitor the proportions that do so. It will also facilitate the possible introduction of additional performance measures such as the proportion of students who continue to participate in education and complete Year 12 or equivalent, regardless of the institution or sector in which they participate or complete.

The new school accountability framework, combined with the introduction of the Victorian Student Number in the school and VET sectors, will enable the building of a cross-sectoral (school and VET) youth transitions transparency and accountability framework.

## Further strengthening completions in the VET sector

Many young people leave the school system without a qualification, but continue their studies in the VET sector. Research indicates that many of those who complete training programs such as apprenticeships or higher level vocational qualifications obtain good jobs with good incomes.<sup>25</sup> The Victorian VET system has been very successful in attracting young people, experiencing strong growth in enrolments from the 15–24-year-old cohort.<sup>26</sup>

Although there is a lack of definitive information, indicative data suggests that there is scope to improve the qualification completion rates of young people in the VET sector.

Nation-wide research conducted by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research indicates that completion rates for the 15–24-year-old cohort at Certificate I and II levels are very low. For many other cohorts – such as older, employed workers with a qualification who are undertaking additional training to improve their career prospects – this may not be a problem because they can achieve this goal by completing some modules rather than a full qualification. But this is not generally the case for unqualified young people.

<sup>25</sup> Long, M and Shah, C, *Private Returns to Vocational Education and Training Qualifications*, Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Monash University, NCVET, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Skills Victoria, *Victoria's Vocational Education and Training Statistics, a Pocket Guide*, DIIRD, 2008.

A young woman with dark hair and glasses is focused on working on a mechanical component, possibly a valve or part of a machine. She is wearing a light blue shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing industrial equipment.

Victoria's network of TECs caters for early school leavers in the TAFE sector. Preliminary evidence indicates that this model, which provides a dedicated space for young people to combine an entry-level VET qualification within a VCAL program at a TAFE institute, offers the sort of environment that encourages young people to attain qualifications.

Best practice in supporting young people to attain initial qualifications in the VET and ACE sectors has been identified, particularly from the practices in the TECs. Based on this best practice, TAFE completion pilots are being conducted in three TAFE campus locations: Frankston, Bendigo and Brimbank. These pilots will evaluate and refine best practice delivery to support the completion of initial qualifications in the VET and ACE sectors.

Although there is considerable variation in completion rates among industries and occupations, the COAG Apprenticeship Taskforce has recently noted that the extent of non-completion of apprenticeship and traineeships 'has long been seen as a problem'.

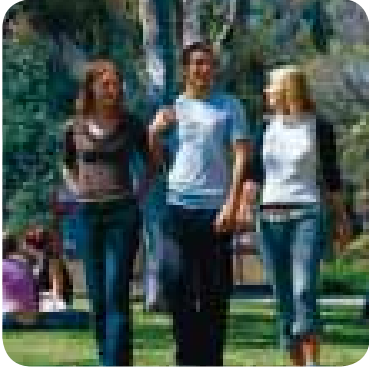
The causes of non-completion of qualifications in employment-based VET pathways, such as apprenticeships and traineeships, are more complex than those of students in institutional pathways. They encompass the employment decisions of employers who are highly sensitive to the economic cycle, the employment conditions of employees relative to other areas of youth employment, and the challenges for employers in providing effective and supportive workplace learning environments. Improvements to the apprenticeship system, including completions, are the subject of a separate and national COAG-led process.

Independent of this national process, research undertaken by the Victorian Government<sup>27</sup> has identified two areas in which action may improve the number of young people completing apprenticeships.

A high proportion of those who fail to complete their apprenticeships drop out in the first six to 12 months. Pre-apprenticeship programs can improve apprenticeship completion rates by better preparing young people to gain employment as apprentices, matching young people to particular trade occupations and providing wage benefits and credit towards the off-the-job training components of apprenticeships.

Improved provision of pre-apprenticeships has been a feature of the Victoria training system in recent years. However, Victorian research indicates that there is potential to further improve the structure and learning outcomes from pre-apprenticeship programs and the wage and training benefits they provide.

<sup>27</sup> Provision of Pastoral Care in Apprenticeships, unpublished report prepared for the Interdepartmental Policy Unit on Youth Transitions, Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Melbourne, 2009.



Additionally, while a significant proportion of pre-apprenticeships are undertaken by students in senior secondary certificates, the volume of learning in many pre-apprenticeships does not fit easily within VCE and VCAL structures. This reduces the likelihood of young people achieving the benefits of pre-apprenticeships.

Research also shows that the quality of the workplace environment, learning opportunities and supervision has a significant impact on the likelihood of an apprentice staying in their apprenticeship, particularly during the early stages. Personal factors related to the apprentice's broader life circumstances also influence the likelihood of completion.



In Victoria, an extensive network of Apprenticeship Field Officers provides a range of supports to apprentices and their employers, including assistance in dispute resolution. The National Partnership will enhance the services provided to apprentices aged 15–24 years, with intensive support during the first three to 12 months of their apprenticeship from 27 new Apprentice Support Officers.

Pastoral care for apprentices, such as mentoring and advice and support for workplace supervisors, has the potential to further improve apprenticeship completions.

## Questions

**What would further strengthen the delivery partnerships between government and non-government schools and between schools and VET providers?**

**What additional actions should Government take to support young people to complete initial qualifications in the VET sector?**

**Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision, and support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?**

**How should schools, VET providers and system authorities use the new transparency and accountability arrangements in Victorian schools and the Victorian Student Number to improve the completion rate of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications?**

**What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools and VET sectors?**

**How can businesses and industry be involved in increasing completion rates – especially for apprenticeships?**



## Systems that assist students to move effectively between courses, institutions and sectors

From the ages of 15 to 24, young people who stay engaged in education and training move between courses, institutions and sectors. Young people articulate – that is, progress – from one completed (or partially completed) qualification to another, often with credit towards the next qualification. This process of articulation is a tool for building stronger career paths for young people. Effective articulation arrangements ensure that individuals acquire the suite of knowledge and skills they require by progressing seamlessly through qualifications, being granted credit where they are eligible.

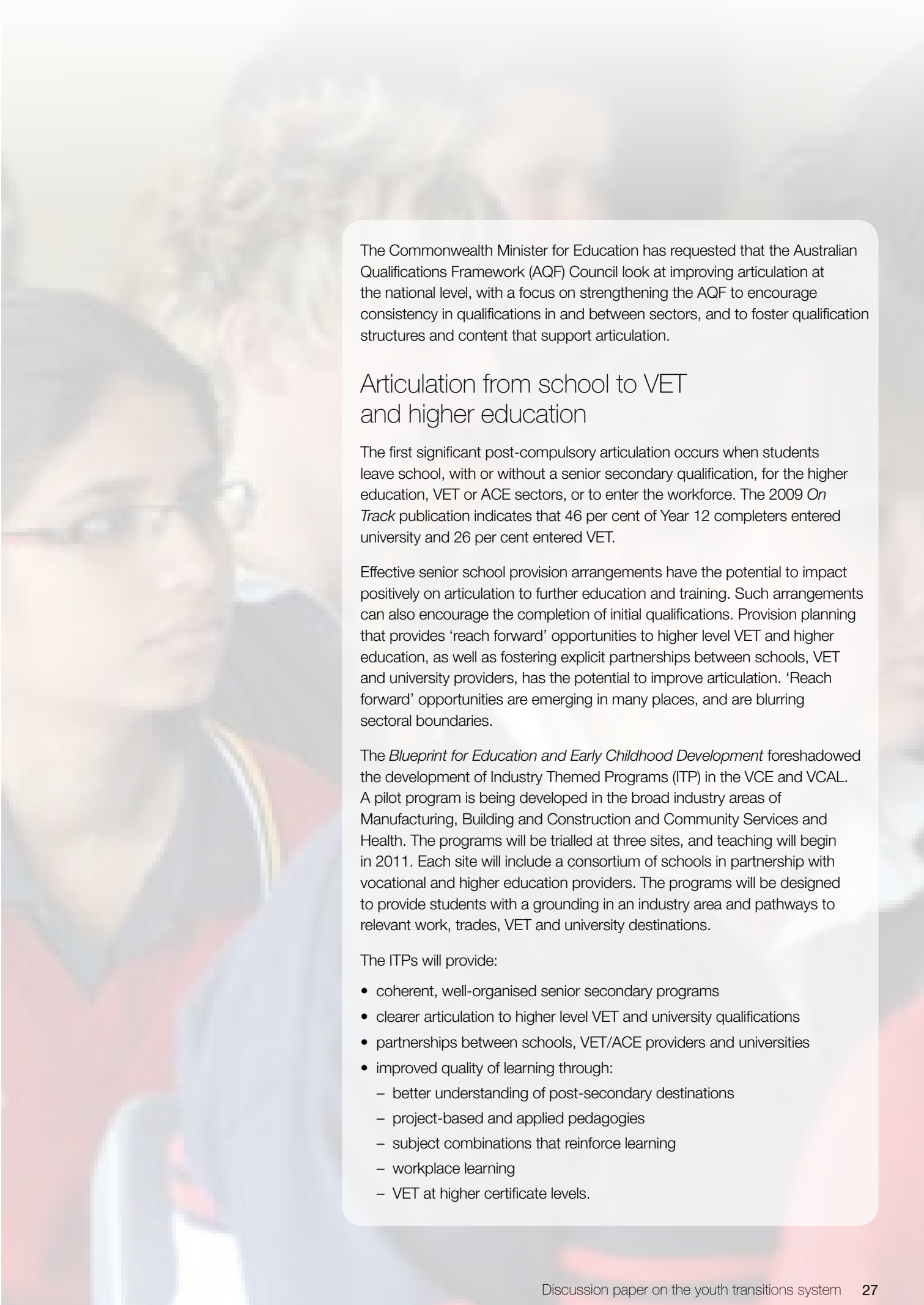
Effective articulation arrangements are also essential if Australia is to achieve the significant increase in VET and higher education enrolments and qualifications necessary to sustain a prosperous Australia in future decades. COAG has set targets to halve the proportion of people aged 16–64 without a Certificate III or above, and the Commonwealth Government has set a target to increase to 40 per cent the proportion of people aged 25–34 holding a bachelor degree.

Meeting these targets will require greater retention of students at school and much greater post-school enrolment in the VET and higher education sectors. It will require greater rates of articulation from school to VET or higher education, from lower to higher level VET qualifications, and from VET to higher education.

The articulation challenge also has implications for the design of new qualifications and the redesign of existing qualifications. Each qualification will need to provide students with:

- the relevant learning outcomes for that qualification, for both general skills and specific content
- an effective basis for transition to other qualifications, often in different sectors.

Articulation is a significant national issue. The different sectors have distinct missions, learning outcome specifications, qualification structures, and management and governance arrangements, which sometimes prevent students from moving efficiently between courses, institutions and sectors. However, Victoria is in a position to determine local arrangements and influence national outcomes.



The Commonwealth Minister for Education has requested that the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Council look at improving articulation at the national level, with a focus on strengthening the AQF to encourage consistency in qualifications in and between sectors, and to foster qualification structures and content that support articulation.

## Articulation from school to VET and higher education

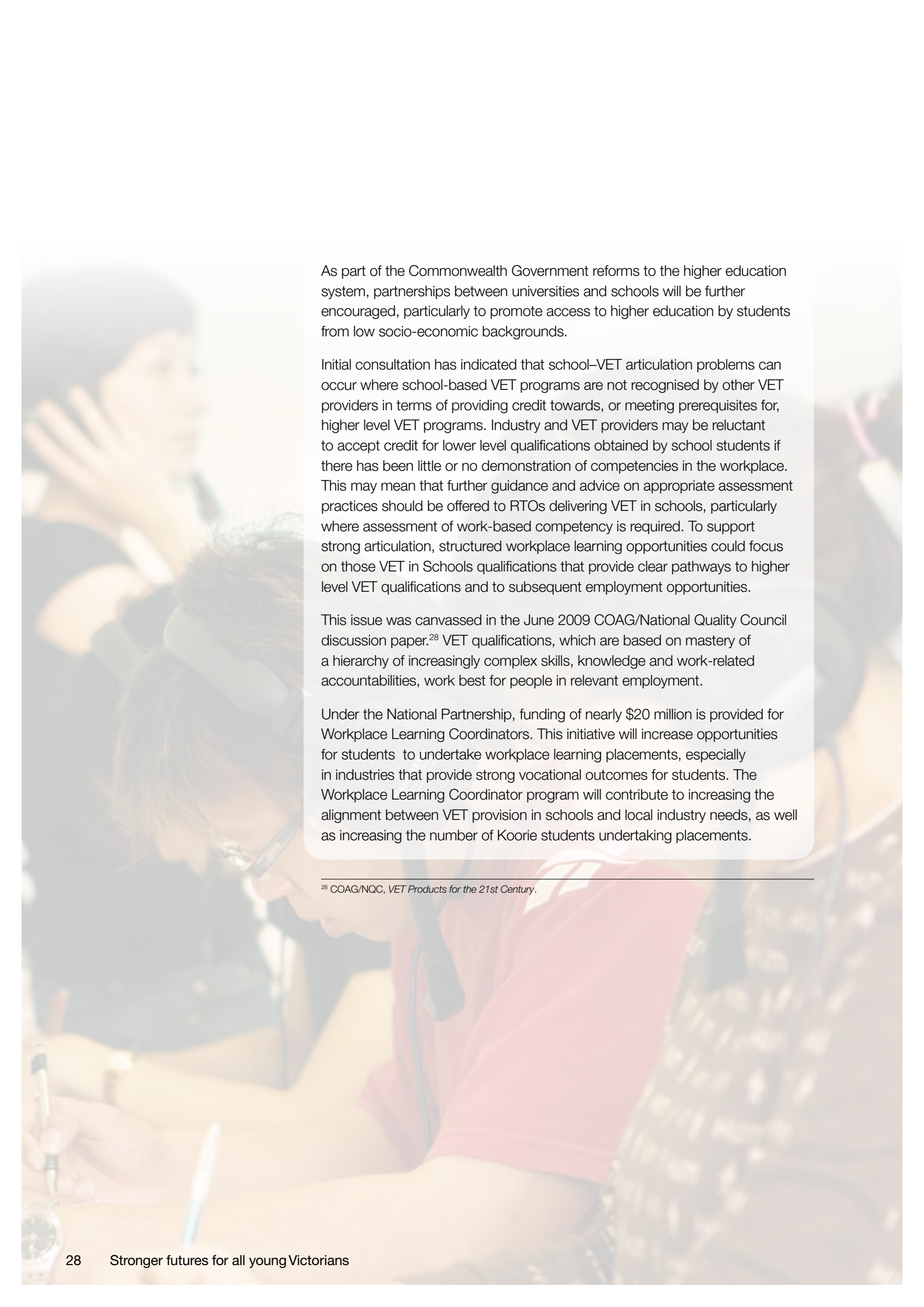
The first significant post-compulsory articulation occurs when students leave school, with or without a senior secondary qualification, for the higher education, VET or ACE sectors, or to enter the workforce. The 2009 *On Track* publication indicates that 46 per cent of Year 12 completers entered university and 26 per cent entered VET.

Effective senior school provision arrangements have the potential to impact positively on articulation to further education and training. Such arrangements can also encourage the completion of initial qualifications. Provision planning that provides 'reach forward' opportunities to higher level VET and higher education, as well as fostering explicit partnerships between schools, VET and university providers, has the potential to improve articulation. 'Reach forward' opportunities are emerging in many places, and are blurring sectoral boundaries.

The *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* foreshadowed the development of Industry Themed Programs (ITP) in the VCE and VCAL. A pilot program is being developed in the broad industry areas of Manufacturing, Building and Construction and Community Services and Health. The programs will be trialled at three sites, and teaching will begin in 2011. Each site will include a consortium of schools in partnership with vocational and higher education providers. The programs will be designed to provide students with a grounding in an industry area and pathways to relevant work, trades, VET and university destinations.

The ITPs will provide:

- coherent, well-organised senior secondary programs
- clearer articulation to higher level VET and university qualifications
- partnerships between schools, VET/ACE providers and universities
- improved quality of learning through:
  - better understanding of post-secondary destinations
  - project-based and applied pedagogies
  - subject combinations that reinforce learning
  - workplace learning
  - VET at higher certificate levels.



As part of the Commonwealth Government reforms to the higher education system, partnerships between universities and schools will be further encouraged, particularly to promote access to higher education by students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Initial consultation has indicated that school-VET articulation problems can occur where school-based VET programs are not recognised by other VET providers in terms of providing credit towards, or meeting prerequisites for, higher level VET programs. Industry and VET providers may be reluctant to accept credit for lower level qualifications obtained by school students if there has been little or no demonstration of competencies in the workplace. This may mean that further guidance and advice on appropriate assessment practices should be offered to RTOs delivering VET in schools, particularly where assessment of work-based competency is required. To support strong articulation, structured workplace learning opportunities could focus on those VET in Schools qualifications that provide clear pathways to higher level VET qualifications and to subsequent employment opportunities.

This issue was canvassed in the June 2009 COAG/National Quality Council discussion paper.<sup>28</sup> VET qualifications, which are based on mastery of a hierarchy of increasingly complex skills, knowledge and work-related accountabilities, work best for people in relevant employment.

Under the National Partnership, funding of nearly \$20 million is provided for Workplace Learning Coordinators. This initiative will increase opportunities for students to undertake workplace learning placements, especially in industries that provide strong vocational outcomes for students. The Workplace Learning Coordinator program will contribute to increasing the alignment between VET provision in schools and local industry needs, as well as increasing the number of Koorie students undertaking placements.

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<sup>28</sup> COAG/NQC, *VET Products for the 21st Century*.



The major mechanism for facilitating movement of students from the school sector to higher education is the Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank (ENTER). The ENTER provides a uniform and transparent process for higher education selection.

Research indicates that selection based on the ENTER is a weaker indicator of student success in higher education courses for students with ENTERs below 80.<sup>29</sup> There is a growing trend by some universities to complement selection processes for some courses with a broader range of selection methods, including aptitude testing and interview.

The recent reforms to higher education announced by the Commonwealth Government will create a student demand driven sector comprising a larger and more diverse cohort of students. A greater diversity of higher education providers and courses is expected to emerge to accommodate this. This will increase the numbers of those for whom the ENTER is a modest predictor of success. Articulation partnerships forged between schools and universities will also provide opportunities and create pressures for student entry based on local rather than statewide processes.

In this environment, the basis for entry to higher education is likely to broaden from an ENTER-based selection process towards one that includes capacity assessment and matching processes. An informed dialogue will be required between stakeholders to determine processes that maintain the principles of transparency, fairness and efficiency, while promoting the benefits of differentiated processes.

## Questions

**How can student transition to the VET sector, higher education and full-time employment be improved?**

**What other steps are required to assist schools' connection to the world of work?**

**What other initiatives would improve school to tertiary education articulation and support young people to take advantage of the expansion of these sectors?**

<sup>29</sup> Dobson, I & Skuja, E, 'ENTER scores: an over-rated measure', *Principal Matters*, Autumn 2007, pp. 34–37.



“Partnerships  
between universities  
and schools will be  
further encouraged.”

## Articulation within the VET sector and from VET to higher education

Students can also move to different courses or institutions within the same sector, such as those within the VET sector that articulate from lower to higher level VET qualifications, or move to a course in a different industry or occupation.

The *Securing Jobs For Your Future – Skills for Victoria* reform package strongly supports the ‘vertical’ articulation of students from lower to higher level VET qualifications through the provision of government funding for students who undertake qualifications above the level of those they already possess.

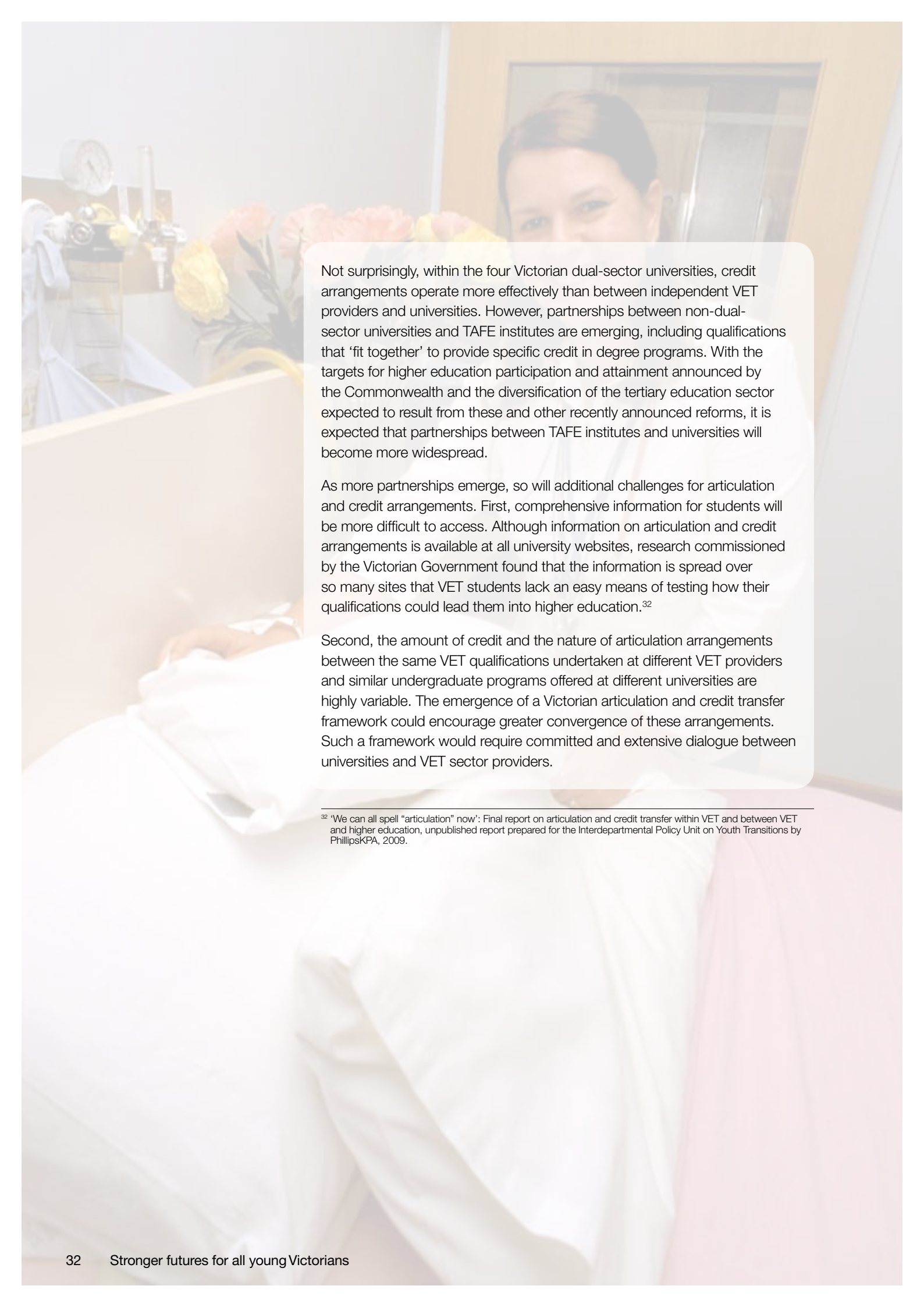
A key process for enhancing the capacity of individuals to move through the qualification levels within a Training Package is the extent to which the various qualification levels have clear transition points at which a higher level qualification builds on the outcome of a lower qualification.

The 2009 Student Outcomes survey suggests that about 11,800 Victorian VET module or full qualification completers from 2007 were enrolled in higher education in 2008. In 2009, about 4400 (or 10 per cent) of university enrolments through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre were students offered places on the basis of TAFE awards at Certificate IV or above. However, research from the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training indicates that there may be scope to improve credit arrangements for those students who articulate from TAFE to higher education, as the rate of credit for these students in Victoria between 1999 and 2004 was approximately one in four.<sup>31</sup> Consultation with the TAFE sector has also shown inconsistency in credit arrangements – different universities grant different levels of credit for the same qualification.

Initial consultation points to reasons for low rates of credit, including the possibility that students from VET may lack experience in essay writing, formal analysis, research and problem solving. The availability of electives in higher level VET qualifications that develop these skills may help to address such deficits.

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<sup>31</sup> Long, M, *TAFE and Entry to Higher Education*, Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, 2006.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white lab coat, is smiling and holding a bouquet of pink and yellow flowers. She is in a clinical or hospital setting, with medical equipment and a bed visible in the background.

Not surprisingly, within the four Victorian dual-sector universities, credit arrangements operate more effectively than between independent VET providers and universities. However, partnerships between non-dual-sector universities and TAFE institutes are emerging, including qualifications that ‘fit together’ to provide specific credit in degree programs. With the targets for higher education participation and attainment announced by the Commonwealth and the diversification of the tertiary education sector expected to result from these and other recently announced reforms, it is expected that partnerships between TAFE institutes and universities will become more widespread.

As more partnerships emerge, so will additional challenges for articulation and credit arrangements. First, comprehensive information for students will be more difficult to access. Although information on articulation and credit arrangements is available at all university websites, research commissioned by the Victorian Government found that the information is spread over so many sites that VET students lack an easy means of testing how their qualifications could lead them into higher education.<sup>32</sup>

Second, the amount of credit and the nature of articulation arrangements between the same VET qualifications undertaken at different VET providers and similar undergraduate programs offered at different universities are highly variable. The emergence of a Victorian articulation and credit transfer framework could encourage greater convergence of these arrangements. Such a framework would require committed and extensive dialogue between universities and VET sector providers.

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<sup>32</sup> ‘We can all spell “articulation” now’: Final report on articulation and credit transfer within VET and between VET and higher education, unpublished report prepared for the Interdepartmental Policy Unit on Youth Transitions by PhillipsKPA, 2009.



Supporting additional young Victorians to participate in higher education will require a focus on those areas where higher education participation is low and higher education infrastructure is limited – primarily Melbourne's peri-urban fringe and regional and rural locations. This need was expressed in the *Australian Review of Higher Education* (Bradley Review).

One possible response to this challenge would be to expand the provision of higher education courses in TAFE institutes, either in partnership with universities or as stand-alone institutions.

Partnerships between universities and schools or VET providers in low socio-economic background communities offer the potential for increased enrolments in higher education by students from these backgrounds. Discussions are occurring between providers to further strengthen such partnerships. The Commonwealth Government has announced that its Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program will be revised to better support the achievement of its goal that 20 per cent of those enrolled in higher education will be from low socio-economic status background.

In order to position Victoria in the new policy environment created by the Bradley Review, the Government is developing a Victorian Tertiary Education Plan, due to be released in the middle of this year.

## Questions

**Should efforts to improve VET to higher education articulation and credit arrangements focus on particular occupational pathways and skill priority areas, for example in engineering and nursing?**

**How can governments ensure that reforms to the VET and higher education sector address both skill needs and student demand for particular qualifications?**

**How can governments improve provision and articulation arrangements to better support young people, especially in regional and rural areas, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?**

**What other actions should be contemplated by institutions and government?**



## Opportunities for young people to re-engage with education and training

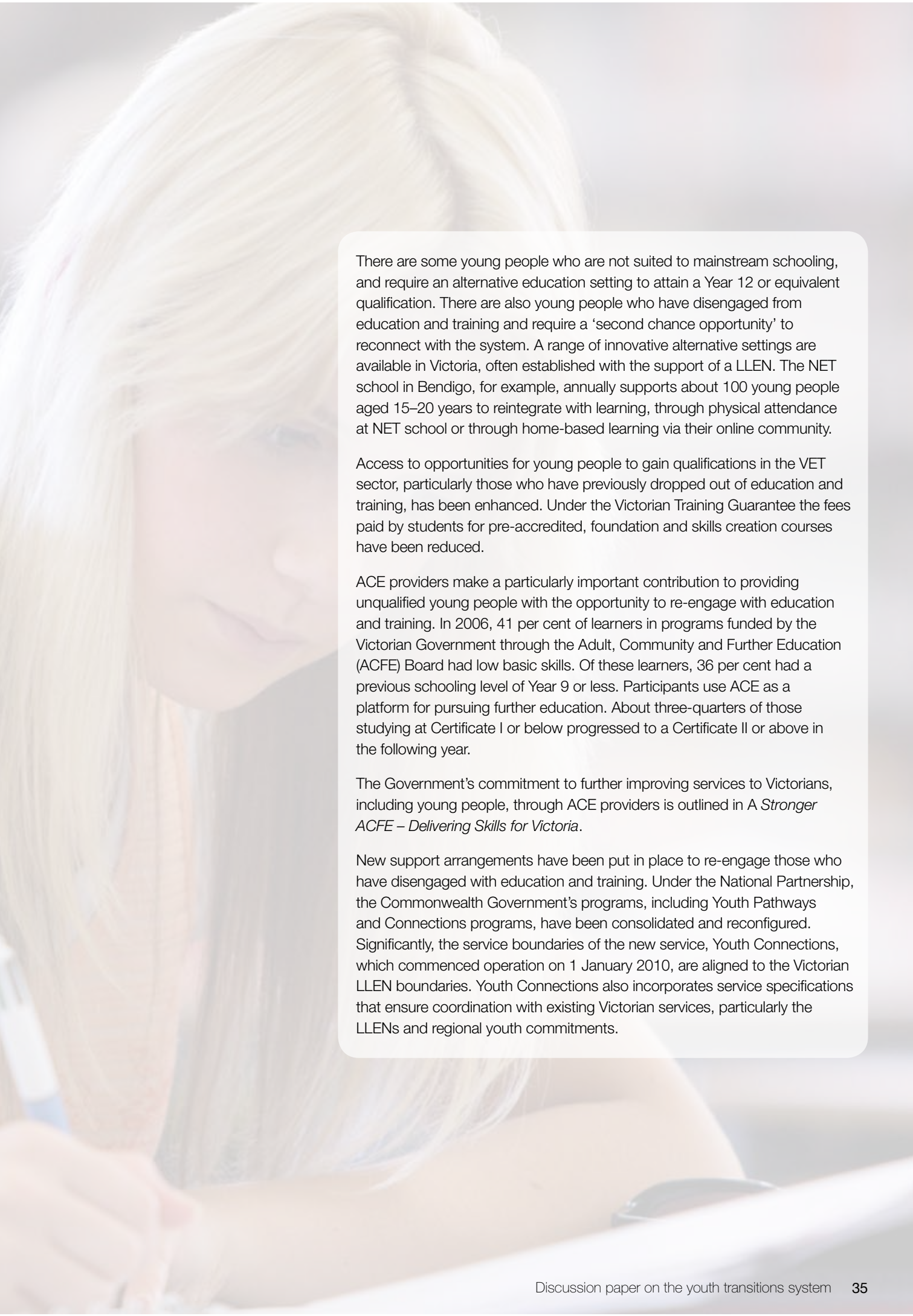
OECD research indicates that effective youth transitions systems are able to minimise the number of young people who are not in education, training and employment, and also provide efficient systems to quickly identify and re-engage those who drop out of education and training without gaining initial qualifications.



Under the 2009 COAG National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transition, the Victorian and Commonwealth governments have implemented a range of measures to retain more young people in education and training until they attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification and to re-engage those who drop out. These measures have been adopted to provide additional support for young people during the economic recovery to avoid the creation of a pool of low-skilled, long-term unemployed young people, and to improve youth transition arrangements in the longer term.

From 1 January 2010, the National Partnership entitles all 15–19-year-olds to an education or training place for any government-subsidised qualification, and 20–24-year-olds to an education or training place for any government-subsidised qualification that would result in a higher qualification. As part of the implementation of the National Partnership, the school leaving age in Victoria has been raised from 16 to 17 years. From 1 January 2010, all young people aged 17 years or under must be engaged in full-time education, training or employment, or a combination of these.

To retain young people in education and training, all nine DEECD regions have implemented Regional Youth Commitments. Under this initiative, providers, supported by the DEECD regional offices and the LLENs, commit to keeping young people engaged in education and training until they complete Year 12 or equivalent or make a transition to another provider.



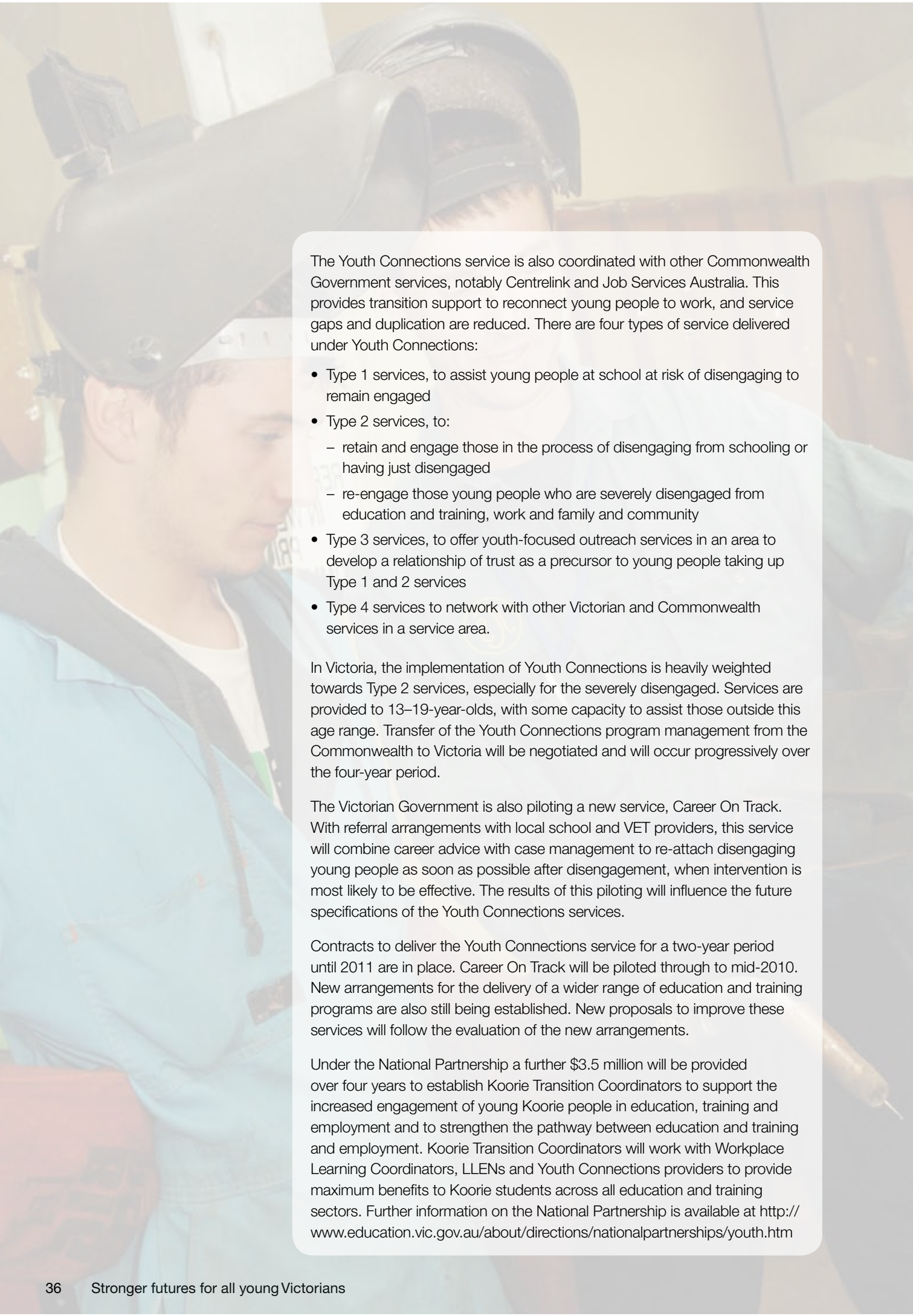
There are some young people who are not suited to mainstream schooling, and require an alternative education setting to attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. There are also young people who have disengaged from education and training and require a 'second chance opportunity' to reconnect with the system. A range of innovative alternative settings are available in Victoria, often established with the support of a LLEN. The NET school in Bendigo, for example, annually supports about 100 young people aged 15–20 years to reintegrate with learning, through physical attendance at NET school or through home-based learning via their online community.

Access to opportunities for young people to gain qualifications in the VET sector, particularly those who have previously dropped out of education and training, has been enhanced. Under the Victorian Training Guarantee the fees paid by students for pre-accredited, foundation and skills creation courses have been reduced.

ACE providers make a particularly important contribution to providing unqualified young people with the opportunity to re-engage with education and training. In 2006, 41 per cent of learners in programs funded by the Victorian Government through the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board had low basic skills. Of these learners, 36 per cent had a previous schooling level of Year 9 or less. Participants use ACE as a platform for pursuing further education. About three-quarters of those studying at Certificate I or below progressed to a Certificate II or above in the following year.

The Government's commitment to further improving services to Victorians, including young people, through ACE providers is outlined in *A Stronger ACFE – Delivering Skills for Victoria*.

New support arrangements have been put in place to re-engage those who have disengaged with education and training. Under the National Partnership, the Commonwealth Government's programs, including Youth Pathways and Connections programs, have been consolidated and reconfigured. Significantly, the service boundaries of the new service, Youth Connections, which commenced operation on 1 January 2010, are aligned to the Victorian LLEN boundaries. Youth Connections also incorporates service specifications that ensure coordination with existing Victorian services, particularly the LLENs and regional youth commitments.



The Youth Connections service is also coordinated with other Commonwealth Government services, notably Centrelink and Job Services Australia. This provides transition support to reconnect young people to work, and service gaps and duplication are reduced. There are four types of service delivered under Youth Connections:

- Type 1 services, to assist young people at school at risk of disengaging to remain engaged
- Type 2 services, to:
  - retain and engage those in the process of disengaging from schooling or having just disengaged
  - re-engage those young people who are severely disengaged from education and training, work and family and community
- Type 3 services, to offer youth-focused outreach services in an area to develop a relationship of trust as a precursor to young people taking up Type 1 and 2 services
- Type 4 services to network with other Victorian and Commonwealth services in a service area.

In Victoria, the implementation of Youth Connections is heavily weighted towards Type 2 services, especially for the severely disengaged. Services are provided to 13–19-year-olds, with some capacity to assist those outside this age range. Transfer of the Youth Connections program management from the Commonwealth to Victoria will be negotiated and will occur progressively over the four-year period.

The Victorian Government is also piloting a new service, Career On Track. With referral arrangements with local school and VET providers, this service will combine career advice with case management to re-attach disengaging young people as soon as possible after disengagement, when intervention is most likely to be effective. The results of this piloting will influence the future specifications of the Youth Connections services.

Contracts to deliver the Youth Connections service for a two-year period until 2011 are in place. Career On Track will be piloted through to mid-2010. New arrangements for the delivery of a wider range of education and training programs are also still being established. New proposals to improve these services will follow the evaluation of the new arrangements.

Under the National Partnership a further \$3.5 million will be provided over four years to establish Koorie Transition Coordinators to support the increased engagement of young Koorie people in education, training and employment and to strengthen the pathway between education and training and employment. Koorie Transition Coordinators will work with Workplace Learning Coordinators, LLENs and Youth Connections providers to provide maximum benefits to Koorie students across all education and training sectors. Further information on the National Partnership is available at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/nationalpartnerships/youth.htm>



## Questions

How can Youth Connections be implemented in Victoria to most effectively re-engage young people with education and training?

What services should Youth Connection service providers use to establish effective referral and working arrangements?

Should LLENs be provided some flexibility to facilitate and broker service provision to young people 20 and over, in line with the flexibility in Youth Connections service provision?

Is the range of qualifications on offer to re-engage young people adequate? (Existing qualifications include VCAL, adult VCE, the General Certificate of Adult Education and the Diploma of Further Education.)

## How to contribute your views

This discussion paper is designed to elicit your views on how we can better support all young Victorians to continue onto further education and training and to make a successful transition to working life.

We invite you to contribute your ideas on how this can best be achieved. In particular, we would encourage you to respond with your thoughts on the questions that have been put forward in this discussion paper.

Electronic versions of this discussion paper can be downloaded from the following websites:

### **Education:**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/consultation/strongerfutures.htm>

### **Skills Victoria:**

<http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/corporate/directions/youth-transitions>

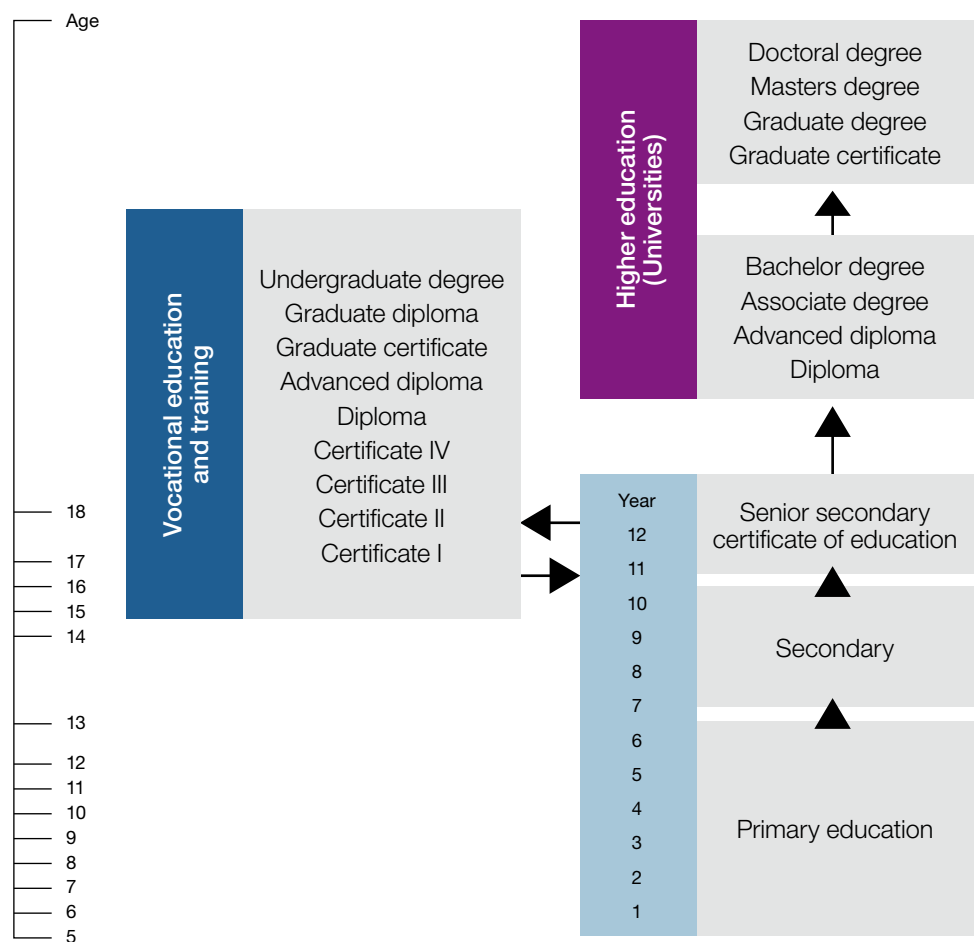
Additional information on the consultation process, including how to make a submission, can also be obtained from these sites. All submissions will be treated as public documents. Written submissions will be accepted until 11 June 2010.



“Since 1994, students undertaking the VCE have been able to take accredited VET qualifications as part of their VCE program.”

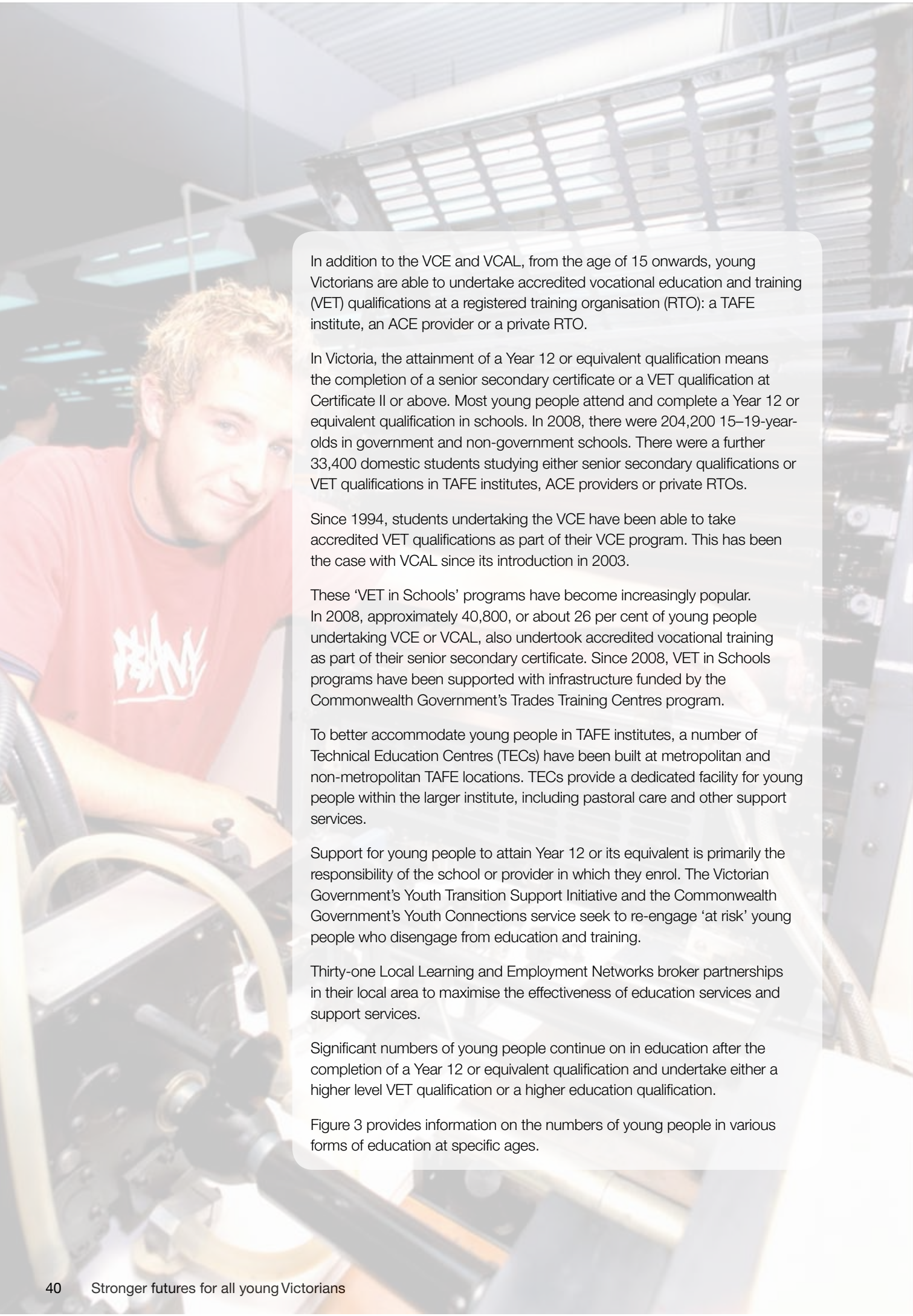
# Appendix 1:

## The Victorian education and training system for 15–24-year-olds



There are two Victorian senior secondary qualifications, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). The VCE and VCAL are typically taken by students in Years 11 and 12 in schools. In addition to the VCE and VCAL, some schools offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma.

The VCE and VCAL can also be undertaken at TAFE institutes and some adult and community education (ACE) providers.



In addition to the VCE and VCAL, from the age of 15 onwards, young Victorians are able to undertake accredited vocational education and training (VET) qualifications at a registered training organisation (RTO): a TAFE institute, an ACE provider or a private RTO.

In Victoria, the attainment of a Year 12 or equivalent qualification means the completion of a senior secondary certificate or a VET qualification at Certificate II or above. Most young people attend and complete a Year 12 or equivalent qualification in schools. In 2008, there were 204,200 15–19-year-olds in government and non-government schools. There were a further 33,400 domestic students studying either senior secondary qualifications or VET qualifications in TAFE institutes, ACE providers or private RTOs.

Since 1994, students undertaking the VCE have been able to take accredited VET qualifications as part of their VCE program. This has been the case with VCAL since its introduction in 2003.

These 'VET in Schools' programs have become increasingly popular. In 2008, approximately 40,800, or about 26 per cent of young people undertaking VCE or VCAL, also undertook accredited vocational training as part of their senior secondary certificate. Since 2008, VET in Schools programs have been supported with infrastructure funded by the Commonwealth Government's Trades Training Centres program.

To better accommodate young people in TAFE institutes, a number of Technical Education Centres (TECs) have been built at metropolitan and non-metropolitan TAFE locations. TECs provide a dedicated facility for young people within the larger institute, including pastoral care and other support services.

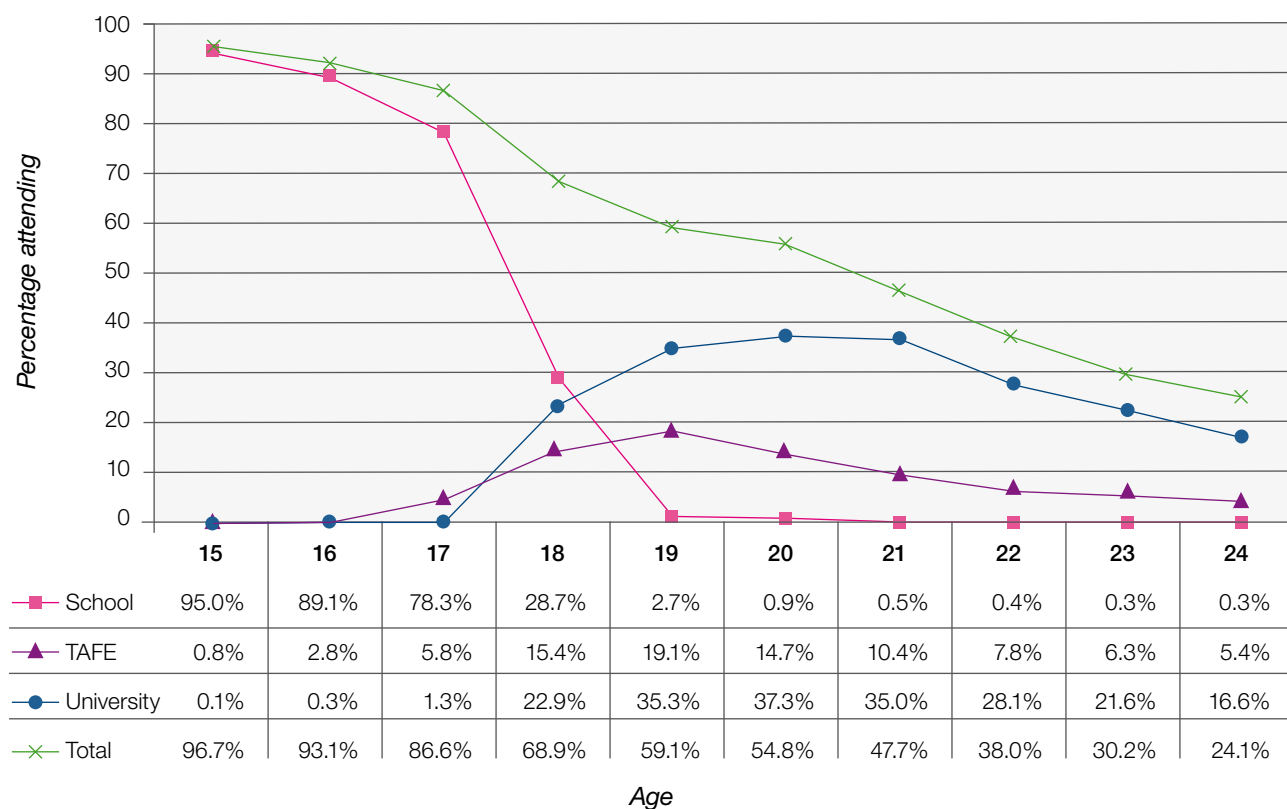
Support for young people to attain Year 12 or its equivalent is primarily the responsibility of the school or provider in which they enrol. The Victorian Government's Youth Transition Support Initiative and the Commonwealth Government's Youth Connections service seek to re-engage 'at risk' young people who disengage from education and training.

Thirty-one Local Learning and Employment Networks broker partnerships in their local area to maximise the effectiveness of education services and support services.

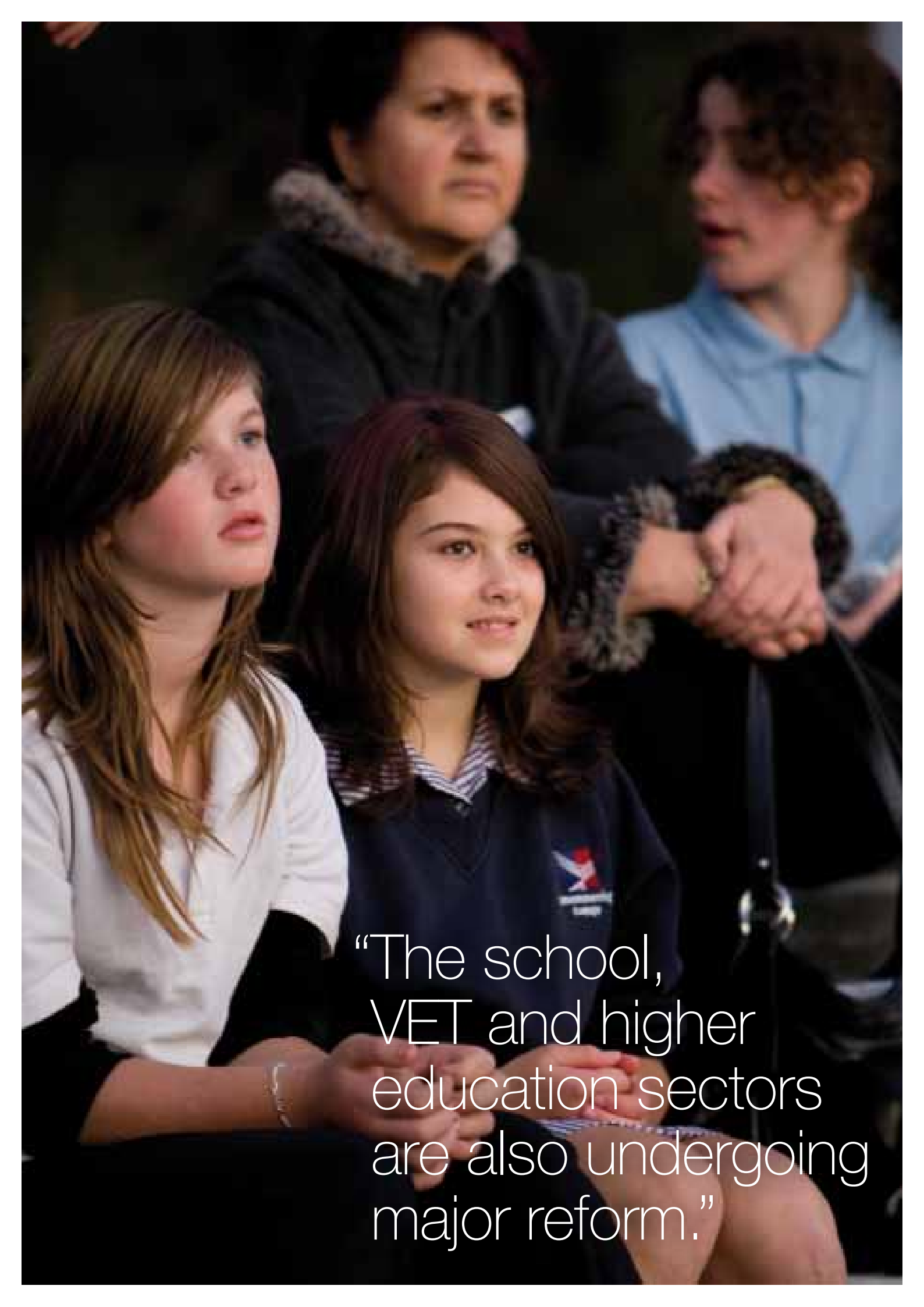
Significant numbers of young people continue on in education after the completion of a Year 12 or equivalent qualification and undertake either a higher level VET qualification or a higher education qualification.

Figure 3 provides information on the numbers of young people in various forms of education at specific ages.

Figure 3: Young people attending education or training, Victoria, 2006



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006



“The school,  
VET and higher  
education sectors  
are also undergoing  
major reform.”

# Appendix 2:

## National and state policy and the youth transitions system

A range of activities across all education and training sectors at the state and national levels are aimed at improving the youth transitions system in Victoria.

The AQF Council is working to strengthen the AQF, to ensure that it supports flexible cross-sectoral linkages and pathways across the school, VET and higher education sectors. The redesign and redevelopment of the AQF will be particularly important in improving articulation mechanisms that will affect the 15–24-year-old cohort.

Individually, the school, VET and higher education sectors are also undergoing major reform.

A national curriculum from kindergarten to Year 12 in specific learning areas is being developed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority for implementation from 2011. The national curriculum will help ensure that all young Australians develop a strong foundation in the key areas of learning by the time they finish school. The ACARA is also developing an approach to national data collection and reporting for schools. Information on individual schools is available for the first time on a new national school performance website at [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au).

There is significant work being done in the VET sector through the joint COAG and NQC project VET Products for the 21st Century. A policy framework has been developed to enable VET qualifications and products to be flexible and responsive to the changing needs and workplace practices of industry, business and individuals. This includes a number of recommendations in relation to the definition of competency, Training Packages, a national credit system, and enabling and preparatory qualifications. This policy framework will have important implications for articulation mechanisms, as well as literacy and numeracy support in the post-compulsory years.

At the state level, the VET sector is being strengthened through *Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria*. This reform of the skills system will provide an additional 172,000 training places for Victorians over the next four years, and ‘boost training delivery and workforce engagement, strengthen industry partnerships and drive major operational and structural changes’.<sup>33</sup> Of particular importance to young people is the Victorian Training Guarantee, which provides government-subsidised training places for all young people, subject to eligibility criteria.

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<sup>33</sup> *Securing Jobs for Your Future – Skills for Victoria*, August 2008, p 11.







Authorised by the Victorian Government.

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