

**Victorian Response to Commonwealth
Grants Commission Post-Compulsory
Enrolments Consultancy for the 2010
Review**

April 2009

Introduction

The Commonwealth Grants Commission provided States and Territories with the opportunity to comment on Professor Stephen Lamb's "*Modelling of post-compulsory school enrolments*". Victoria has maintained throughout all submissions that non-policy factors have a significantly larger impact on post-compulsory school enrolments. Victoria considers Professor Lamb's modelling proof of our hypothesis and urges the Commission to include Professor Lamb's results in its calculation of assessed student numbers.

Victoria submits the following in response to the modelling of post-compulsory school enrolments:

- The modelling clearly supports an increase in the weighting given to non-policy influences driving differences in post-compulsory participation rates across States. In 2004, it was determined that non-policy influences contributed 70 per cent of the differing participation rates. Lamb's consultancy for the 2010 review has since suggested that this be increased to 80 per cent;
- Victoria supports all of the non-policy influenced variables used in the modelling of post-compulsory school enrolments, and encourages the Commission to consider the addition of non-government students as a non-policy variable in order to maintain consistency with various studies that have suggested the higher proportion of school students in non-government schools coincides with higher post-compulsory participation; and
- Victoria supports the modelling which decreases the extent of policy influences to a maximum of 20 per cent as the methods used in the modelling.

Non-policy influences

Victoria considers Professor Lamb's modelling is robust and consistent with determining variables to control for a range of non-policy factors that influence differences in post-compulsory enrolments across States.

During January 2009, Victoria presented in its response to the Commission's Position Paper that several non-policy factors are more influential than State policies. Factors such as socioeconomic status, sector (public versus private), and culturally and linguistically diverse populations have a far stronger influence on participation and cost of post-compulsory education than any differences in State policies.

Victoria believes that Professor Lamb's initial findings which recommend an increase in the weighting of non-policy influences, from around 70 per cent in 2004 to 80 per cent in 2010, is consistent with our previous position and would ensure that the assessment method best reflects the school expenses States face.

As stated above Victoria is supportive of the non-policy variables used in Professor Lamb's research; however, the inclusion of a school sector variable, with specific

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reference to non-government schools would represent all the major variables contributing to enrolments.

Victoria notes that in order to calculate assessed enrolments the Commission has asked Professor Lamb to undertake further work on the extent to which policy and non-policy influences impact on individual States post-compulsory participation. Victoria welcomes this work and looks forward to seeing and commenting on the results once they are provided to all States.

The lack of policy influence is reduced in its impact across States by the increasing consistency of compulsory attendance ages across jurisdictions. All States have a policy of increasing participation and retention, as evidenced by a range of literature and have moved to increase the minimum leaving age to help achieve this outcome. In particular, the prevalence of “learn or earn” policies effectively keeps children in school until they are at least 16 in most States unless they undertake an apprenticeship or some other full-time work resulting in greater alignment of policy.

In addition, the Commonwealth and States have agreed to develop a national curriculum for all Australian students from kindergarten to Year 12 by 2010. This will be pertinent for the 2010 Review as this will reduce any policy differences between States and will result in a convergence in policies and service delivery approaches.