

Government Responses to the Recommendations of PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE'S

91st Report on the Review of the findings and recommendations of the Auditor-General's reports tabled September 2007 - February 2008.

Pursuant to Section 36 of the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*, this paper provides a response to the recommendations contained in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's (PAEC) 91st Report.

Guide for Readers:

Following is the explanation of the format of this paper.

1	Title			
2	Chapter number and topic			
1	2	3	4	
PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned	

Row 1: Indicates the title of this paper.

Row 2: Indicates the number and topic of the response to the PAEC recommendations.

Column 1: Contains the PAEC's recommendations as published in its 91st Report.

Column 2: Indicates the government's response to each recommendation (**Accept, Accept in part, Accept in principle, Under Review or Reject**).

Column 3: Indicates those actions relevant to the implementation of the recommendation that have been taken to date.

Column 4: Indicates the additional actions planned that are relevant to implementation of the recommendation, together with an explanation of the government's position concerning the recommendation.

**GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PAEC REPORT NO. 91, Review of the findings and recommendations of the Auditor-General's reports tabled
September 2007 – February 2008**

PART A – IMPROVING OUR SCHOOLS: MONITORING AND SUPPORT

PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
• Recommendation 1 (Page 36 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support) The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development ensure that adequate processes and robust measures are in place to monitor the effective implementation of the new performance improvement initiatives and assess their impact on the educational outcomes of Victorian government school students.	Accept	The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) has recently introduced an Outcomes and Evaluation Framework which improves capacity to measure the impact of initiatives upon the outcomes articulated in the DEECD Corporate Plan, including improved student outcomes. A new 'Intake adjusted' measure of school performance has been developed to take into account the different circumstances each school faces in improving outcomes for students. Extensive training in the interpretation and use of these measures has been undertaken by school leadership teams and key regional office staff. Cascading from this DEECD is now developing a portfolio-wide evaluation strategy including a two-tiered approach, focusing on larger-scale outcomes monitoring and analysis (macro-evaluation) and analysis that is initiative and program based (micro-evaluation).	To maintain support to the implementation of the new 'Intake adjusted' measure of school performance, training will continue to be offered to staff involved in use of the data. The portfolio-wide evaluation strategy will be finalised and implemented.
• Recommendation 2 (Page 53 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support) The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should ensure that any targeted support provided to schools with student outcomes below expected levels is sustained over such a period as to make realised improvements in the school's performance outcomes. As part of the accountability process, the impact of targeted interventions in these schools should be clearly measured and documented.	Accept	This recommendation is embodied in the set of guiding principles endorsed by the Departmental Leadership Team for the National Partnerships Implementation Strategy in Victorian Government Schools.	From 2010 onwards, schools targeted through the National Partnerships or System Improvement Funds are required to set clear four year targets for improvement in their School Strategic Plans, with regular monitoring through the Annual Report.

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PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned

• Recommendation 3 (Page 53 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support)			
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should ensure that the personnel responsible for managing and monitoring school performance both within schools and in regional offices are highly proficient in interpretation and analysis of school performance data, together with capabilities for identifying appropriate strategies for addressing issues highlighted by the data.	Accept	Regional Network Leaders (RNLs) work with Principals in their networks to analyse and interpret data, use data effectively in schools and ensure that the most appropriate strategies are included in schools' annual implementation plans. Since their appointment in late 2008, all 70 RNLs have undergone an extensive program of professional learning. This has included the DataWise program undertaken through Harvard Online.	To maintain support to the implementation of the new 'Intake adjusted' measure of school performance, training will continue to be offered to staff involved in use of the data. The newly created Bastow Institute for Educational Leadership will deliver training and continue to assess the demand for ongoing professional learning in data analysis and school improvement, and design and roll-out programs as appropriate.
• Recommendation 4 (Page 53 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support)			
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should undertake an independent review of the effectiveness of the Regional Network Leaders model in 2012, including in regards to their impact on underperforming schools.	Accept	The Department has commissioned the University of Melbourne to undertake a five year longitudinal study of the network model.	Fieldwork will commence in 2010.

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PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
• Recommendation 5 (Page 60 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support)			
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should ensure that regional offices identify the existence of any unmet demand for targeted support within their region. These schools should be monitored to allow early detection of any worsening in their performance and prompt intervention as required.	Accept	As part of the Blueprint Implementation Paper "Supporting School Improvement: Transparency and Accountability in Victorian Government Schools", a School Performance Summary Report has been generated for each government school. This will enhance the ability of regional offices to assess need and target support.	School Performance Summaries were available from late November 2009. They will be updated for inclusion into School Annual Reports, due at the end of March 2010. From then on, the School Performance Summary will be included in the School Annual Report in March each year.
• Recommendation 6 (Page 60 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support)			
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development undertake an evaluation of the revised regional funding model and newly implemented regional network structure following two years of operation to assess its success in improving the capacity of regional offices to better manage underperforming schools.	Accept	As per the response to Recommendation 4.	As per the response to Recommendation 4.

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PART A – IMPROVING OUR SCHOOLS: MONITORING AND SUPPORT			
PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned

Recommendation 7 (Page 65 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support)			
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should assess whether the issues surrounding the allocation of and access to, Student Support Services Officer resources have been adequately addressed by the new arrangements for management of the resource so that improved access to services by government school students has been effected.	Accept	'The Strengthening Student Support Services Directions Paper: The Way Forward' was released in January 2009 and outlined the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (DEECD's) commitment to greater accountability through the use of consistent statewide performance indicators supported by the development of a data collection and reporting system. An interim reporting mechanism was established in April 2009 to collect data on service demand, service volume and service provision. Quarterly reports provide DEECD with the capacity to monitor and review service demand and delivery.	DEECD is developing an on-line student support services data collection and reporting system which will enable the collection and reporting of a range of service data including service demand, provision and quality. The system will be deployed in Term one of 2010.
Recommendation 8 (Page 70 of Part A: Improving our Schools: Monitoring and Support)			
The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should direct Regional Network Leaders to assess the use and understanding of school performance data by school personnel and ensure that relevant training is targeted accordingly.	Accept	Regional Network Leaders (RNLs) are responsible for overseeing the Performance and Development Cycle for principals in government schools. As part of this process, RNLs work with principals to assess their development needs, including the use and understanding of school performance data. Where a need exists, they are responsible for ensuring principals have access to appropriate development opportunities.	The newly created Bastow Institute for Educational Leadership will deliver training and continue to assess the demand for ongoing professional learning in data analysis and school improvement, and design and roll-out programs as appropriate.

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE PAEC REPORT NO. 91, Review of the findings and recommendations of the Auditor-General's reports tabled September 2007 – February 2008

PART B – FUNDING AND DELIVERY OF TWO FREEWAY UPGRADE PROJECTS

PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
• Recommendation 9 (Page 92 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects)			
VicRoads ensure that its expanded provisions relating to stakeholder consultation and independent validation of traffic and financial models are fully complied with in the development of business cases for future major road projects.	Accept	VicRoads is ensuring that the expanded provisions relating to stakeholder consultation and independent validation of traffic and financial models are adhered to through the VicRoads Project Review Committee process and further tested through Business Case Review by the Department of Transport's (DOT) Project Control Group. VicRoads is developing a community and stakeholder engagement model including staff training, systems and tools – VicRoads Strategic Directions 2008-2010.	
• Recommendation 10 (Page 99 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects)			
VicRoads should ensure that probity plans established for major projects are dated and formally approved, consistent with the rigour required by the Victorian Government Purchasing Board best practice guidance for the development of such plans.	Accept	VicRoads Procurement Toolkit and Probity Plan template requires the probity plan and any changes to be approved and dated by the Business Area Manager.	
• Recommendation 11 (Page 100 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects)			
Based on its experiences with the Tullamarine-Calder Interchange project, VicRoads ensure there is a robust approach to the management of key probity issues during the procurement phase for future major road projects, supported by clear evidence of full adherence to its documented procedures.	Accept	As per the response to Recommendation 10. Use of the VicRoads Probity Plan template will ensure the management of key probity issues.	Over the next two years, as a minimum, the VicRoads Independent Internal Audit Program will focus on the management of key probity issues.

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PART B – FUNDING AND DELIVERY OF TWO FREEWAY UPGRADE PROJECTS			
PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
Recommendation 12 (Page 107 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects)			
The Department of Treasury and Finance widen its best practice Gateway initiative to incorporate, at the Gateway 6 Review stage, a requirement for agencies to publish in annual reports the key findings from the review report on benefits achieved from major projects compared with targets.	Reject	All Gateway Report recommendations are recorded in the Gateway Review Lessons Learnt database, which is used to track and monitor trends across the Gateway program. It is used to inform new policy work, improve training in specific area, and improve project delivery practices. The data is used by the Gateway Supervisory Committee (GSC), which is made up of senior representatives across all departments, to inform improvements to infrastructure.	The Department of Treasury and Finance's Investment Lifecycle Guidelines identify, as good practice, conduct of post-implementation reviews on government investments. These reviews are intended to identify lessons and benefits flowing from the initiative. Gateway Reviews are limited to high and medium risk projects and the reports are kept confidential to reflect their sensitive nature and to protect the integrity of the process. This ensures that the Gateway review team and participants are able to make a frank assessment of the project that will be of most use to the relevant department and also to improve project delivery practices.
Recommendation 13 (Page 108 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects)			
The Auditor-General conduct, as an extension of the earlier audit, an audit of the findings of the Gateway 6 Review report for the Tullamarine-Calder Interchange project as soon as practicable after the report's completion.	Not applicable	The Government has reviewed the recommendations the Committee has made for the Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) and considers these matters to be operational. Therefore, it is appropriate that VAGO address these recommendations independently.	Not applicable.

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PART B – FUNDING AND DELIVERY OF TWO FREEWAY UPGRADE PROJECTS

PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
Recommendation 14 (Page 111 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects) Consistent with its leadership role in a major national improvement initiative, the Department of Treasury and Finance ensure there is effective dissemination through training and other means of the initiative's outcomes across relevant Victorian public sector agencies.	Accept	The Victorian Gateway Unit is a participant at the annual Australasian Gateway Regional Forum, a gathering of representatives from the States and Territories currently using or piloting the Gateway Review Process. Currently Victoria is the only jurisdiction authorised by the originators of the process (the Office of Government Commerce - OGC in London) as an Authorised Accredited Hub. In this leadership role, Victoria continues to provide support to newly implemented Gateway units throughout Australasia, and works closely with the OGC to develop new innovative tools and solutions. This ensures dissemination is not only within Victoria but across the region and in the United Kingdom. The Victorian Gateway Unit, in consultation with other Australasian Jurisdictions, has developed a new Lessons Learnt database, which will provide key learning from projects performed to date from a high level, down to a subject matter specific level.	The Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) will continue to take a national leadership approach through dissemination of training and lessons learnt to the region. This will be delivered through the Australasian Gateway Regional Forum and through training that is provided by DTF.
Recommendation 15 (Page 121 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects) VicRoads ensure Parliament is adequately informed, in the period up to and beyond the completion of the M1 Upgrade project, on the effectiveness of its performance in the achievement of the project's expected benefits and outcomes.	Accept	VicRoads 2008-09 Annual Report published useful commentary on the M1 Upgrade Projects. The Executive Director Major Projects and the M1 Project Director meet with the Minister monthly to ensure he is kept abreast of all issues in relation to the project.	VicRoads will publish the benefits of the M1 project in its annual report following completion of the project and the Gateway 6 review.

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PART B – FUNDING AND DELIVERY OF TWO FREEWAY UPGRADE PROJECTS

PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
• Recommendation 16 (Page 126 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects) The Department of Transport ensure there is transparent periodic reporting on the effectiveness of its performance in implementing key responsibilities in strategic transport policy and planning.	Accept	The Department of Transport (DOT) has established the strategic direction of the transport portfolio through its long-term transport plan, The Victorian Transport Plan (VTP), and its short-term corporate plan, the DOT Plan 2009. The VTP contains indicative timelines for the program of capital works in the plan. Regular public reports of progress against these timelines are published on the VTP website, both as bulletins updated daily and as an eNews service updated monthly. The DOT Plan 2009 contains a performance framework of outcome performance measures for the transport network. These outcome performance measures are aligned to the strategic directions contained in the DOT Plan 2009. Reports against these indicators are produced for the DOT Leadership Team quarterly. DOT's Delivery Coordination Division maintains a capital projects data base updated monthly with progress data. This database is used to source enterprise reporting for DOT's executive and external reports to central agencies on project performance.	DOT intends to produce an annual report of the outcome performance measures contained in the DOT Plan 2009 in its Annual Report for 2009-10.

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PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
• Recommendation 17 (Page 126 of Part B: Funding and Delivery of Two Freeway Upgrade Projects) The Department of Treasury and Finance ensure that key issues arising from actions taken by VicRoads to share its project management skills across the public sector are captured and incorporated into its best practice guidelines.	Accept	The Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) is using the lessons learnt from this project, amongst others, to further develop and improve guidance material on the use of Alliancing based projects in Victoria. To assist with this work, DTF has established a Victorian Alliancing Reference Group. It is chaired by VicRoads, and has another two senior VicRoads representatives. This will ensure that the VicRoads experiences are well addressed.	The treasuries of New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria (the Chair) collaborated and sponsored a national benchmarking study that investigated the Value for Money (VfM) proposition provided to government through project alliancing and how can VfM be enhanced in the alliance delivery method. Guidance is being progressively updated and expanded as the Inter-Jurisdictional Alliancing Steering Committee works together with agencies and industry to develop drafts for comment and publication, including: • policy principles for the planning and practice of project alliancing projects; • re-development of the outdated Project Alliance Practitioners' Guide leading to a new Practitioner's Guide to Alliancing; • Guidance Notes on specific topics of interest to project alliancing practitioners will be released from time to time; and • training programs in the planning and practice of project alliancing.

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PART C – AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INVESTMENT, MONITORING AND REVIEW			
PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
Recommendation 18 (Page 132 of Part C: Agricultural Research Investment, Monitoring and Review)			
The Department of Primary Industries undertake a formal risk assessment for the agricultural research investment framework to ensure that it identifies possible risks and barriers to achieving its new directions and can appropriately mitigate those risks and barriers.	Accept	A risk assessment of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Science Investment Framework utilising formal risk management processes is being scoped for conduct in early 2010 and completion by 30 June 2010.	Risk assessment and consequent risk management and action plans are to be completed by 30 June 2010. Results from this assessment will also be utilised as input to addressing Recommendation 19.
Recommendation 19 (Page 135 of Part C: Agricultural Research Investment, Monitoring and Review)			
The Department of Primary Industries undertakes an appropriate external review of its Agricultural Investment Framework at the end of 2010.	Accept	The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is scoping a study to review its Agricultural Science Investment Framework. The review proposes to include external international experts who contributed to the 2007 review and design of the new Science Investment Framework.	The review is due to be completed by the end of 2010.
Recommendation 20 (Page 139 of Part C: Agricultural Research Investment, Monitoring and Review)			
The Department of Primary Industries ensure that staff involved in administering the agricultural research program are part of the Portfolio and Project Management project being undertaken by the Corporate Services Group.	Accept	Staff involved in administering the agricultural research program and operation of the Science Investment Framework have contributed to the design specifications of the Portfolio and Project Management project. This input will continue.	A representative of the staff administering the agricultural research program and operation of the Science Investment Framework will be included in the Project Control Board for the Portfolio and Project Management project. The Portfolio and Project Detailed Requirements Business Case is scheduled for completion in March 2010.

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PART C – AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH INVESTMENT, MONITORING AND REVIEW			
PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
Recommendation 21 (Page 139 of Part C: Agricultural Research Investment, Monitoring and Review)			
The Department of Primary Industries ensure that its investigation of IT systems for the agricultural research program considers the systems currently being used in other jurisdictions.	Accept	The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) staff have visited and consulted with other jurisdictions in investigating improved IT systems for the agricultural research program, including systems to support Project and Portfolio Management.	Information on IT systems utilised by other jurisdictions will be included as part of the systems evaluation, to be undertaken as part of the Request for Information phase of the Portfolio and Project Management project. It is estimated that this will occur during mid 2010.
Recommendation 22 (Page 141 of Part C: Agricultural Research Investment, Monitoring and Review)			
The Department of Primary Industries include in its annual report information on the economic, social and environmental benefits of commercialised and non-commercialised agricultural research investment in Victoria.	Accept	The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Annual Report 2008-09, published in October 2009, includes information on the benefits and impacts derived from a number of the major DPI agricultural research investments. This annual report also includes details of commercialised intellectual property.	DPI will continue to include in its annual reports the benefits arising from its agricultural research investments.

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PART C – PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
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• **Recommendation 23 (Page 146 of Part C: Program for Students with Disabilities: Program Accountability)**

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development consider including a performance indicator that measures how many students successfully transition out of and no longer require the support of the Program for Students with Disabilities and the number of students exiting the program for other reasons.	Under Review	The Program for Students with Disabilities supports students across seven disability types. Students generally enter the program in prep and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) undertakes a review of their needs during year six to determine whether funding should be continued into secondary school. This process results in approximately 15% of students reviewed at year six transitioning out of the program by the end of their primary school years, equating to approximately 1.5% of the program. There are a number of other reasons why students would exit the program. The Program for Students with Disabilities targets students with moderate to severe disabilities which are generally life-long conditions. While early intervention may significantly improve a student's ability to achieve their goals, the intervention itself is unlikely to reduce the need for support via the program. If it does, this would be addressed as part of the year six review process. The performance indicators already established focus on the ability of students to transition to further education, employment, transition-to-work programs or planned activity groups.	DEECD will investigate whether including a performance indicator on the number of students exiting the program and their reason for doing so, is viable and consistent with established program directions.
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PART C – PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

PAEC Recommendation	Response	Action Taken to Date	Further Action Planned
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• Recommendation 24 (Page 148 of Part C: Program for Students with Disabilities: Program Accountability)

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development review Individual Learning Plans for the Program for Students with a Disability to ensure they better meet the needs of the students and the Department.	Under Review	The focus of the Student Support Group and Individual Learning Plans is on educational planning and monitoring of a student's progress. As a result, Individual Learning Plans are tailored to the needs of the child. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is currently trialing new curriculum advice for students who are working towards level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. This advice provides comprehensive guidance on curriculum standards and progress indicators for students with disabilities who cannot yet be placed within the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. The outcomes from this trial will be incorporated into the development of educational pathways for students with a disability and will contribute to the development of the Abilities Index.	DEECD will investigate how Individual Learning Plans can be modified in line with <i>Working Towards Level 1 of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards</i> and the Abilities Index to provide consistent and reliable data that better meets the needs of students and the Department.
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