17 March 2008

Ms Karen Ellingford
Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE Vic 3002

eetc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Ellingford

Parliamentary Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students participate in Higher Education

Chisholm Institute of TAFE is pleased to offer the attached response to the Parliamentary Inquiry.

Chisholm Institute is the largest TAFE and VET provider in the south eastern region of Victoria, encompassing outer urban Melbourne and regional and rural areas. The Institute has 38,000 student enrolments annually, approximately 8,000 of which are young people up to the age of 20.

The Institute believes that, in establishing partnerships with schools and in providing effective and successful pathways in post-secondary education and training, it is contributing to the economic development and social sustainability of its resident communities. The Institute's response to the Inquiry reflects this broad goal.

Should the Committee have any questions regarding the Chisholm response, the Executive Officer is asked to contact Ms Maria Peters, Deputy CEO and Executive Director Programs on 9238 8423.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Virginia Simmons
Chief Executive Officer
Response to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Geographical Difference in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education.

Below are Chisholm Institute’s of TAFE offers the following comments in response to four of the terms of reference a, b, d and g.

a) variations in the number and type of university applications, offers, acceptances and completions in different metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

Chisholm Institute of TAFE has a broad student catchment that is focused on its six campuses in the south east of metropolitan Melbourne and Victoria. The core local government areas are:
Shire of Bass Coast
Shire of Cardinia
City of Casey
City of Frankston
City of Greater Dandenong
Shire of Mornington Peninsula

The Institute offers education and training services to individuals and communities that span outer urban, regional and rural settings.

The Census 2006 data clearly shows that participation in post-school qualifications is significantly different in the Chisholm catchment to that of Melbourne generally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
<th>Bachelor Degree</th>
<th>VET Certificate I-IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bass Coast</td>
<td>13.5 %</td>
<td>38.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinia</td>
<td>15.2 %</td>
<td>43.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>15.8 %</td>
<td>39.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankston</td>
<td>14.6 %</td>
<td>39.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Dandenong</td>
<td>17.5 %</td>
<td>29.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mornington Peninsula</td>
<td>16.9 %</td>
<td>35.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melbourne</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.5 %</strong></td>
<td><strong>26.1 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each local government area, the percentage of persons with VET qualifications is higher than the metropolitan Melbourne average.

The reasons for this are multi-faceted, ranging from local economic conditions, to resident aspirations and the cost of distant higher education provision. There are also pockets of social disadvantage in the region wherein participation in any form of education is difficult.
The Census 2006 data also shows that secondary school completions are lower than the Melbourne average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 12 or Equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Coast</td>
<td>29.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinia</td>
<td>33.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>39.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frankston</td>
<td>35.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Dandenong</td>
<td>40.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mornington Peninsula</td>
<td>36.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Melbourne</strong></td>
<td><strong>48.5 %</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54% of the 15 – 24 year age cohort in Melbourne has Year 12 or equivalent, whereas in the south east the percentage of persons ranges from 31% in Bass Coast to 44% in the City of Casey.

The On Track Survey of 2006 students shows that the lower participation in higher education continues to be a regional reality. The destination of 2006 Year 12 completers shows that the percentage of Victorian students attending university in 2007 (47%) is higher than that for the Chisholm catchment: South East (41%), Frankston Mornington Peninsula (33%) and South Gippsland Bass Coast (29%).

Whilst participation in higher education is lower than that of metropolitan Melbourne, growth has occurred in other post-secondary pathways. According to Chisholm’s research, participation in TAFE, in particular, has been positive and reflects:

- the regional economy and labour force structure
- the desire on the part of young people to live at home or within the local community for social and economic reasons
- significant increases in the cost of travel and accommodation which acts a deterrent to relocating for education
- a buoyant local economy that can offer employment, albeit predominantly part-time and casual, to young people
- generational differences in that young people today seek greater flexibility and choice in what they do.

Post-secondary options, whether university or VET, are important to regional economic and community sustainability. A mix of solutions, not just university, is a requirement within all regional economies and jobs such as a trade or the paraprofessional occupations are attractive to local residents.
b) influences of school retention rates, including enrolments and completions of VCE, VCAL and VET in schools on participation in higher education

Chisholm Institute has assisted in the rapid and significant growth in VETiS and VCAL within the region in the past 5 years.

Offering a relevant vocational experience to secondary school students is important in raising school retention rates. The Victorian Government has recognized this through the development of a Technical Education Centre at Chisholm’s Berwick campus and by providing funding for trade wings secondary colleges. These developments are an acknowledgement that the students of today will take up a variety of study patterns, some of which contribute to higher education entry and all of which contribute to retaining young people in schools.

It is Chisholm’s experience that the pathways for exit school leavers is complex, often combining the necessity of gaining employment with part-time study.

The On Track longitudinal study of the 2004 school leaver cohort shows that about one quarter of the school leavers who entered a campus-based VET course (at any level) in 2004 were enrolled in a university course in 2007. TAFE is a valid and relevant pathway to higher education participation.

Chisholm’s study of its 2006 graduate cohort shows that the graduate journey is complex and is invariably some combination of work and study. In Chisholm’s region, it is unlikely that a young person is able to study full time for any length of time. Nonetheless, 40% of the graduates were enrolled in further study, 27% in TAFE, 7% in higher education and 5% with other registered providers. 79% of all graduates were employed.

The acquisition of skills and qualifications for young people in the south east catchment should be seen as a combination of participation in higher education or VET with pathways between the two.

d) potential geographic, economic, social, cultural and other influences on university application, offers, acceptances and completions across Victorian communities

Regional and rural students are more likely to be affected by these factors than urban students. The more distant students experience:
- a lack of low cost and frequent transport services
- dislocation when forced to leave family and social networks to study
- difficulty adjusting to a city lifestyle.

The major factor is cost. The On Track Survey states, “School completers living in non-metropolitan regions and in the Mornington Peninsula were more likely to identify the costs of travel or the need to travel long distances in order to reach education providers as a reason for them no longer being in study or training”.

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Potential students will turn to local education and training options such as VET in order to continue studying, taking advantage of the pathways to higher education when they are older and have greater financial resources. For some regional disadvantaged communities, the cost of attending any post-secondary option is prohibitive.

A report by the Jesuit Social Services, *Dropping off the Edge*, analysed a number of factors that comprise social disadvantage. They arrived at 6 bands to describe the continuum from extreme disadvantage (band 1) to relative advantage (band 6).

The south eastern communities are all well represented in the report on Victoria, notably,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 1</th>
<th>Rosebud West</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band 2</td>
<td>Cardinia, Doveton, Bass Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 3</td>
<td>Hastings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band 4</td>
<td>South Gippsland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each of these communities, with the exception of Doveton, social disadvantage is combined with a considerable distance from higher education providers.

The *SEIFA Index of Disadvantage* for the Melbourne Statistical District shows the City of Greater Dandenong, with its large migrant and refugee population to be the most disadvantaged in metropolitan Melbourne.

For 50% of the statistical local areas in the Chisholm catchment, disadvantage outweighs advantage, and yet enrolments in VET are increasing. The cost of education and training is a serious consideration with local post-secondary options being very attractive.

As further consideration is that of ENTER scores at individual universities given that these vary widely across the state. Educational disadvantage may be exacerbated by the need to travel outside the region in order to access a university with appropriate ENTER scores.

**g) strategies to address any barriers contributing to geographic differences in participation in higher education.**

Completing year 12 or equivalent, whether in school or a VET provider confers an advantage to the individual and creates a pathway to higher education. Pathways are the foundation of continued participation, now or in the future.

The *On Track* survey of the 2003 cohort in 2007 shows that 85% of the Year 12 completers were engaged in study, training or work compared with 72% of early school leavers. It also showed that 1 in 4 of a sample of university entrants had left without completing their degree.
One of the most effective regional strategies would be to support the growth of technical and vocational education through the TEC at Berwick, VCAL and VETiS as these are proving to be effective pathways for students. Full funding for TAFE delivery of VETiS streams would take the pressure off parents to make up the difference and allow more students, often the disadvantaged, to access VET pathways.

The Victorian Government's Guaranteed Place policy could be redefined to Year 12 or equivalent certificate III, to promote a continuation of a student's journey through school and VET. A young person's eligibility would be retained as they enter a post-secondary option. Under the current policy, a young person's eligibility ceases when they have acquired a certificate II whilst at school, even though this may be unrelated to their career aspirations.

The Victorian Government could approach the Commonwealth to review the Youth Guarantee Allowance, making it reflect today's costs and allowing more young people to be supported in education and training. A part-time Allowance might be considered.

Learning hubs could be developed for collaborative and cooperative delivery of vocational and higher education courses. There is a regional education infrastructure that could be shared to a greater extent. There are some excellent examples of this in the south east relating to partnerships between Chisholm and schools. Higher education partnerships are lacking.

Lastly, there is no strategy to grow education and training provision in the population growth corridors of Melbourne. Without some increases in VET providers' capacity to offer government places in relevant courses, the levels of disadvantage will become entrenched, with gaps appearing between the residents' skills and the requirements of the local labour market, as is currently the case in the City of Greater Dandenong.

Growth in the higher levels of VET education and training would offer significant pathways to higher education as well as improving the skills of the existing residential workforce. For young people, being able to study locally whilst acquiring the maturity and financial resources to move to university study would be a distinct advantage.

**In summary, the suggested strategies are:**

1. **Support the growth of technical and vocational growth through the full funding of VET in Schools and alternatives to schools such as Technical Education Centres**
2. **Redefine the Victorian Government's Guaranteed Place**
3. **Review the Youth Allowance and introduce a part-time Allowance**
4. **Establish learning hubs to facilitate pathways to higher education and VET**
5. **Grow the level of provision of education and training in the growth corridors of Melbourne**
6. **Expand the provision of higher levels of VET.**