Submission to:

Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into “Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education”

Prepared by:

Hobsons Bay City Council

March, 2008
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction - The focus of this submission is on municipal wide trends and issues within Hobsons Bay City Council rather than on smaller subdistricts. An initial priority of the submission is to establish a “baseline” understanding of the nature and pattern of higher education across the municipality within a wider regional and Australian/overseas context.

The submission does not attempt to be an exhaustive one, and acknowledges that more detailed assessments could and should be undertaken over time.

At the time of preparation of this submission, it is understood that the information and data sets provided here are accurate and reasonable steps have been taken to verify the information and issues discussed in the submission.

Section 1 – Data generated from the 2006 ABS census suggests there is a higher education shortfall for the municipality when compared to the Melbourne metropolitan average. If young people between the ages of 15-24 in the municipality attended higher education at the same rate as their metropolitan peers another 700 would be attending university.

The municipality also has a small shortfall on TAFE participation when compared with metropolitan Melbourne in 2006.

Section 2 - The lower levels of participation in higher education in the municipality are partially explained by or coincide with lower average levels of school retention to Year 12 for residents in Hobsons B(74% cf 80% for Victoria).

Hobsons Bay secondary students resident in the municipality (compared with Melbourne Metro) are more likely to attend a catholic secondary college, and less likely to attend other non government secondary schools.

Section 3 – Other relevant factors that may mitigate against participation in higher education from the municipality may include generally lower income levels, the occupational structure of residents in the workforce, a higher than average level of unemployment and a lower rate of connection to the internet.

Section 4 - Victorian On Track data for 2006 Year 12 completers confirms lower average levels of proceeding to higher education and lower higher education, TAFE and apprenticeship outcomes compared with Victoria (75% cf 80%).

LLENs data sets suggest quite a high level of early school leaving across the secondary schools in the municipality, with approx half of these leaving for less positive pathways. Early school leaving is evident in Years 9-12 inclusive.

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VCE performance scores are generally lower in western metropolitan schools compared to all Victoria.

Section 5 - Australia will face growing international competition for high skills labour graduates from the emerging economies of China, India and the former Russian Federation, not just the United States, Asian countries that invest heavily in education and a more integrated Europe. Much of the available data highlights a significant level of public underinvestment in higher education in Australia for the last decade.

Section 6 – Significant curriculum and capital expenditure changes have been implemented in Victorian schools over the last decade and Victorian participation in higher education, school retention rates and uptake in apprenticeships is high compared to the national average. The unique development of VCAL has played a leading role in delivering better upper secondary and post school outcomes in Victoria. There is also a relatively strong uptake of VET in the municipality.

The Hobsons Bay and the Wyndham communities have both been well served by the WynBay LLENSs.

Most government secondary schools in the municipality have recently experienced, or are planned to receive, significant capital and technology upgrades.

Victoria University has established a strong presence in the last decade and is committed to further changes and development in the west.

Significant numbers of students from Hobsons Bay attend Victoria University, RMIT and University of Melbourne.

The election of a new Australian government will result in increased access to computers for senior secondary students and new vocational facilities.

Section 7 – Residents in the Hobsons Bay City Council, especially younger ones who are working their way through primary and secondary education, encounter a mix of barriers to participation in higher education that are in part to do with numbers of students going to university, partly to do with the quality of courses and their results and have a lot to do with access and equity issues. The OECD summarises these issues as quantity, quality and equity.

Too few students from Hobsons Bay go on to higher education and TAFE, while many who aspire to universities feel unable to attain their dream. Generally lower levels of performance at VCE mean that there are no secondary schools from the
municipality in the top 150 performing VCE schools out of over 500 across the state. Students from poorer families are doubly disadvantaged.

Section 8 – The Hobsons Bay City Council has taken an active role in encouraging residents to value and undertake more education and training at the highest levels. This aspect is supported by the Council through the provision of scholarships in conjunction with Western Chances and supporting students in engineering and technology pathways. Also, Hobsons Bay City Council has a very active involvement in community renewal initiatives, including complete education redevelopments in Laverton and Altona.

Other actions under consideration at the Council to build a culture of investment in higher education and learning in the community include:

1. A review of community and further education in the municipality.
2. An immediate need to improve learning pathways for current secondary students into universities especially in areas of interest including health and education, sport and recreation, languages, hospitality and music.
3. The development of an inaugural municipal annual dinner for the education and training industry within our community.
4. Participation in a wider regional forum on identifying new ways to reduce social and education exclusion.
5. Discussions with the Victorian and Australian governments about the creation of a Social Inclusion Fund which would enable increased links between schools, communities, business and higher education eg the funding of a month of work experience over Years 9, 10 and 11 not just one week.

Adoption of a number of these measures over the next few years should assist younger and older residents in the municipality to join the education revolution that is often talked about and needs to be achieved especially in this municipality.

The Council welcomes constructive feedback or inquiries about this submission.
INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this submission from Hobsons Bay City Council is to outline and discuss key aspects of the pattern of participation in higher education within the municipality, and to compare the Hobsons Bay experience with the western region, Victoria, Australia and overseas. In most instances the term “outer western” is used to describe the six municipalities including Hobsons Bay, Wyndham, Brimbank, Melton, Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley. At other times the term Western Region education is used to describe all the schools administered by the Western Metropolitan Region of Education and Early Childhood Development.

A second key purpose is to identify and discuss a series of emerging strategic issues around higher education participation and participation in education more generally that are emerging in the municipality and the west of Melbourne.

The paper is a “work in progress” and commences to bring together some of more recently available information about education and training in the municipality and to include some commentary on perceived strategic issues from a number of sources including the Council and the wider education community. The paper does not seek to provide a comprehensive or exhaustive account of higher education in the municipality.

The paper is organised in two main parts and eight main sections:

Part A – Background and Participation Overview

- Higher Education Profile and Trends in Hobsons Bay.
- Schooling and Retention.
- The Wider Education and Community Context in Hobsons Bay.
- School Exiting and Youth Transition.
- Australian and International Developments

Part B – Strategic Issues and Opportunities

- Summary of Key Education and Training initiatives.
• Key Strategic Education Participation Issues for HBCC and Western Region.
• Options for Improved Higher Education and Education Outcomes.
PART A – BACKGROUND AND PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW
SECTION 1 – HIGHER EDUCATION PROFILE – Hobsons Bay

Information generated within the Social Planning and Development (SPD) Unit at Hobsons Bay City Council (HBCC) confirms a 17 per cent growth in participation in higher education in the municipality for the decade 1996 to 2006 for the 15 – 24 age group.  

Table 1 – Enrolment in Higher Education – HBCC – age 15-24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>1120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source – ABS Census Data

Females in this age group within the municipality are more likely to be in higher education, while male participation has been rising more quickly over the decade under review (40% compared to 16%).

Whilst the overall increase in participation in higher education in the 15-24 age group is welcome, including the improvement for males, information sets generated for the review of Victoria University Making the Future initiative (and again based on ABS 2006 data) report that Hobsons Bay has a generally lower proportion of females and males aged 15-24 in higher education when compared with Melbourne and other municipalities in the west.

Table 2 – Enrolment in Higher Education – 15-24 age group – 2006 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hobsons Bay</th>
<th>Melbourne Metro</th>
<th>Maribyrnong</th>
<th>Moonee Valley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males in uni</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females in uni</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2006.

1 Data sets utilised in this paper have been provided in the main from Social Development and Planning at Hobsons Bay City Council and Victoria University.
These participation in higher education figures in Hobsons Bay (12.4 % for males and 16.1% for females in the 15 – 24 age category) translate into just over 1300 students out of a total of approximately 11,000 persons aged between 15 and 24.

If females and males in the Hobsons Bay municipality undertook higher education at the same rate as Melbourne metropolitan there would be approximately 700 more students attending higher education.

TAFE participation

Data provided by the SPD unit in HBCC shows that there were 741 other residents aged 15 – 24 from Hobsons Bay enrolled at TAFE Colleges. This represents a small reduction of 20 from 1996 and means that approximately one person aged 15 – 24 resident within the municipality attends TAFE for every 2 attending University.

Table 3 – Enrolment in TAFE – HBCC – 15-24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census data

Participation in TAFE education in Hobsons Bay continues on a trend ratio of approximately 6:4 for males compared with females. The participation rates in TAFE are lower for both males and females when compared with the Melbourne metropolitan average and lower than the comparable rates in both Maribyrnong and Brimbank.

Table 4 – Enrolment in TAFE – 15-24 – 2006 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hobsons Bay</th>
<th>Melbourne Metro</th>
<th>Maribyrnong</th>
<th>Brimbank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males in TAFE</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females in TAFE</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2006.

The net effect of these lower rates for participation in TAFE by both males and females for the municipality amount to about 100 fewer students, that is the
municipality is performing closer to the metropolitan average for TAFE than for higher education, but a shortfall remains nonetheless.

**Victorian and Australian Participation in Higher Education**

The following two tables illustrate that the proportions of Victorians aged 15 – 24 participating in both Universities and TAFE are higher than their Australian counterparts.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2006

Table 6 – Enrolment in TAFE – 15-24 – 2006 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2006

In light of the above:

- Hobsons Bay performs below the Victorian and Australian averages for males and females for participation in university.

- It performs marginally above the Australian average for males in TAFE but below the Victorian figure – an important issue for a strong manufacturing state.

- Hobsons Bay rates for participation in TAFE for females are lower than for Victoria and Australia.
SECTION 2 – SCHOOLS AND RETENTION

Information prepared within the Social Planning and Development Unit at HBCC shows that there were approximately 5000 students attending secondary school in the Hobsons Bay municipality at the 2006 Census. This represented only a small increase on the 2001 Census and an increase of approximately 500 a decade earlier.

Table 7 – School Enrolments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Change 96 - 06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>2262</td>
<td>2318</td>
<td>4580</td>
<td>2515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2006

Information obtained by the SPU from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development indicates that over the same period of time apparent retention from Year 7 to beginning of Year 12 has been fairly stable for the four years to 2006. This means that the student retention rate has hovered around the low to mid 70’s in the municipality for a number of years and was just over 74% in 2006, which is significantly less that the Victorian rate of almost 80%.

The lower than Victorian average apparent retention to Year 12 for Hobsons Bay may go some way towards explaining why lower proportions of 15 – 24 year olds continue to University or TAFE. The lower retention rate to Year 12 is less marked for females than males in the municipality but overall for males and females combined it translates into approximately 350 fewer young people undertaking Year 12 in the municipality when compared with all Victorian Year 12 student retention.

It should be noted here that apparent retention to Year 12 is an estimate only and does not include part time students and nor does it take account of young people attending TAFE.

Participation in schools and non school education activity.

Table 8 provides another way of examining these issues and is obtained from data generated at Victoria University.²

It shows that of the 15-19 age group in Hobsons Bay (remembering that most young people complete Year 12 in Victoria when they turn 18), 70.5% of males and 73.1% of females were in schools or non school education (university and TAFE including apprenticeships) in 2006. Table 8 also shows that these figures are about 3% fewer for males and about 4% fewer for females when compared to the Melbourne metropolitan average.

Of some concern in Table 8 is the relatively high proportion of males and females recorded as unemployed in the 15 – 19 age group in Hobsons Bay (and across metropolitan Melbourne) given the robust nature of the labour market and a general shortage of skilled labour.

According to the data prepared at VU in this table, it appears that there are higher proportions of this age group in the municipality who are in unemployment than in full time employment.

Table 8 – Participation in education, school and non school, and other labour market activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Melbourne Metro</th>
<th>Hobsons Bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of 15-19 in education - school and non school</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>77.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time employment</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2007 quoted in VU briefing

Type of secondary school

This initial profile of secondary school participation that sits under higher education and TAFE is concluded with a brief overview of the type of school institution attended by students in the municipality.

Table 9 lists school attendance by type of educational in metropolitan Melbourne, the outer west (all six western councils) and Hobsons Bay.

It shows that approximately 57 secondary students in every 100 in the municipality attend government schools (+1 per 100 compared to Melb metro), 31 attend catholic secondary schools (+8 compared to Melb metro) and 13 attend other non government secondary schools (-9 compared to Melb metro). In general terms, secondary students resident in Hobsons Bay are more likely than

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their metropolitan counterparts to attend a catholic school and less likely to attend an independent (other non government school).

Table 9 – Secondary School Attendance rate – Melbourne Metro, Outer West and Hobsons Bay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Melbourne Metro</th>
<th>Outer Western Melb</th>
<th>Hobsons Bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non Govt</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2007
SECTION 3 – COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The 2006 Census recorded that there were 81,460 who recorded Hobsons Bay as their usual place of residence, slightly lower than ERP 84,800.

Of these people over two thirds were born in Australia with considerable numbers being born in the United Kingdom or New Zealand.

Table 10 – Country of Birth – Hobsons Bay - 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>51,920</td>
<td>68.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1,270</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,845</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>1,463</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1,063</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>3,867</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COB not stated</td>
<td>5,862</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81,460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total less not stated</td>
<td>75,598</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS Census 2006

Thus while almost one third of Hobsons Bay residents are born overseas other western region municipalities have considerably higher proportions of overseas born residents, for example Brimbank 46.8% at the 2006 Census and Maribyrnong 42.6%. Brimbank, Maribyrnong and Wyndham also have more than 5000 new immigrants arriving between the 2001 and 2006 census – the comparable figure for Hobsons Bay is 3,318.

Other general characteristics of the residents in Hobsons Bay noted by Victoria University from the 2006 Census:

- The median individual income (ie based on the total population, not just income earners or income support recipients) was $460 for Hobsons Bay which placed it $20 below the Melbourne metropolitan average. Moonee Valley, Melton and Wyndham each recorded a higher level.

- Hobsons Bay recorded 31.7% of males and 33.9% of females as managers or professionals compared to the Melbourne metropolitan averages of 36.6% and 34.8% respectively. Whilst below the metropolitan average, these figures are considerably stronger than for Outer Western municipalities (27.8% for males and 29.3% for females).
• On the measure of unemployment, Hobsons Bay recorded 5.5% for males compared to 4.8% across metropolitan Melbourne, for females 5.2% compared to 4.8% for metropolitan Melbourne.

• The proportion of dwellings in Hobsons Bay not connected to the internet was just under 40% (39.8) while the Melbourne metropolitan average is just over 34% (34.4). The Victoria University commentary links this lower level of internet connection to the generally lower level of income in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

• The proportion of all males in Hobsons Bay not completing Year 12 is significantly higher (31.1%) compared to 23% for Melbourne metropolitan in the 20-24 age group, and 33.8% for the 25 – 34 age group compared to 28% for Melbourne. These lower rates occur in all age groups including the 35-45 years cohort (49.5% to 45.5%) or approximately every second male in this age group.

• The female non completion rates for Year 12 in the 20-24 age group and the 25 to 34 age group are significantly lower for both the Hobsons Bay residents and for Melbourne metropolitan.

The interaction of these factors may contribute to the generally lower levels of upper secondary, TAFE and university participation in Hobsons Bay and the outer west of Melbourne when compared to metropolitan Melbourne and Victoria. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Section 7.

Another factor that is sometimes regarded as having some bearing on participation in education and training is the proportion of lone parent households which can place greater financial and personal stress on adults and children alike, but the following table suggests some care should be exercised in reaching that conclusion.

The west generally has a higher proportion of lone parent households but Maribyrnong ranks high on both this indicator and has high levels of participation in school education and higher education.

Table 11 – Proportion of Lone Parent Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hobsons Bay</th>
<th>Melb Metro</th>
<th>Maribyrnong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lone parent households as a % of all families</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source ABS 2006

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SECTION 4 – YEAR 12 OUTCOMES AND EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Each year the Victorian government commissions an On Track survey of student leaver destinations.

In 2006, there were 580 young people who attended secondary schools in the Hobsons Bay municipality and who completed Year 12 in 2006. Not all of these students lived in Hobsons Bay and they could be attending any of five secondary schools in the municipality.

The On Track follow up survey of these Year 12 completers in 2006 found that approximately 4 in 5 of these applied for a tertiary place and 85 per cent of this group received an offer.

Table 12: Destinations of Year 12 Completers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VTAC DATA 2006/07</th>
<th>ON TRACK SURVEY DATA 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary applications and offers</td>
<td>In education and training April 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Completed Year 12</td>
<td>Tertiary applicant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>580</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: On Track Survey (2007) - includes international students

Subsequent survey results show that approximately 43 in 100 of the completers were enrolled at university while 31 in 100 undertake TAFE/VET or had taken up an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Just under 5 per cent had deferred their study and 17 per cent were employed. Those unemployed accounted for 4.5% or about the national average for unemployment.

Stated another way, approximately three quarters of 2006 Year 12 exiters from Hobsons Bay were enrolled in University, TAFE or an apprenticeship in 2007.

Published data from the Victoria wide On Track survey indicates that on average for every 100 Year 12 completers statewide, 47 were enrolled in university, 19 in TAFE, 8 in apprenticeships (including traineeships), 22 were in work, and 4 were looking for work.
The Hobsons Bay Year 12 completers data looks marginally more robust than the census data provided earlier (section 1) in terms of keeping student options open for university, TAFE and other vocational training. Outcomes for Year 12 students in the municipality could be on the improve subsequent to the census – taken in August 2006 prior to these results, but there are also quite a number of students who attend the five secondary schools in Hobsons Bay whose normal place of residence is outside the municipality.

On Track data sets for 2007 do indicate that the combined proportion of Year 12 completers from 2006 across the six municipalities that make up the outer western area achieve an 80% placement rate in universities, TAFE, and apprenticeships/traineeships.

The Transition of Early School Leavers

According to data provided by the WynBay LLEN to a meeting of School Principals for 2006, there were 44 students who left during year 12, or about 1 per week across the municipality.

There were a further 396 who left school early (108 at Year 9, 175 at Year 10, and 113 at Year 11). Males comprised 55% of the early school leavers and boys and girls leave on average at 10 per week across the school year in the municipality.

The Wynbay LLENs, drawing on On Track Data) concluded that 2/3rds of these young early school leavers in Hobsons Bay had positive outcomes –

- 35% were in apprenticeships/traineeships
- 14% were in full time employment
- 16% were in VET

17% of these early school leavers were unemployed.

Transition and risk

The Social Development and Planning Unit at HBCC has drawn on work of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, who have researched and written extensively about youth transitions, and have identified the potential risk of young people who leave school and are not engaged in further education, training or employment.

Table 13 shows that at the 2006 Census there were almost 1100 young people from Hobsons Bay who could be identified in ‘at risk’ category as derived under the Dusseldorp Skills Forum “calculation”. That said, it is important to note that this number, according to the SDP Unit at HBCC, also includes those who are not in the labour force or studying and may have taken on roles as parents or carers.
Nevertheless, even if the total figure of 1100 is halved, the at risk calculation does draw attention to a group of young people who may potentially require more concerted support to assist their transition.

Table 13: Number of disengaged young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>15-19 year olds</th>
<th></th>
<th>20-24 years olds</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobsons Bay</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: VLGA (derived from ABS data)

Assuming that about one third of the early school leavers from Hobsons Bay, or 100 young people from year 9 to 12 inclusive, do struggle to find secure and positive work and or learning situations on a cumulative, year by year basis, it would seem reasonable to suggest that there may be a grouping of 400 to 600 young people aged between 15 and 24 (but also possibly reaching down to as young as 12 or 13) who experience significant labour market and income turbulence.

It is not a purpose of this paper to further examine these issues except to note that real retention rates do tend to be significantly lower than for apparent retention rates, and the amount of early leaving in the municipality may be somewhat higher than is generally thought.

Year 12 and other Education Results (JW still seeking more up to date information)

The most recent comparative “performance data” for schools in the western region, remembering that this includes an area larger than the six municipalities considered here as the “outer west” shows the following for 2002:

Table 14 – VCE Scores - 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Western Region - Education</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Studies</td>
<td>25.69</td>
<td>28.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>26.38</td>
<td>28.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>26.62</td>
<td>28.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Education and Training

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Similarly, primary students in Year 5 across the whole western metropolitan Education region perform a little lower than their Victorian counterparts.

Table 15 – AIM test scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Western Region - Education</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: DEET
SECTION 5 – THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

There is increased public and private recognition that education participation and training provision and achievements should be benchmarked against international not just national jurisdictions.

The increased importance of educational quality is acknowledged by many in what is commonly called the “knowledge economy” as is the increased mobility and higher skill levels of a “global work force and a global market place”. The evident rise in the rapidly changing world economic order of the growth economies of China and India and the opening up of formerly closed economies in eastern Europe has accelerated these trends.3

Whilst more than a quarter of a million young Australians leave school each year to pursue further education, training and work, the comparable figures for China is in the range of 11 million per year, while India has increased the numbers of students attending university by over half in the decade to 2004. China alone produced 4.4 million university graduates in 2005 compared to 2.5 million in all of the European Union.

And in the new world economy these economies not only generate large numbers of less skilled workers who undertake work that was previously a major employer of key sections of our economy, they are now moving many more highly skilled workers into the top end of the labour force especially in technology and advanced manufacturing.

Added to this, both Europe and Northern America continue to generate very high numbers of highly skilled and entrepreneurial workers who have had the benefit of extensive support for higher education.

As the OECD (2006) noted, “the biggest challenge may lie in the competition for advanced skills”. Until now, countries like China or India have not been able to provide sufficient jobs for their own talent and OECD countries became the beneficiaries of that mobile labour. In the US alone they reported the proportion of science and engineering jobs filled by tertiary educated workers from overseas increased from 14% to 22% between 1990 and 2000.

The OECD further reported (p.16) that in the 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) it showed that 15 year-olds from the US and Europe

were performing about the middle levels on key maths indicators while the south east asian countries, and Australia, were performing at the higher levels.

In relation to tertiary education (universities and TAFE), the OECD (2006:32) reports that Australia had a similar proportion of people aged 25 to 34 who had completed tertiary studies (approximately 38%) compared with France and Denmark, but significantly below Sweden, Korea, Japan, Canada and the Russian Federation (interestingly, the highest proportion of all).

*Investment in Education*

The OECD (2007) reported that Australian funds expended on education from both public and private sources were approximately 5.9% compared to 6.2% of GDP for all OECD countries in 2004. Australia’s total private and public expenditure on all of education is more robust in international comparative terms when it calculated on a per capita basis. The OECD reported (2007) that Australia, Japan, most of the northern European countries and the United States, do spend the highest amounts per student.

Such investments are reflected in relatively high levels of enrolment in the full range of education and training institutions (private and public) for the 15-19 age group. The OECD (2007) reports that most of 28 countries achieve levels of over 80% in the 15-19 age group (Australia is 82.5%), implying that attainment of an upper secondary schooling or vocational equivalent credential is becoming the *baseline for successful participation in the world economy*. Interestingly, Australians aged 30 – 39 have the highest proportion of enrolment in education of any of the countries except for the United Kingdom (14% and 15.8% respectively).

All of these trends, or comparative developments, are important for a wide range of economic, personal, social and cultural reasons. One regularly mentioned observation is the fact that while students who completed upper secondary schooling tend to have higher levels of average income and reduced levels of unemployment, there is an additional average earnings premium associated with completion of tertiary education (TAFE or University) as distinct from just completing upper secondary schooling, of approximately 25%.

A related concern addressed at length in annual OECD reporting is a perception that there is considerable inequality in Australian schooling outcomes. Two key sets of concerns are expressed, there are a proportion of schools that seem to reinforce existing social inequities, and Australia should do more to reduce a “tail” of lower performing students on key indicators including mathematics and literacy. That is, while Australia scores relatively high on international PISA tests, it also has a core of students who perform at the lowest levels in the tests.

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PART B – STRATEGIC ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES
SECTION 6 – INITIATIVES

Compulsory schooling

Compulsory schooling is generally regarded as covering the school years from Prep to end Year 10 and has been the site of major changes in Victoria and Australia in recent years.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) Annual Report for 2007 summarises many of the key initiatives that have been introduced to lift the overall quality of compulsory years and post compulsory schooling. They include:

- Recasting student learning into eight main teaching and learning domains to end Year 10.
- Development of a new Student Resource Package which is more student focussed.
- Building leadership capacity through new leadership programs for senior administrators and teachers.
- Increased emphasis on each school and region having a strategic plan to lift student learning outcomes.
- A Leading Schools Fund to assist schools to develop local solutions to their own challenges.
- A ten year commitment significantly increased levels of capital spending on new facilities and learning provision which first need to be based on agreed education plans for the school/s.

Each government secondary school in Hobsons Bay has participated in most of the elements of this “new blueprint” for Victorian schools and has also undertaken significant rebuilding works.

Post Compulsory Schooling.

Victoria is generally regarded as taking a strong national lead on changes in education and training provision in the post compulsory years or for Years 11 and 12 in particular and vocational equivalent studies dating back to the Kirby review of Post Compulsory Education and Training in Victoria in 2001.

Major developments initiated since the review include:

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The introduction and development of the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning which now caters for over 13,000 students in the final years of schooling. VCAL is a hands on option for these students that offers practical work related experience and learning. It is available in both government and non government schools and also through TAFE and ACE providers. The On Track data survey of 2006 VCAL students indicates that approximately 43% of students across Victoria (30% in the western education region) proceed to an Apprenticeship or Traineeship/TAFE program and about another one third proceed to employment. Only a small proportion proceed to University. One government secondary school and ... non government schools provide VCAL in Hobsons Bay.

Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VET) – including school based apprenticeships and traineeships – have also expanded significantly in Victoria. Nationally recognised VET certificates are undertaken by senior secondary students as part of VCE or VCAL. There are now over 36,000 students who undertook VET studies in Victorian secondary schools in 2006. VET is well established at secondary schools in Hobsons Bay. On average in Victoria, about one third of students who take at least one VET subject go on to university, and 28% proceed to TAFE.

Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs). All students 15 years and over in government schools are expected to have an up-to-date pathway plan and associated support to maximise their chances of a successful transition to further study and or work.

What happens to students on leaving the secondary school is the responsibility of On Track data surveys, the Local Learning and Employment Networks, of which the two municipalities of Wyndham and Hobsons Bay are serviced by one network. The Victorian government also established a Youth Transition Support initiative and there is one Youth Transition Support worker who provides specialist support to young people at risk of a poor transition. The three LLENS in the outer west have adopted a region wide protocol on all these issues called Western Youth Futures.

In an assessment provided to the Western Metropolitan Region on the 2006/07 On Track data the following factors were found to influence retention and post school destinations:

- The school intake eg how selective, SES factors and ethnicity
- Policy and provision of curriculum
- Size of school
- Transition programs actually in place at the school
- State of the local labour market and industry

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• Proximity of tertiary institutions

Early school leaving was seen to be determined across the On Track data by:
• Money (80%)
• Seeking a job (74%)
• No longer interested in school (72%)
• Wanted an apprenticeship or traineeship (68%).

Victoria University

The establishment of Victoria University has been responded to well by residents and students in the western suburbs. It has become one of the three main destinations of Year 12 completers along with RMIT and the University of Melbourne.

VU has embarked on a significant reform agenda in recent years including:
• Regrouping study options under five key course clusters
• Establishment of a 25% requirement in any course studied for workplace studies
• Increased customisation of programs towards the student to create a better learning pathway through the University
• Creating a distinct Vocational Education sector including a new Chair
• Instituting a series of Access and Success projects including the regional aspirations survey.

The University also makes specific provision for entry to the university by an education portfolio and its student profile most closely matches the socio economic profile of the state out of any of the universities in Victoria.

Australian Government

The election of a new Commonwealth government will have two visible effects during the period 2008 to 2010:

• The policy commitment to ensure that all senior secondary students can gain access to a computer should be implemented across Australia.
• Secondary schools will be entitled to a once off injection of $500K to $1.5 million to establish new vocational education facilities.
SECTION 7 – STRATEGIC ISSUES

In its review of education across many of the major economies the OECD assesses education performance on four key criteria, quantity, quality, equity and ambition.

The approach taken here is to use the first three of these categories and to add another one, governance and planning.

**Quantity**
The preceding information and discussion does suggest that students in Hobsons Bay proceed to higher education or TAFE at lower levels, particularly when compared with metropolitan Melbourne averages, and less so when compared with state and national data sets.

Their apparent retention rate to Year 12 also lags behind the Victorian average, and a significant proportion of early school leavers struggle to find ongoing work and/or study outcomes each year.

The lower levels of upper secondary school participation, TAFE and university may also reflect “demand side factors” of the type cited by Marginson (The Age 17/2/08) where Australia reduced overall public funding of tertiary (university and TAFE) by 4% between 1995 and 2004. The average outlays for OECD countries over the same time increased by 49%. A major effect of this was to reduce the per capita funding per tertiary student in Australia by 28%.

Discussion with, and findings from an ongoing aspirations and access study at Victoria University with just under 2200 students from the western region in years 9-12, show that many of the young people want to go to university (70%) but only 7% felt equipped to achieve this. Commonly cited obstacles included lack of finance, cost of programs, lack of family support/cultural attitudes, inadequate access to technology, and transport.

Marginson also noted on this that under the HECS system that has evolved over the last two decades that it is now routine for most students, not just poorer ones, to graduate with more than $25,000 in HECS debt. Unsurprisingly he noted that 70% of tertiary students work part time – often up to 20 hours, which clearly has some benefits if the work relates to their studies but can also cut into their study time. Part time students are also more likely to discontinue their studies than full time students at university.
One consequence of these significant changes in university funding has been to increase the numbers of international students as universities look for new sources of funding to fill the funding gap – Marginson describes this as the “emptying out” of public funding. Unsurprisingly, the Victorian On Track data records relatively high rates of discontinuation for western region students at university.

Quality

The generally lower VCE overall results and study scores, as well as lower than state-wide averages on national tests, suggest that there is room for improvement in student performance and that this will be relevant to improved upper secondary, university and post compulsory study and or labour force outcomes.

VCE results over recent years, based on VCE median scores and proportions of students in VCE who score above 40, indicate that there are only about 6 secondary schools in the western region of Melbourne that are placed in the top 150 schools. Of these, four are non government schools and the two government schools are located in the Moonee Valley/Essendon municipality.

Equity

A number of concerns have been identified throughout this submission for Hobsons Bay students in terms of social and economic equity. The generally lower levels of family income have been noted as have the higher unemployment figures and low professional/managerial occupations.

When looked at in these terms, upper secondary education does not appear to be providing a way into higher education or TAFE to the extent that many of the young people in Hobsons Bay and the west of Melbourne may actually wish. Males in particular have higher early school leaving rates and lower upper secondary education and university participation rates.

An interesting finding in the On Track data shows that whilst 43.1% of the students form the lowest SES quartile in Wynbay, proceed to university on completing Year 12 (compared to 36.1% state-wide), 50.9% of those in the highest SES quartile (compared to 64.1% state-wide) do the same. This suggests that in higher socio economic status homes in the Wynbay LLENs (Hobsons Bay and Wyndham) there is pattern of choosing to go to TAFE, a theory that is actually reflected in the figures (where 21.1% of students from a higher SES go to TAFE compared with 11.9% for Victoria).

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Governance and Planning

The proceeding sections of the paper illustrate that there have been many and significant changes in governance and school planning ranging from an increased emphasis on strategic planning, improving management and teaching leadership and the development of many more networked structures which bring together schools, universities, TAFE, business and the wider communities.

Feedback from staff and managers consulted for this paper at secondary school and university level indicated a need for even more initiatives to engage parents and carers in support of students who aspire to university education.
SECTION 8 – STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Existing Achievements

Hobsons Bay City Council has taken a very active role in seeking to focus increased public and private policy and program attention on the education and training opportunities, facilities and environment for its young people and for those who seek to pursue continuous learning.

The Council has been a major contributor to education and resource planning for the new Laverton P-12 complex which brings together two former primary schools and the Laverton secondary school in a fully rebuilt environment. The school initiative is taking place within the broader context of the Hobsons Bay Council support to the Laverton Community through one of the state’s Community Renewal projects. This is resulting in significantly improved physical environs, better transport and mobility outcomes, new jobs and training services and in time a new community centre. A new Children’s Hub has also been built and is now in operation at a cost of over $2.2 million.

The Council has been similarly involved in the new education planning and facilities development that has resulted in the Altona Secondary College, Altona North and the Bayside school developing a consolidated Year 11 and 12 campus which secures very high levels of combined university, TAFE and employment outcomes. The Bayside 7-10 campus in Kororoit Creek Road has also been assisted through Council and Victorian government funding to develop a highest quality tennis court precinct and vastly improved sporting and recreational facilities.

Council has also implemented, following the creation of a combined community and expert group on post compulsory education, a number of scholarships to the value of $1000 per year to assist four local students to undertake higher education studies. The Council also funds two scholarships in engineering as part of its wider commitment to assist young people into high skill careers.

Future Opportunities

Council will give consideration to the following program of activity to further increase community attention on improved higher education, school and training opportunities for the municipality:

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1. Detailed attention to and implementation of recommendations arising from a current review of **Further Education programs and facilities** within the municipality. This is extremely important to residents seeking to continue their studies or to return to study for more formal qualifications.

2. Enter discussions with Western Metropolitan Region and Victoria University about improved Higher Education and **TAFE Learning Pathways** within Hobsons Bay given the lower than expected upper secondary, university and TAFE participation rates. Specific discussion could focus on finding additional or new Learning Pathways that assist senior secondary students with interests in particular curriculum areas eg environment, music and performance, fitness and sport to strengthen their links with key university or TAFE units and staff. These discussions could also extend to more formal learning links with other Victorian Government departments eg arts in the instance of music and performance, or health and maybe even transport. There should also be a municipal wide discussion about the ways in which the anticipated Australian government funding boost for computing and vocational education will assist young people to pursue the Learning Pathways they are most interested in (see esp Education Age, 18/2).

3. Discussion with local school principals and school council presidents about the potential for an **Annual Education Community Dinner** which brings together managers, staff, parents and students from all the education settings within the municipality. Leading business and community agencies would also be invited to this annual event. The event could be hosted by the Mayor and have a leading education speaker.

4. Discussions with the Western Metropolitan Region of Education, and other relevant agencies, about prospect of an **Annual Regional Conference** examining education, employment and social inclusion plans and outcomes for the 0-25 age group in particular in the Hobsons Bay municipality and the western region more generally. The Council is interested to discuss the practicability of setting clear increases or targets in higher education, TAFE and employment for the municipality not just the region more generally.

5. Discussion with the Victorian Minister for Education about the prospect of a Social Inclusion Fund to provide a new source of education and training support to young people in the western suburbs (and other similar geographic areas in Victoria) who wish to undertake higher education but feel ill equipped to achieve this. Funding may be available for mentoring, additional study and even work experience placements relevant to their course of study. Council will also recommend that a proportion of a new SIF could be directed to VU for monitoring and dissemination of progress on targets and program success.
Bibliography


Department of Education, Annual Report, 2006-07