Introduction

Swinburne University’s Lilydale Campus was established, concurrent with the 1992 Act of Parliament which gave Swinburne university status and a mission which included providing access to higher education for Outer Eastern Melbourne. Because the university has both urban and outer urban campuses the university has been in a position to observe differences in participation.

The campus at Lilydale has always had a clear brief to develop strong relationships that will benefit the region and increase regional participation. Much regional research and development has been led by the Centre for Regional Development which has identified Higher Education participation as a catalyst for regional development and that education institutions have a key role to play because of their capacity to add to human capital and regional outcomes generally. It is the work undertaken collaboratively with regional partners that informs this response.

Regional growth and sustainability is an issue of concern in outer eastern Melbourne which has experienced a decline in relative growth. As an outer urban region the Outer East has more in common with Regional Victoria and is characterised by:

- A significant population which tends to be homogenous, demonstrating negligible growth, ageing with pockets of socio-economic disadvantage (in the outer areas a high proportion of residents earn less than $350 per week);
- A dominance of small and micro business rather than large industry;
- Net migration for work (for example, of the 67,555 employed residents in Yarra Ranges, 44,030 or 65% travel out of the Shire of Yarra Ranges for work);
- Unemployment rates averaging 4.6% but over half of the unemployed are long term unemployed. Unemployment is more marked in the outer areas of the region where youth unemployment is of concern. There is also some evidence to suggest that there are “hidden” unemployment groups, in that young people are underemployed or in casual positions;
- Stagnant labour force participation rates; and
- Transport and service disadvantage

The Centre for Regional Development has been working in collaboration with the three municipalities of the Outer East and regional stakeholders in developing a suite of regional sustainability indicators. One of the indicators causing stakeholders most concern is the learning community indicator. The education of community members
is vital for the sustainability, health and well-being of the community. Educated people are more likely to contribute to a culture that is inclusive, creative and innovative (see Attachment A). Thus the low levels of existing education qualifications and the low participation rates in higher education in the region have caused this area to be flagged for immediate regional action (Regional Indicators Website www.sustainableoutereast.com).

**Student Aspirations**

A study of student aspirations resulting in the report, *Are we fostering enterprising young people? Student Aspirations in Outer Eastern Melbourne* (Summary Report attached, full report available on at www.swin.edu.au/crd) was undertaken in collaboration with 21 secondary schools in outer eastern Melbourne in 2005. In addition to the literature review and an analysis of enterprise programs in schools, two hundred and forty-five students completed a survey instrument designed to gauge the links between parental, school and other influences on student attitudes and the combined effect on aspirations generally and more specifically on academic work and enterprise aspirations. Most of the surveyed students planned to go on to study at university.

However, the current destinations of school leavers in the Outer East indicate a much lower actual participation in tertiary education. Of those students who are offered tertiary positions, fewer students take up the offer compared to students across the state of Victoria on average. The reasons most often cited by school leavers in the Outer East for not studying are that they are ‘not ready’, ‘it is irrelevant’ or that they are ‘not sure of coping’ (DET, 2005). Therefore, although the majority of year 10 students in the Outer East of Melbourne may aspire to university, not all will actually turn the aspiration into reality (Langworthy, Mawson & O’Connor, 2007).

**Regional Skills Audit**


Outer Eastern Melbourne does not have the employment capacity to provide jobs for all regional resident workers. The fewest jobs are located in Yarra Ranges followed closely by Maroondah. Knox has a greater number of jobs but still significantly fewer than resident workers. In addition the lowest percentage of OEM employed residents work in Knox. The lack of local jobs presents a disadvantage to workers and to the local economy.

Whilst the period from 1991 to 2006 saw strong employment growth in both OEM and Melbourne SD, the patterns of this growth bear closer examination. In line with the findings of research into the changing nature of work, part time work is now taking a significantly greater share of employment growth. During this time women’s participation in the workforce has also grown and thus it is not surprising to find that the growth of employment for women outstripped the growth in employment for men in both regions. This reflects trends Australia wide.

Despite these similarities, there are striking differences between employment patterns of residents in Melbourne and the Outer East. Outer Eastern Melbourne differs significantly in terms of the skill and knowledge intensity of resident’s occupations and within OEM there are differences between the three municipalities.
of Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges with employment disadvantage increasing with distance from Melbourne.

Men and women workers in the region experience differing trends. Women in the Outer East are faring better than men; the skill intensity of the full time jobs of women has grown with the strongest growth experienced in Knox followed by Maroondah and then Yarra Ranges (although it should be noted that the decline in skill intensity of women’s part-time work, except in Knox, runs contrary to trends in Melbourne and Australia where the knowledge and skill intensity of part time work is growing strongly).

Overall the trend away from high skilled occupations towards lower skilled occupations is a concern for the region. The trend can be explained to a certain degree by the dominant regional industries that tend to favour lower skilled occupations but the growth in the number of residents employed in lower skilled occupations throws into focus the issue of regional job creation.

The study raises a number of questions for government, local government and education. Whilst the study highlights challenges facing the regional economy it also provides an opportunity for local government, education and business to focus efforts to improve the skills and knowledge of the resident workforce and assist in the creation of a sustainable regional economy (Langworthy, Esoposto & Feldman, 2007).

Key Issues Identified by the Education and Training Committee

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

Currently most undergraduate university and TAFE course offers are processed through the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre. There are differences in the number and success of applications between government and private schools. There are differences in the applications for metropolitan and rural and regional areas. At Swinburne the majority of students come from metropolitan postcodes although it should be noted that outer urban students who experience many of the same disadvantages as rural and regional students are considered metropolitan by government.

The highest rural and regional participation can be observed in the State’s regional Campuses; Ballarat, Deakin Warrnambool, Latrobe Bendigo and, just over the border, Charles Sturt Albury and interstate at the University of Tasmania. Whilst Swinburne serves regional students, that is those who reside in Outer Eastern Melbourne, at Lilydale most of those who come from the Outer East would be considered metropolitan by the State Government.

Enrolment for the most part is contingent upon an ENTER score. As Golding et al have noted, the concept of a required ENTER score is often a deterrent to regional and outer urban students for whom high scores may seem unattainable. Some universities have provided alternative pathway for rural, regional and outer urban students (using UniTest instead of ENTER, for example).

There is an inherent contradiction in an approach that aims to increase higher education participation but uses a competitive ENTER benchmarks. If only those
who get an ENTER of 75 an over can be offered a place then only 25% of VCE graduates will be offered a university place. However, statewide over 47% of VCE graduates end up at university with the majority of these students being metropolitan residents.

Influences on student aspiration and therefore application to attend university will depend on school experience and success, family tradition of higher education and financial factors. For students residing in outer urban and rural areas, the costs of attending university (living away from home and HECS) can be a significant deterrent.

The Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network (OELLEN) works loosely with the Department of Education and Training to monitor post school destinations and the fate of early school leavers.

This issue was also addressed by the Outer Urban Working Party which reported to the then Minister in 2003 (report attached).

**Influences on school retention rates**

Outer eastern school retention rates of 75% are well below the Victorian average of 84% (2005). In Upper Yarra a study of the managed Individual Pathways of Year 9 students (2006) demonstrates that only 58% of the original Year 9 cohort attempt Year 12. Subsequently 12.4% go on to TAFE and 11.9% to Higher Education.

The relationship with Upper Yarra Secondary College is an example of work undertaken by Swinburne at Lilydale which has provided a basis for partnership. The collaboration with local schools has steadily gained momentum over the year through the Leading Schools ELearning Community project with the seven schools in the Yarra Valley Network: Croydon High School, Healesville High School, Lilydale Heights Secondary College, Mooroolbark College, Pembroke Secondary College and Upper Yarra Secondary College. Areas of common concern for these schools include student attendance (in general but particularly at Year 9 level); VCE results; student retention; tertiary pathways; student well-being and connectedness; and student insularity.

As suggested in the Ballarat University report *Everything is harder: participation in tertiary education of young people from rural and regional Victoria* (Golding, Barnett, Brown, Harvey & Angus, 2007, school experience, socio-economic status and family are a significant influence on retention rates and the intention to study post school.

There is some evidence to suggest that Learning Disability, as distinct from intellectual disability, also influences the school experience, retention rates and intention to study post school. Significant work, led by the Associate Dean of Research at Lilydale, Everarda Cunningham is researching this issue and has resulted in a comprehensive professional development program for teachers in schools providing them with tools to assist students with learning disabilities in their classrooms.

The Eastern Metropolitan Region of the Department of Education and Training and the three Local Learning and Employment Networks have developed a Youth Commitment that aims to guarantee support an follow up of early school leavers.
Influences of participation in other post school pathways
Over recent years there has been a strong emphasis on Vocational Education and Training (VET) in schools programs.

Participation in VET in Schools program has a positive impact on student’s vocational choices. Studies suggest academically weak students that participate in a VET in Schools program were more likely to choose to go onto further study at either university or TAFE than academically weak students who did not. Academically weak VET in Schools participants also reported smoother transitions to work. Conversely, academically strong students who did not complete a VET in Schools program tended to go to university and those that did tended to go to TAFE. However, nearly two-thirds of VET students who enrol at TAFE, make the transition to university, and overall, four out of five are entering study in a tertiary institution.

Studies suggest that VET graduates are not only more likely to move into full-time work, apprenticeships or traineeships after the completion of their secondary studies, but they are also more likely to enter the labour force overall, or pursue VET options through TAFE institutions when compared with non-VET graduates. VET students also seem to be less likely to find they are unemployed or to have been unemployed for long periods of time since leaving school (Polesel, Helme, Davies, Teese, Nicholas, & Vickers, 2004, VET in Schools: A post-compulsory education perspective. NCVER).

A very small number of Students who complete the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), an alternative to the Victorian certificate of Education (VCE), do go on to university but in the main VCAL is seen as a pathway to work.

The current focus on skills shortages would seem to emphasise VET over Higher Education. The emphasis on trades skills (particularly by government) can be seen to run counter to encouraging Higher Education participation. Young people and their parents see the income differential of a degree as marginal with higher income from trades occupations either realised or predicted.

In a report prepared for the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, Bob Birrell and Virginia Rapson (Clearing Away the Myths: Higher Educations Place in Meeting Workforce Demands, Centre for Population and Urban Research, Monash University, 2006) argue that this approach is based on a presumption that we have too much emphasis on higher education and that we do not have enough young people to meet the demand for trades and higher education skills. They note that the largest skills demand is for managerial professional and associate professionals and that there is an increasing demand for higher educational qualifications often met by skilled migration. Increasing higher education participation, they argue, is essential Australia is to relace the skills of the baby boomers whose retirement is impending.

Potential geographic, economic, social cultural and other influences on university applications offers, acceptances and completions across Victorian communities

Family background, individual characteristics and proximal learning settings combine to have large associations with adolescents’ educational aspirations and small relationships with their occupational aspirations. Girls tend to have educational aspirations that are higher than those of boys, whereas boys have higher occupational aspirations.
Lower socio-economic status families are debt averse and the long term financial benefits of higher education may appear marginal especially to those in regional areas where post school employment is readily available. Thus applications will not be made or if made, not accepted.

Australian studies have identified various barriers or issues young people experience when transitioning from school to university. Barriers or issues include the development of self-determination skills, lack of clarity between TAFE and Higher Education, competitive entry requirements, unrealistic career expectations, mobility between TAFE and Higher Education, the consequences of Year 12 course selection, student learning styles or students’ self perception of success at school (James, 2000; Thomson, 2005; Marks, 2005; Wingate & Macaro, 2004). In contrast other Australian authors have examined ‘when’ students make a decision to proceed to HE indicating choices are made as early as Year 9 (Toon Khoo & Ainley, 2005).

Several motivational theories can inform us to why students successfully transition from school to university. These include intrinsic vs extrinsic motivational theory, expectancy-value theory, self-determination theory and goal theory (Wingage & Macaro, 2004). A successful transition program would identify and address student motivation.

The On Track survey follows up the destinations of Year 12 graduates. In outer eastern Melbourne the major reason for students not transitioning to further education is that ‘they are not ready’ or ‘it is not relevant’.

Advantages and disadvantage of participation and non participation in higher education for school leavers and their families and communities in different metropolitan rural and regional areas

Studies have shown that participation in higher education delivers benefits beyond vocational outcomes. Whilst the benefit of higher education has been largely promoted in productivity terms (higher income and success in the marketplace), those who have completed higher education are more likely to succeed as business entrepreneurs, live more healthy lifestyles and contribute to their communities. As parents they are more likely to value education. The importance of Universities to communities is summarised in Attachment A.

A challenge for those living in regional areas is the growth opportunities for local employment and the nurturing of local entrepreneurs who will contribute positively to the development of the local economy. Many of the young people will need to move out of the region for their education. What will attract them to return?

Potential effects of geographical differences in participation in higher education on skills shortages and Victorian economy

If Victoria is to have the skilled and educated population that will both create and sustain viable communities access to education equitably is essential. If those who reside in non metropolitan areas are disadvantaged by geography the implications are significant and will impact upon regional population and communities in future and predicate continuing migration to the city and regional centres.

Strategies to address any barriers contributing to geographic differences in participation in higher education
The issue of student aspiration to attend university must be addressed in outer urban and regional areas. One strategy is to develop strong university school partnerships.

Schools and university partnerships are not new. Universities have provided speakers, usually recruitment staff, and a range of marketing initiatives including campus tours, ‘experience’ days on campus, discipline based ‘camps’, curriculum and extension studies for high achievers. Emerging models engage university students with school students. These programmes do not necessarily focus on VCE. One perspective is that school students need to be engaged earlier than VCE if aspirations are to be raised. The models found include:

- **Extension studies**
  Extension studies are designed for high achieving students and provide for the completion of a first year university subject as part of the VCE. Although Swinburne had a number of subjects accredited we have never successfully engaged with regional schools in recruiting enrolments and where students have undertaken subjects they tend not to enrol in Swinburne for their degree courses. It has been decided that extension studies will not be provided at Lilydale.

- **Peer Tutors/mentors**
  The most common model is the Peer Tutor/peer mentor model – best examples Flinders Uni – the INSPIRE program (Koerner & Harris, 2006) and University of South Australia – (Underwood, 2006). In these models, usually one uni student to one secondary school student or small group of secondary school students, are very successful but labour intensive and usually require at least one full time co-ordinator as well as a training program for the tutors/mentors.

- **Leadership programs**
  These programs tend to be extra curricula but involve university students and secondary school students in leadership programs and community projects. Sometimes leadership programmes are undertaken by university students in association with community groups without any secondary school student involvement (Bower & Cavanagh-Russell, Hudson, 2006).

  Manessis (2006) describes the Student Leadership Program (SALP) program at Melbourne University which appears to have much in common with the Swinburne Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program except that students undertake the work voluntarily with non-for-profit community organisations. Like Industry based Learning, this work is listed on transcripts but not given credit.

- **Discipline-specific projects**
  A good example of this can be found in the education precinct collaboration in Southern Queensland where cross sectoral education initiatives are being delivered in secondary Accounting and Social and Community Studies programmes and tertiary level Urban Design and Landscape Architecture studios (Delaforce & Buckley, 2006). Wingate & Macaro (2004) identify some of the factors that influence success at university by students enrolled in a German course at Oxford University. This paper highlights an initiative to address these factors and the sorts of concerns students most identified including student self perception, different student learning orientation and styles and student expectations. The University of Pennsylvania has a strong offering of school linked projects in disciplines like health, social sciences, architecture and anthropology, for example.

- **Multidisciplinary teams like those used in Entrepreneurship programs**
  Swinburne offers the Venture Cup and involves students in Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE). Some regional schools have been involved in Young Achievement Australia (YAA). These programs are often extra-curricula but involve
students in multidisciplinary teams who develop enterprises, often competitively. These programs have a limited life span but quite successful outcomes although it is noted that they are likely to attract high achieving and highly motivated students.

A variety of papers discuss issues related to community engagement and higher education participation as opposed to describing school-university models of collaboration (Bower and Cavanagh-Russell; Hudon, 2006). Leadership is a common theme emerging in these papers.

Whilst the work of the Social Work Department at the University of SA (Pullin & Munn, 2006) focuses on community partnerships to provide practical placement for social work students, it provides an example of how academic strength and community need can be aligned.

• **Foundation Degree**

Whilst in the Australian context Foundation degrees have been used as bridging degrees for International students and those who have not performed well at VCE level, internationally new models of Foundation Degrees are linking the workplace, community and university to provide more meaningful learning and pathways through to accreditation and further study.

The model provided by Foundation Direct established at the University of Portsmouth and significantly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council in the United Kingdom, (HEFCE) gives some interesting insights into ‘just in time’ learning and potential methodologies for engaging with off site students.

The Outer Urban Working Party findings also developed recommendation which include strengthening of the role of outer urban university campuses (attached).

**Reports Attached**

*Are we fostering enterprising young people? Student Aspirations in Outer Eastern Melbourne, Summary Report*

*Current Skills and Knowledge in the Outer East: Signposts for the Future, Summary Report*

*Outer Urban Higher Education Working Party report*
Why universities are important to communities – the human capital perspective. Prepared by Anne Langworthy, Director, Centre for Regional Development, Swinburne University of Technology (2006)

University graduates are most likely to be employed (84.3%). Conversely people who do not complete secondary school are least likely to be employed (57.0%). Continuous participation in education is the key to long term success in the labour market. Graduates also receive more ongoing training in the workplace than non-graduates. University graduates earn more with a conservatively estimated annual gross income differential of 10% over a 45 year working life.

- Graduates have higher levels of earning power and contribute significantly to Australian household spending. The 1998-99 Australian Household Expenditure Survey reveals that graduates account for 27% of earnings averaging almost twice the weekly wage of non-graduates. This modelling indicates that 12.4% of GDP is attributable to graduate education.

- Increased university participation has led to significant increases in annual labour productivity and overall per capita growth Australia since 1930.

- Government sees a crucial role for universities not only in responding to the knowledge and skill demands from community and industry, but also because the "hopes and aspirations of young people depend on opportunities to improve their education."

- Universities foster democratic participation. Graduates more likely to participate and accept diversity in their communities and are over three times more likely to be a member of a voluntary organisation than non-graduates. Not only are graduates more likely to participate in and accept diversity in their communities but they have better health and wellbeing and are less likely to be involved in crime. Degree holders are significantly more likely to hold positive attitudes to race and gender equality.

- Graduates live healthier lifestyles, less likely to smoke, less likely to be obese, 40% less likely to suffer from depression and more likely to report "excellent" health.

- Higher education qualifications are associated with less physical decline, depression, loneliness, social loss and positively associated with continuous growth in aging people.

- Universities contribute to local, state and national economies. Communities use university facilities, students and staff volunteer in the community, the university, university staff and students spends money in the community, international students contribute financially and culturally to the community and universities attract project and research funding. As examples, Wollongong University injects $1.3 million a day into its regional economy - second only to Bluescope Steel as the most important economic driver in the region and 100% of nursing graduates at Deakin Warrnambool are employed within 6 months of graduation with 80% working within 100km.

- The benefits of higher education are intergenerational. Graduates are more likely to take an interest in their own children’s education and to be involved with their children’s school which are predictors of schooling success.
Business owners with partial or complete higher education more frequently turn start-up business activities into operating young businesses (Hindle and O’Connor, 2005)

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ii ibid P. B.16


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