Parliamentary Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in Which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education

Smart Geelong Region LLEN Submission
Prepared by “Researching Futures” - a research agency of SGR LLEN

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Introduction

This submission draws on two sources of information.

The first source is data of 2002-2005 Year 12 Completers transitions into Higher Education based on data available for secondary schools in the Geelong region. An overview is provided based on these data. Individual schools are not identified but school’s data is aggregated as follows:

1. All schools in the Geelong region (2002-2004);
2. All Government schools in the Geelong region (2002-2004);
3. All non-Government schools in the Geelong region (2002-2004); and
4. All Government schools clustered according to their SLAs (2005).

In addition, the aggregated data for the first 3 aggregations is further broken down to show gender differences.

Further, Year 12 Completers’ actual university destinations are shown for 2003-2005 once again including a breakdown according to gender.

The second source of information is a summary gleaned from a consultation held by the Smart Geelong Region LLEN with school principals of a selection of government and non government region secondary schools, the Regional Director of Barwon south western regional ACFE, a councillor from the City of Greater Geelong and a senior manager within the City Council.
Data on Geelong Region Higher Education Participation

1. Numbers of Year 12 Completers

These data for the years 2003-2005 show that the Government school sector is the major provider of Year 12 Completers in the Geelong Region. Although there is a trend of decreasing Government school numbers across the three years, Government schools continued to produce around 50% of the Completers with the Catholic and Independent sectors each contributing around 25%.
2. Destinations of ‘Education & Training ‘Year 12 Completers (all Schools)

When the data from all school sectors are aggregated the number of Year 12 Completers with a University destination averages 40.4%. The gender difference is marked: young women with a University destination average 45.4%; young men average 34.8% - a difference of 10.6%.
3. **Destinations of ‘Education & Training ‘Year 12 Completers (by School Sectors)**

For the Government school sector, 30.1% of Year 12 Completers on average have a University destination. For the young women cohort this average is 33.9%; for young men the average is 27.6% - a difference of 6.3%.

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### SGR LLEN Year 12 Completer Destinations: In Education & Training - All Govt Schools X All Completers

![Graph showing SGR LLEN Year 12 Completer Destinations: In Education & Training - All Govt Schools X All Completers](image1)

### SGR LLEN Year 12 Completer Destinations: In Education & Training - All Govt Schools X Female Completers

![Graph showing SGR LLEN Year 12 Completer Destinations: In Education & Training - All Govt Schools X Female Completers](image2)

### SGR LLEN Year 12 Completer Destinations: In Education & Training - All Govt Schools X Male Completers

![Graph showing SGR LLEN Year 12 Completer Destinations: In Education & Training - All Govt Schools X Male Completers](image3)
For the Non-Government school sector, 51.8% of Year 12 Completers on average have a University destination. For the young women cohort this average is 57.3%; for young men the average is 45.0% - a difference of 6.8%.
4. Universities chosen by SGR LLEN Year 12 Completers

These summed data for the 2002-2004 period show that for Year 12 Completers from Geelong region schools 49% took up Higher Education places at Deakin University. University of Melbourne and University of Ballarat were the next most popular choices with 14% and 11% respectively.
5. Chosen Universities by Gender of Year 12 Completers

These data show the percentages of males and females within the cohort of Geelong Region Year 12 Completers choosing each University: for example, of the 57 choosing the Australian Catholic University, 96% are young women.

6. Distribution of the 2002-2004 Year 12 Completers from Geelong across Deakin University Campuses

These data show that the two Geelong campuses received 81% of the 2002-2004 Year 12 Completers choosing Deakin overall. This is 40% of all University places for this cohort.
7. SGR LLEN Government Schools Higher Education Students by SLA: 2005

Numbers of Year 12 Completers by SLA

These 2005 data show that the Year 12 Completers in 2005 show the distribution of Year 12 Completers, in terms of student numbers, across the Government schools clustered according to SLA.

South Barwon-Inner SLA with 3 Government Schools had the biggest Year 12 Completer cohort, followed by Corio Inner/Geelong West, also with 3 schools. The remaining two SLAs contribute approximately equal numbers of Year 12 Completers and each of these SLAs has 2 Government schools.
These 2005 data, based on the 4 clusters of Government schools grouped by SLA, show that 3 clusters produced approximately equal numbers of Year 12 Completers with University destinations with the remaining cluster producing just over half the average of the other 3 clusters.

These 2005 data, based on the 4 clusters of Government schools grouped by SLA, show the percentage of each SLA-grouped school cluster’s Year 12 Completer cohort that goes onto University. 38% of Year 12 Completers from Geelong SLA schools have a University destination. The maximum difference across the 4 clusters is 15%.
These 2005 data, based on the 4 clusters of Government schools grouped by SLA, show that the Corio Inner/Geelong West cluster has the least number of Year 12 Completers with University destinations deferring. Numbers of deferring Year 12 Completers are highest the South Barwon-Inner clusters.

These 2005 data, based on the 4 clusters of Government schools grouped by SLA, show the percentage of each SLA-grouped school cluster’s Year 12 Completer cohort that enrol in a University course and then defer. Deferment from the schools in the Corio Inner/Geelong West SLA cluster is 43% of the average for the other 3 clusters.
8. **Commentary on Geelong Region Year 12 Completer Destination Data**

From the above data several points relevant to the Parliamentary Inquiry can be made.

In Geelong there are marked differences in the percentages of students completing Year 12 according to their school sector, their gender and the geographic region in which their school is located.

Overall, 40.4% of those Geelong students completing Year 12 take up University study in the year following Year 12 graduation. But the difference between school sectors is significant.

For the years 2003-2005 the Government schools in the Geelong region had on average 1,210 students complete Year 12 in each year. Of these 1,210, on average 365 went onto University study – 30.1%.

For the years 2003-2005 the Non-Government schools in the Geelong region had on average 1,120 students complete Year 12 in each year. Of these 1,120, on average 580 went onto University study – 51.8%.

Gender differences within sectors are also significant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Year 12 Completers with a University Destination</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young Women</td>
<td>Young Men</td>
<td>Gender Difference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Schools</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Schools</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Government Schools</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Young males, regardless of school sector, are less likely to take up a Higher Education destination.

The greatest difference is between young women attending Non-Government schools and young men attending Government schools – a difference of 29.7 percentage points (30%).

These gender differences are also expressed in the enrolments in Victorian Universities for Geelong region Year 12 graduates with only 2 universities going against the trend: that is, Swinburne University of Technology with more Geelong region males than females enrolling and RMIT with gender parity.

Deakin university is by far the most popular university destination for Geelong region Year 12 graduates (49%) with the Geelong campuses picking up 90% of those students selecting Deakin overall.

The 2005 data for Year 12 Completers categorised according to their SLA clusters show geographic differences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government School Cluster</th>
<th>University Destination % of Year 12 Completer Cluster Cohort</th>
<th>University Enrolled – Deferred % of Year 12 Completer Cluster Cohort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Govt. Schools</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellarine Inner/ Greater Geelong Pt B</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Barwon Inner</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corio Inner/Geelong West</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to interpret these data as, being based on one year, it can be indicative only. Also the variation between the individual schools within some clusters is greater than the variations across the clusters. Even so, the clusters with below the average for Government school sector university destinations should be a focus for further research. The marked difference in the deferment rate for students from the Corio Inner/Geelong West cluster also suggests a focus for further research.

**Smart Geelong Region LLEN Consultation**

The outcomes from this consultation were as follows:

- Geelong as a regional centre has geographic differences in terms of socio-economic status of its communities and in terms of life style options.
  - The areas to the north (Corio and Norlane) and to the south east (Newcomb, Whittington and areas of the Bellarine Peninsula) have generally lower socio-economic indicators than the City Centre and the areas to the south (Belmont, Highton).

- Recognised the difference in University destination rates for students enrolled in the different school sectors and the differences in these rates for government schools located in the different areas of the Geelong region.

- Could expect University destinations to be higher in Geelong than in country areas such as Hamilton given the closer proximity of Geelong to University campuses – expectation that this was not necessarily the case and that if true this is a concern needing attention.

- It was noted that in the Corio/Norlane area the issues were:
  - Tertiary study not modelled by parents
  - Access and cost
  - Aspirational data focuses on employment and TAFE but there is new interest in university.
  - Part time work can interfere with studies.
  - Small town mentality and keen to stay in Geelong.
  - Small cohort go on to university.
Some young people are independent, eg young parents, adults returning to study. Strong personal drive with maturity and aspiration for further study.

The consensus from the Catholic schools was:

- Parental expectations of University education high.
- Strong VCAL & VET alternatives now - significant VET and VCAL offered so more options are being taken up by students.
- Problems re living away from home, particularly in Melbourne, plus affordability.
- Affordability – sometimes families with modest incomes are struggling more than those eligible for youth allowance for example.
- Anecdotal evidence suggest kids who take a gap year do return to study in their course.
- Some students seem to want to stay in the local area, so may knock back a university place outside of Geelong for the Gordon Institute of TAFE in Geelong.
- Other regional cities have attractive higher education options, eg Ballarat.
- Tertiary studies tend to get completed by students taking these up.
- Complexity of young people’s lives – expectations, intensity, conflicting message – contribute to decisions about University study.

Others points raised included:

- VUT and RMIT attractive because of public transport access. Latrobe and Monash too far out.
- Cost of supporting young person to move away from Geelong.
- Deakin University in Geelong – if wanting to study a creative course then requires going to Melbourne.
- Parenting skills and family support possibly changing and affecting some students’ study destination decisions.
- TAFE option sometimes can act as a pathway to a preferred course later.
- Very expensive to go and try things out now, due to HECS etc. TAFE is a cheaper option.
- Lots of year 12 children don’t know what they want to do, which causes confusion.