



GIFTED RESOURCES

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4 July 2011

**Ms Kerryn Riseley, Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring St
East Melbourne Vic 2002**

Dear Ms Riseley,

Attached is the submission from Gifted Resources to the Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee (ETC) Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students in answer to your invitation of 22 March 2011

Thank you for conducting this inquiry and for the opportunity to contribute a submission. I would be happy to elaborate or answer further questions if required.

Sincerely

Mrs. Jo Freitag



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Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students 2011

June 2011

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1. GIFTED RESOURCES

Gifted Resources is a not-for-profit Information Service for parents and teachers of gifted students and the service providers who cater for them. Gifted Resources aims to provide contact information in regard to the programs and services available and to raise awareness of and dispel myths and stereotypes concerning gifted students.

Gifted Resources in its present form was established in 2004 and provides a website www.giftedresources.org email newsletters, telephone contact, a library, resources for sale and loan, guest speakers and film discussions.

Gifted Resources acts as a hub for the gathering and disseminating of information about the services and resources available so that parents and teachers feel less isolated and can decide how to provide for the needs of the gifted children in their care.

The activities of Gifted Resources can be read in the annual Activity Reports section of Gifted Resources website About Us page at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/gris.html>

Gifted Resources services are valued in Australia and internationally. See Appreciations for Gifted Resources <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/appreciations.htm>

Gifted Resources is solely operated in a voluntary capacity by Jo Freitag, who undertakes voluntary Project Work in association with Borderlands <http://www.borderlands.org.au/>

Gifted Resources has always operated on a shoestring budget and currently receives no funding or sponsorship and does not accept paid advertising.

An application was lodged for a Bendigo Bank Community Grant to cover the operating expenses for next year however it was not successful.

The information in this submission is based on the information provided to Jo Freitag for inclusion on the Gifted Resources website or in the Gifted Resources newsletter. Every effort is made to keep the information current but there is no guarantee that all available services are included or that the information is completely current.

2. DEFINITIONS OF GIFTEDNESS

There is no one universally accepted definition of giftedness and there are many methods of identification.

Some definitions describe "gifted" as an intelligence test score above 130, two or more standard deviations above the norm, or the top 2.5% of the population

Others define "gifted" based on scholastic achievement, working above the grade level of the age or as prodigious accomplishment: adult-level work while chronologically a child.

See: <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/identification.htm>

The Columbus Group, 1991 defined Giftedness as Asynchronous Development and emphasised the impact of giftedness on every aspect of life and the need for modifications in education and parenting.

"Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally."

The Columbus Group, 1991, cited by Martha Morelock, "Giftedness: The view from within", in Understanding Our Gifted, January 1992

It is important to realise that the gifted are not a homogenous group.

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/highly_profoundly.htm

Within the gifted group are varying levels of giftedness described by Prof. Miraca U. M. Gross. These different levels of giftedness require different types of modification to education to meet their needs.

See: <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/gats/assets/pdf/plk12gtlvls.pdf>

Distinguishing Levels of Giftedness: What does it mean for our practice?

Angela Chessman, Senior Curriculum Adviser, Gifted and Talented Students Program, NSW Department of Education and Training

Some define Giftedness as Potential for Excellence.

This view matches well with Prof Francoys Gagne's Differentiation Model of Giftedness and Talent Model. See: http://www.giftedconference2009.org/presenter_files/gagne_p12_therealnature.pdf

Gagne's model emphasises the importance of the influences of environmental factors, such as exposure to appropriate people and programs, on the progression from initial giftedness to fully developed talent.

A recent (27 May 2011) Global #gtchat session (<http://www.ingeniosus.net/gtchat>) between experts in the field of gifted education from around the world discussed Making Gifted Education Relevant based on a blog entry by #gtchat founder, Deborah Mersino. Call to action : Making gifted education relevant today <http://www.ingeniosus.net/archives/call-to-action-making-gifted-education-relevant-today>

One of the contentions was the use of the terms gifted and gifted education and whether it could more usefully be replaced with a term such as talent development. Some felt however that change of terms could also lead to dilution of provision.

Tim Dracup, freelance gifted education consultant, formerly Head of the English Government's Gifted and Talented Education Unit describes the polarity of viewpoints and definitions of giftedness in a blog entry at <http://giftedphoenix.wordpress.com/2010/05/16/hello-world-2/>

Definitions of giftedness encounter several prevalent myths about giftedness such as

- There are no gifted students
- All students are gifted

Both of these myths can easily be countered by demonstration of fact and application of logical thinking.

The “All students are gifted” myth needs to be further explained in terms of “All students are of equal worth as a person. All students are equally valued. All students have areas of personal strength. But not all students are academically gifted”.

The article “Is it a cheetah?” by Stephanie Tolan http://www.stephanietolan.com/is_it_a_cheetah.htm is particularly useful for describing the concept of giftedness and the need for appropriate provision for gifted students.

Gifted is a subset of the Student category in the same way as Cheetah is a subset of the Felines category.

These varying views of the definition of giftedness are all represented by different groups and workers in the field of gifted education in Victoria.

3. SERVICES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN VICTORIA

Gifted Resources provides information about the services available for gifted students and their families in Victoria by means of a website www.giftedresources.org , a monthly email newsletter <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/newsletter.htm> , a special holiday programs newsletter before each of the school term holidays and by responding to specific queries by email or telephone consultations.

Queries most often received relate to

- Parenting gifted children
- Locating or forming parent support groups
- Parenting very bright babies and toddlers
- Identification, IQ testing, location of psychologists with expertise in area of assessment of gifted children
- Early entry to school
- Acceleration and extension options
- Locating help for social emotional issues related to giftedness such as intensity, sensitivities, perfectionism
- Social issues related to friendships
- Locating services for 2E –Twice Exceptional (Gifted plus Learning Difference or Disability also called GLD)
- Locating suitable schools for gifted or 2E students
- Information regarding scholarships and coaching
- Programs and information for Visual Spatial Learners
- Programs, competitions etc for use in programs for gifted students
- Finding mentors and contacts
- Homeschooling

The information provided is usually a suggestion to contact services listed in the **Service Locator** section of Gifted Resources website <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/services.htm> where information and links can be found concerning

- ❖ Extension and Holiday Programs for Gifted Children
<http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/vicextensions.htm>
- ❖ The Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children (<http://www.vagtc.asn.au/>) in the State Gifted and Talented Associations Section
<http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/stateassoc.htm>
- ❖ Parent Support Groups <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/parents.htm>
- ❖ Teacher Education and P.D. in Gifted Education
<http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/teacherpd.htm>
- ❖ Psychologists and Education Consultants with expertise in area of giftedness
<http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/psychedcons.htm>
- ❖ Schools <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/schools.htm>
Includes contact details and links for Gifted Education sections and policies for state education departments and contacts and links for Victorian Non-government schools, Lutheran Schools and Catholic Education Office. **Gifted Resources does not recommend specific schools.**
- ❖ Select Entry High Schools and Select Entry Accelerated Learning Programs in Victoria
<http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/sealp2.htm>

Every effort is made to keep the information on the website and in the newsletter current. There is an In Tray section on Gifted Resources home page <http://www.giftedresources.org/> where brochures and fliers for coming events are placed and a Calendars section at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/calendars.htm>

Many providers of gifted programs, holiday programs and social skills programs routinely notify their coming events.

The Gifted Resources newsletter is sent to approx 1,500 email addresses and many forward the newsletter through their own networks.

Several psychologists and education consultants and teachers have stated that they either print out the newsletter and display it on a pin board or give a copy to their clients.

Jo Freitag/Gifted Resources is often contacted by parents who are deciding whether homeschooling would be a suitable option for their family. They are aided to make their decision by in person, telephone or email consultation and connection to the information, groups and resources to be found at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/webhomed.htm> and <http://www.giftedresources.org/jo/homeschooling.htm>

In Victoria one of the most important contacts in regards to homeschooling is HEN Home Education Network website <http://www.home-ed.vic.edu.au/> which contains an article specifically describing Home Educating Gifted Children at <http://www.home-ed.vic.edu.au/2004/08/01/home-educating-gifted-children/>

Information is often requested in regard to programs for 2E – Twice Exceptional students and contact details are given. Gifted Resources has a page devoted to Visual Spatial Learners at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/vsl.htm> and links to 2E websites at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/webgifgld.htm>

Other giftedness issues such as social / emotional issues are addressed by direction to websites and articles listed on the Website Lists page at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/websitelists.htm> , to discussions of these topics on Sprite's Site blog <http://giftedresources.org/jo/blog> and to programs offered by psychologists and education consultants.

4. EQUITY

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians
December 2008

http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

Goal 1:

Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Australian governments, in collaboration with all school sectors, commit to promoting equity and excellence in Australian schooling.

This means that all Australian governments and all school sectors must:

- provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location*
- ensure that schools build on local cultural knowledge and experience of Indigenous students as a foundation for learning, and work in partnership with local communities on all aspects of the schooling process, including to promote high expectations for the learning outcomes of Indigenous students*
- ensure that the learning outcomes of Indigenous students improve to match those of other students*
- ensure that socioeconomic disadvantage ceases to be a significant determinant of educational outcomes*
- reduce the effect of other sources of disadvantage, such as disability, homelessness, refugee status and remoteness*
- ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity*
- encourage parents, carers, families, the broader community and young people themselves to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes*
- promote a culture of excellence in all schools, by supporting them to provide challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all students to explore and build on their gifts and talents*
- promote personalised learning that aims to fulfil the diverse capabilities of each young Australian.*

The noble sentiments of these goals of excellence and equity are not yet the standard practice in regard to the education of gifted students in Victoria.

Gifted students can be found in every ethnic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic group but attitudes toward and access to services for gifted students are not as evenly distributed.

5. THE SCOPE, COVERAGE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

POLICIES

The current attitude of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development toward the education of gifted students is outlined at

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/gifted/>

It is not as comprehensive as the Bright Futures policy of 1995

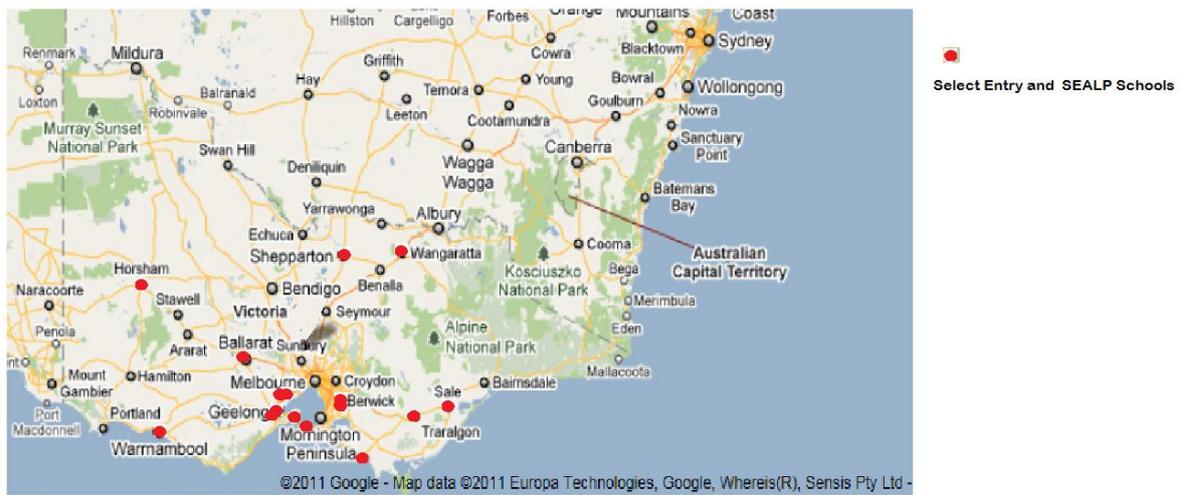
<http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/2163406>

Some individual schools have their own policy on the education of gifted students.

LOCATION OF SERVICES

These maps show the approximate location of the services listed at June 2011 in the Service Locator section of Gifted Resources website.

Select Entry and SEALP Schools in Victoria (outside Melbourne Metropolitan area) June 2011



Select Entry and SEALP Schools in Victoria in Melbourne and surrounding areas June 2011



Select Entry and SEALP Schools

Gifted Parent Support Groups in Victoria

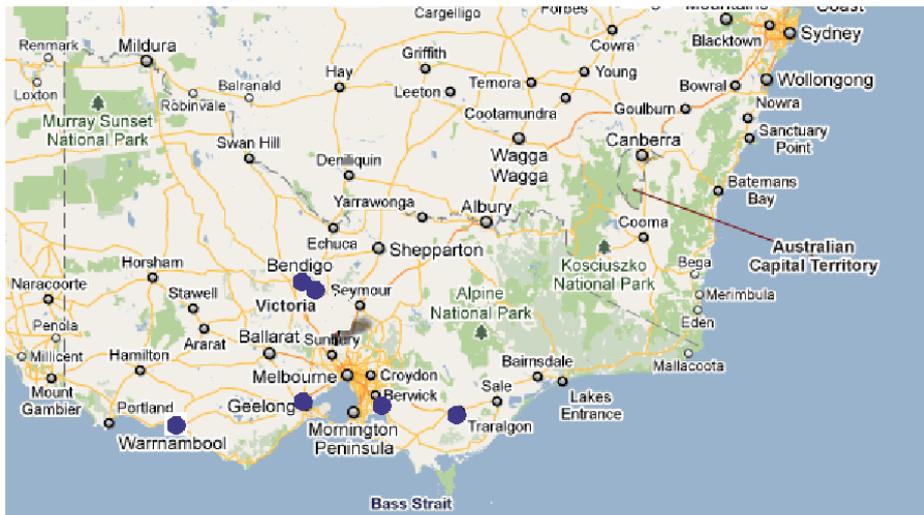
Not including Parent Support Groups linked to schools

as listed in the Service Locator on Gifted Resources website www.giftedresources.org June 2011



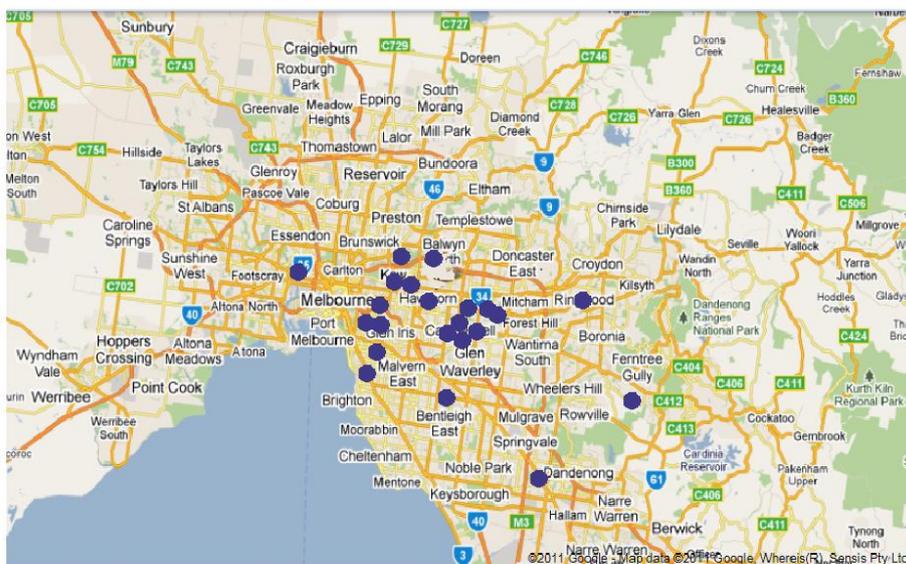
Active Group
Contact person for the area

**Psychologists and Education Consultants with expertise in Gifted Education
in Victoria (outside Melbourne Metropolitan area) June 2011
as listed in the Service Locator on Gifted Resources website www.giftedresources.org June 2011**



●
Psychologists and
Education Consultants

**Psychologists and Education Consultants with expertise in Gifted Education
in Victoria in Melbourne and surrounding areas June 2011
as listed in the Service Locator on Gifted Resources website www.giftedresources.org June 2011**



●
Psychologists and
Education Consultants

These maps show the approximate locations of services but do not provide any measure of the quality of the provisions.

Distance Education Centre Victoria <http://www.distance.vic.edu.au/> performs a valuable service, to gifted students who are eligible to use it, by providing curriculum materials for geographically isolated students and for schools which are not able to offer specific subjects.

Universities and TAFE colleges provide opportunities for dual enrolment and extension courses.

Some of these are listed in the Extension and Holiday Programs section of the Service Locator on Gifted Resources website at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/vicextensions.htm>

The government Select Entry and SEALP schools are all secondary schools and there is no equivalent for primary schools. There are some primary schools which have an excellent reputation for educating gifted students because those schools and their teachers have an ethos of valuing and catering well for the needs of gifted students. Some parents move house or spend extra time in travelling for their children to be able to attend these schools.

The quality of provision offered for gifted students varies greatly from school to school and is related to the attitudes of the principal and staff and the amount of training and PD in education of gifted students that has been undertaken.

In school and outside school hours' supplemental extension programs, clubs, competitions, holiday programs and mentoring add to the provisions available for gifted students in Victoria. Some of these are listed in the Extension and Holiday Programs section of the Service Locator on Gifted Resources website at <http://www.giftedresources.org/gr/vicextensions.htm>

6. OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING SUPPORT AND IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Key factors to improving support and educational provisions for gifted and talented students are:

- ❖ Generating a culture of valuing academic achievement as much as sporting ability or entertainment ability and a positive attitude towards gifted students
- ❖ Establishing policies for best practice in the education of gifted and talented students which will continue even if political and cultural climate changes
- ❖ Compulsory comprehensive pre-service training in education of gifted students for all teachers and further post graduate PD for teachers of gifted programs
- ❖ Inclusion of education about social/emotional issues related to giftedness for infant and child care service workers
- ❖ Greater willingness of schools to embrace acceleration options such as early entry, whole grade level or subject accelerations, dual enrolment (eg being prepared to investigate possible acceleration options using tools such as the Iowa Acceleration Scale <http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/IAS.aspx>)
- ❖ Greater willingness of schools to truly differentiate the curriculum to the degree required to enable gifted students to learn at their own pace and level in regular classes
- ❖ Increased awareness of social emotional issues related to giftedness (<http://giftedservices.com.au/handouts/index.html>)
- ❖ Increased understanding the needs for both challenge and support of 2E Twice Exceptional students (students who are identified as gifted and also have a disability)
- ❖ Valuing and fostering co-operation with parents
- ❖ Improved access to results of research, articles by experts and other information relating to gifted students
- ❖ Adequate funding for organizations and programs which support the educational needs of gifted and talented students
- ❖ Increased co-operation between schools, universities and industry to develop programs and mentoring opportunities for gifted students
- ❖ Increased use of the Internet for global connectedness for education of gifted students and professional networks and PD for teachers.

Excellence in education is when we do everything that we can to make sure they become everything that they can. — Carol Ann Tomlinson

7. REFERENCES

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BORDERLANDS

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<http://www.distance.vic.edu.au/>

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<http://gerric.arts.unsw.edu.au/>

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INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY ON ACCELERATION

Iowa Acceleration Scale

<http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Resources/IAS.aspx>

KRONBORG Leonie

<http://www.education.monash.edu.au/profiles/lkronbor>

MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

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Supporting gifted and talented students to shine – Have your say

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DEECD Gifted Education

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