11 May 2011

The Executive Officer
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam

Attached is the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority’s submission to the Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Children.

Enquiries related to this submission should be addressed to David Howes, General Manager Curriculum, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (phone 9651 4524 or email howes.david.c@edumail.vic.gov.au)

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

JOHN FIRTH
Chief Executive Officer
Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into the Education of Gifted and Talented Students

by the
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA)

May 2011

Enquiries about this submission should be directed to:

David Howes
General Manager, Curriculum Division
Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Phone: 03 9651 4524
Email: howes.david.c@edumail.vic.gov.au
Introduction

The VCAA is an independent statutory body directly responsible to the Victorian Minister for Education, serving both government and non-government schools.

The VCAA provides high quality curriculum, assessment and reporting for all Victorian students from age 0 to 18 by developing and implementing:

- The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework 0–8 (VEYLF 0–8)
- The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)
- National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy Testing (NAPLAN)
- Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
- Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The mission of the VCAA is to provide high quality curriculum, assessment and reporting that promotes individual lifelong learning.

This submission is limited to Part (b) of the Inquiry’s Terms of Reference:

the scope, coverage and effectiveness of current policies and programs for students from both metropolitan and regional school communities, school leaders, teachers and parents and carers to support gifted and talented students.

The submission addresses how gifted and talented students are supported through the VCAA curriculum frameworks and through recognition of excellence.

1. Curriculum Frameworks

The range of curriculum programs developed and implemented by the VCAA provides a strong and robust framework for appropriate learning programs for gifted and talented students.
(a) Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS): the P–10 Curriculum

The VELS recognises that students learn at different rates and that learning should be measured along a developmental continuum not age-related stages.

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) outlines what is essential for all Victorian students to learn during their time at school from Prep to Year 10. The VELS provides a set of common state-wide standards which providers use to plan student learning programs, assess student progress and report to parents.

The VELS curriculum encourages a flexible approach to learning that is inclusive of all students including the gifted and talented. It recognises that students learn at different rates and that learning occurs along a developmental continuum rather than by age-based stages. It is designed so that content at any given level need not be constrained to a particular age.

The learning domains in the VELS are constructed along developmental continua that form an identifiable deepening of conceptual understanding and furthering of skills as students progress through each level. This provides a vertical structure from which teachers can confidently plan teaching and learning programs for gifted and talented students that will allow them to extend and accelerate their learning. This innovative and leading curriculum structure will be maintained as Victoria adopts the Australian curriculum.

In addition, students in Victoria in Years 9 and 10 are able to extend their learning through participation in VET, VCAL or VCE programs of study. Gifted and talented students are able to commence VCE and VET programs in Years 9 or 10. This provides the opportunity for students to pursue both greater depth and breadth in their programs of study.
(b) **Senior secondary years of schooling (Years 11 and 12)**

*Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)*

The Victorian Certificate of Education studies allow students to demonstrate the highest level of learning. The Higher Education Studies program within the VCE allows high achieving students to include a first year higher education study in their VCE program. It offers academic challenge and intellectual stimulation in a broad range of studies, credit towards an undergraduate qualification and experience of higher education institution life and access to those facilities. Under certain conditions, VTAC provides an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) increment for a higher education study as a fifth or sixth study.

An extended investigation study is currently under development by the VCAA. This study will provide new opportunities for students to pursue areas of advanced research, leading to an extended piece of writing in the style of a thesis.

*Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning*

Gifted and talented students can elect to enrol in the Senior Level of this certificate. At the Senior Level, the VCAL curriculum builds on and further develops the application of abstract and technical skills, complex problem solving, specialisation of knowledge and the application of generic and employability skills to complex tasks and contexts. It focuses on a high level of interpersonal skills, independent action and achievement of tasks that require decision-making and leadership. In addition, students can elect to undertake a Senior Extension (Folio Enhancement) program of study which enables them to develop an Art and Design portfolio that demonstrates higher order knowledge and skills in the area of art and design.

*Vocational Education and Training (VET)*

VET in the VCE or VCAL enables students to pursue excellence in vocational studies within their senior secondary certificate. VET programs include structured workplace learning that can enhance the skill development of gifted and talented
students. It also provides a framework within which to further service learning. Most of the select entry schools in Victoria offer VET as well as the VCE.

2. **Supporting outstanding achievement by Victorian students**

   The VCAA celebrates and publicises student achievement through the VCAA excellence and awards programs. These prizes and awards play an important role in the recognition and therefore encouragement of high achievement by gifted and talented students.

   **VCE Season of Excellence**

   The VCE Season of Excellence is an annual festival of works created by outstanding VCE students in technology, design, multimedia and the cinematic, visual and performing arts. It is open to the public and held in venues such as the Performing Arts Centre, The Melbourne Museum, ACMI and the National Gallery of Victoria.

   **VCE Achiever Award**

   The VCE Achiever Award recognises the efforts of VCE students in promoting community involvement in their local school and wider community. It recognises significant leadership qualities and is awarded on the basis of a merit selection process from applications across Victoria.

   **VCAA Plain English Speaking Award**

   The Plain English Speaking Award (PESA) is a public speaking competition for students aged 15-18 years. PESA provides an excellent opportunity for students to extend their skills in oral communication, speech writing and research. This is a State-wide competition with the winner competing nationally and if they should win or come second in the national final they compete internationally.

   **VCAL Achievement Awards**

   The VCAL Achievement Awards acknowledge the achievements of VCAL students and the contributions of teachers and partner organisations to VCAL programs. Selection criteria include outstanding achievement in curriculum, personal development skills and work related skills.
The Australian Student Prize
As recognition of outstanding achievement in the final year of secondary education the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations awards the Australian Student Prize to students in each State and Territory.

Margaret Schofield Memorial Scholarship
This annual scholarship is awarded to a government school student and is based on their VCE Music: Solo Performance examination scores and demonstrated commitment to music and music performance.

Premier’s VCE Awards
The Premier's VCE Awards are given to students who demonstrate excellence in one or more studies in the VCE.

The John Button School Prize (inaugurated in 2011)
The VCAA supports this John Button Foundation award for the best piece of writing on politics or public policy by a Victorian secondary school student between Years 10 and 12.